

cereal. The reputation of Nintendo became far more than just as a good gaming system, but as a revolution. Their **reputation was more valuable than gold**.

Paul rounds out the verse with one final characteristic of the Christian leader:

Therefore an overseer must be...respectable... (1TM 3.2e). The Christian leader must be **“respectable”**—with a **reputation more valuable than gold**. *A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. (PV 22.1)*

AP: We often say it doesn't matter what other people think of us. And in a way, I get what we mean by that. But it does matter if people have something legitimately bad to say about us. If we're living in hypocrisy, it damages the church and their view of our Lord! It's not enough for us to just be righteous, we need to have a reputation as righteous.

1PT 2.11-12 ~ *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

MT 5.13-16 ~ *“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

CONCLUSION

Nintendo faced its own share of competitors over the year: Atari (more than once), NEC, Microsoft, Sega, Philips, and Sony. Some are still around, but many have faded away or left the industry altogether. Yet, Nintendo survives and even thrives.

Even to this day, to the modern gamer, Nintendo may no longer be synonymous with Video Games as it once was, but the company's focus on quality over anything else has resulted in their newest system, the **Switch 2**, having the highest launch sales of any video game of all time. Ultimately, this is a testament to the importance of having a **higher standard**: of being **“above reproach”**, **“sober-minded”**, **“self controlled”**, and **“respectable”**.

Perhaps it's your goal to someday serve in a position of leadership in the church. Perhaps you'd like to serve in other manners. But regardless, these character traits are ones that all Christians, man and woman, should strive to meet. And if we had any doubt, we need only turn to **TS 2**.

TS 2.2-8 ~ *Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, ⁴ and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. ⁶ Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. ⁷ Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.*

INVITATION

#631 [TOP-“Christian Character”]
04/28/2025

A Higher Standard

PC X Pchd **BL – 06/01/2025**

1TM 3.2

QUESTION: Why does it matter if we're no better than the world?

TRN TO 1TM 3

INTRODUCTION

ENTERTAINMENT/Video Games/Video Game Crash of 1983

As the **“proud”** former owner of an Atari 5200, I have no doubt why it is that video games **“crashed”** in my early childhood. I played a whole lot of what we'd consider today to be **“shovelware”**. Previously, there was a certain assumption that each game you bought (\$30 each, or \$120 adjusted for inflation) would have some quality in it. And I'd spent many hours playing the classics like *Pitfall*, *Q-Bert*, and *Centipede*. But with the rise of infamously terrible games like *ET*, came a lack of confidence in quality—which almost singlehandedly resulted in the thriving market falling into a coma, and many were ready to call its **“Time of Death”**.

That meant that former Japanese toy company, Nintendo had its work cut out for it if it was going to overcome the assumption of the industry's death and overcome the reputation of poor quality that Atari and its other competitors had cultivated. But they had an answer!

ENTERTAINMENT/Video Games/Nintendo Seal of Quality

For kids who'd saved up their quarters and dollars from chores, report cards, and visits from the tooth fairy, this seal was a promise that their dollars would be well spent. Well, at least, we assumed it would be. But it did mark an improvement, which lasted for many years and helped many of my generation avoid wasting our hard-earned allowance on *ET*s ever again.

BACKGROUND

When Paul wanted to help Timothy in selecting and identifying godly leadership, he had to find a way to overcome that natural human instinct to appoint and get behind low quality leadership. One only needs to look to **3JN** and the example of Diotrephes to see the damage that could be done by a bad leader. **But how would you overcome this risk?** In **1TM** and **TS**, Paul provides us with a description of what an elder and a deacon ought to be like. In a way, this provides us with Paul—and by extension—**“Seal of Approval”** for Godly leadership.

1TM 3.1-7 ~ *The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

These attributes are requirements for Godly leadership—and they must all be present for a man to be qualified to serve as an elder—a shepherd over God's flock! **But what about everyone else?** I'd argue that most of the characteristics Paul describes as requirements for an elder also point to traits that God calls for all Christians to strive to attain.

The church needs Godly men and women—and as my generation grows older, we'll be looking to yours to step into the role: as workers and as servant leaders. To prepare for

that day, let's all seek to apply Paul and God's **"Seal of Approval"**. Today, we'll take a look at just a few of these characteristics: but I encourage you to take time to learn and apply all of them as you examine yourself!

BD1: "Above Reproach" - Does "Above Reproach" Mean Being Above it All? (vs. 2a)

ILL—Imperfect Games (if you've played retro games, you know that the seal wasn't perfect; for every Zelda and Mario, you'd have games like *Deadly Towers*) The fact was, even that seal didn't mean perfection. A thing I learned painfully as a child as I struggled through my own copy of *Back to the Future*!

Paul begins with making a call for an overseer to be **above reproach (1TM 3.2a)**. Or, as other translations put it: **"blameless"**. That seems like an insane requirement. And it can be easy for us to assume that Paul was calling for leaders to be **"perfect"**. Which, let me just say for every elder in the church, is simply not possible. **Does "above reproach" mean being above it all? Does God expect us to live a perfect life?**

1JN 1.8 ~ *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

No, God is not calling for perfection. However, he is calling for maturity—for living a life that is an example of Godliness for the church to be able to emulate. *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,* ¹⁵ *but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,* ¹⁶ *having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (1PT 3.14-16)*

AP: God calls us to do the same: to be examples—to live a righteous and Godly life. God doesn't expect perfection—but rather, a general life of Godliness. For in much the same way that elders can lead by example among their flock, so can all Christians do the same for those in the world around them—a light in the darkness!

PH 2.14-16 ~ *Do all things without grumbling or disputing,* ¹⁵ *that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,* ¹⁶ *holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*

BD2: "Sober Minded" - Sober Thinking for Sober Times (vs. 2c)

ILL—Not a Toy (part of the struggle of selling the Nintendo in America was that people didn't want a toy; they were used to cheaply designed and low quality game systems; so, "Famicom" became the "Nintendo Entertainment System") It wasn't a toy: it was an **"Entertainment System"**—it was a mature system for mature people! That even was shown in how you plugged in the games: not in the top like a toy, but in the front, like a VCR. Market testing showed that there wasn't a market for a \$300 toy. But something more serious and sober like and **"Entertainment System"**...now you're talking!

As Paul described the next aspect of an overseer, he carried forward a similar thought: that an elder must be **sober-minded (1TM 3.2c)**. The illustration writes itself: they shouldn't be **"drunk"** or **"under the influence"**, literally or figuratively, but instead, they should be **"level headed"**. They should be lead first by their thoughts, and not merely by their emotions and desires.

AP: We live in sober times. There are many temptations and draws that would pull at our hearts and desires and draw us away from God. But in truth, this has been the case for as long as the church has existed. I can't help but think of **JD**, who wrote: *Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.* ⁹ *But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord*

rebuke you." ¹⁰ *But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.* ¹¹ *Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.* ¹² *These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted;* ¹³ *wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. (JD 8-13)*

The descriptions **JD** uses for the false teachers of his time could be applied easily to many today! Ultimately, God calls for His leaders to be the example of **"sober-mindedness"** and **"level-headedness"** that the rest of the men and women in the church should emulate.

1TH 5.5-10 ~ *For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.* ⁶ *So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.* ⁷ *For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.* ⁸ *But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.* ⁹ *For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,* ¹⁰ *who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.*

BD3: "Self Controlled" - You Can't Lead Others if you Can't Control Yourself (vs. 2d)

ILL—NES Controller (there's a fascinating sub-culture centered around the different controller types used over the generations; from the elegant simplicity of the original Atari 2600's simple stick and button, to the 5200's terrible phone keypad, to the current dual-stick standard; but the father of them all can be argued to be the NES's controller) With four simple buttons and a cross-pad, the controller was the basis of all gameplay on the system (excepting the rare Rob-the-Robot, Zapper, and Power-Pad games). There are many a good game of the generation that was solidified or underwhelmed by its control scheme.

Paul continues the theme by describing the overseer as being on who is **"self-controlled" (1TM 3.2d)**. This pairs nicely with being **"sober minded"** and keeping your mind in check. Paul says that the elder can keep their bodies in check. Ultimately, his point was that **you can't lead others if you can't control yourself**.

AP: Self-control isn't praised too highly in the world today. People are encouraged to give in and give room to all their most degenerate desires. I could give examples, but I don't think I need to. We all know people who live without self-control—acting at any given moment on their latest impulse or interest. But Paul encouraged the leaders to be men with self-control, and he also encouraged that of all members of the church: *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.* ²⁵ *Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.* ²⁶ *So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.* ²⁷ *But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1CR 9.24-27)*

If we want to be able to lead others, we need to show self-control and maturity both in mind and in body. For in showing this Godly manner of life, we display a maturity and **"distinction"** that can lead others to follow us as we follow Christ.

TS 2.11-12 ~ *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,* ¹² *training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,*

BD4: "Respectable" - Your Reputation is More Valuable Than Gold (vs. 2e)

ILL—Nintendo's Reputation in the 80s (I cannot overstate how impactful Nintendo was in the 80s; for years, every game system was a "Nintendo"; it seemed they could do no wrong) And they built off that reputation, selling TV shows, t-shirts, even breakfast