

Qualifications for Christian Workers

The following qualifications apply to anyone who is going into Christian service in some capacity to minister to others. These criteria particularly apply to those who take up Christian work as a vocation, such as pastors, evangelists, teachers, or missionaries.

- The Christian worker must be born again and he must understand the Plan of God in all of its phases.
- He must exercise his spiritual gift, such as that of pastor, evangelist, teacher, helps, governments, or other gift. The spiritual gift is a divine enabling for service given at the time of salvation and developed through intensive preparation.
- He must be spiritually mature in the sense of being familiar with the whole counsel of God's Word both by academic understanding and by application in his own life.
- He must have spiritual endurance.

Maturity and the ability to do God's work comes through years of study of God's Word and practice in using doctrinal principles. Following is a review of the doctrinal ideas found in 2 Timothy 2:15.

Study – from the Greek word (**spoudzo**) meaning “to be industrious, eager, to be diligent, to exert oneself”. It has a stronger meaning than “study”. It actually connotes a way of life which includes the proper mental attitude and motivation to learn Bible doctrine daily. This word could be translated “make every effort”. And it is a *command*.

to show yourself or, “to make every effort to represent yourself...”. It means to make every effort to concentrate, to be objective to doctrine, to give priority to the Word of God. The reason that you are entering the Lord's work is to live the life of Christ.

approve – “to pass an exam”. (**dokimos**)

The emphasis is on success, not failure. To be a successful Christian worker, you must study (Test #1), and you must use what you study (Test #2).

Can you teach to the glory of God? The test is on the accuracy of what you teach.

Can you work to the Glory of God? The test comes when you apply, whether you use Grace or legalism, whether you depend upon man or God.

Can you fix a car, iron a shirt, type a letter to the glory of God? The test is on whether you know how to do this.

workman – (**ergateis**), an agricultural worker, a laborer, a routine worker. This word indicates one who is involved in the mundane, routine, ordinary, distasteful, or dull things in life. In the ancient world it meant feeding the cattle, working in the fields, cleaning out the barn, etc. Many people want to do great things for God, to get written up in articles, to get peer recognition for accomplishments.

Some people think that leading someone to Christ is more spiritual than giving a cup of cold water in the Lord's name. But this is wrong! Any task can be done as unto the Lord; the Christian life is fantastic. The emphasis here is on doing small, routine things as unto the Lord. Stay in fellowship and wait for God's promotion.

needeth not to be ashamed – literally, with the previous word, “a not-ashamed workman”. You don't have to be ashamed of your station in life if you have an honest vocation. Every believer is in full time service. A Christian worker must keep grace oriented and not despise the ordinary things, or those who live an “ordinary” life. And he must have these qualities before moving out.

rightly dividing with the word of truth. – to cut straight, to line out a straight path. Use Bible doctrine to keep from straying into the cults, into the movements, to stay with accurate interpretation and application of the Word of God. This enables

a life with no detours, no hangups, no blind alleys. Therefore, the verse says, “Making every effort to represent yourself approved to God, an irreproachable worker cutting a straight path with the Word of Truth.”

The Christian worker must also be able to stand the test of negative volition on the part of those he is reaching. READ Acts 13. Nothing tests the Christian worker more than a lack of response. Paul began his first missionary journey about ten years after he was saved, when he was mature. He ran into negative volition and corrected the situation with the direct approach (Acts 13:6-13).

Religion always has negative volition attached to it, as we see in this context. The religious people were filled with envy, jealous of Paul getting a hearing. They fabricated lies and began a vicious campaign of gossip and maligning. They “spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul”. They spoke against doctrine; they didn’t like Christ being called the Messiah; they didn’t like Paul’s authoritative teaching. They were the religious bosses and controlled everything religious in the town.

Paul and Barnabas “waxed bold” – that is, they spoke dogmatically with authority and confidence. He said, “It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you (Jews)”, but they ran into negative volition, “but seeing you put if from you”. So Paul and Barnabas left and went to a place of positive volition (13:46-49) and had great results.

In Acts 15, they ran into the problem of negative volition on the part of believers, toward doctrine taught categorically (Circumcision). The believers were dragging works into God’s plan of Grace. The Christian worker must understand the doctrine of volition, both positive and negative aspects.

A Christian worker must also possess spiritual endurance. The idea is expressed in 2 Tim. 4:7,8 as having iron in the soul, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Or. “Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” (Prov. 27:17).

The enemy of spiritual endurance is “brittleness in the soul”, as seen in Jer. 13:8-14. In the ancient world they understood how a dried out wineskin would shatter. This passage is talking about the disintegration of the soul of an individual, like Prov. 6:32. The soul becomes brittle when the believer fails to respond to doctrine and either goes into idolatry or sexual sins. The believer drinks the jug of the foam of this life and not only does the jug shatter in his face but so does his soul. It is part of the frantic search for happiness of the person who has received some prosperity, like Solomon who prospered materially but found nothing to satisfy himself (Ecclesiastes).

Brittleness in the soul can become a way of life, like the nation which goes into terrible judgment (Jer. 13:19). This is the pursuit of success and happiness apart from God’s Plan and provision. A brittle soul has not been fulfilled by the Lord and His Word. Instead of Grace orientation, the believer with a brittle soul has legalism, self-righteousness, pride, super sensitivity, human viewpoint, self-justification, a critical and irritable spirit, and accepts no authority but his own.

Instead of being a master of the details of life, the details master him, so he seeks satisfaction with cheap substitutes. Instead of having a relaxed mental attitude, the brittle soul has mental attitude sins: bitterness, jealousy, hatred, cruelty. Instead of a capacity for personal and impersonal love, the brittle soul has pseudo-love, a sickly sweet love accompanied by boredom and instability. Instead of perfect happiness, the brittle soul has depression, frustration, and accepts instant stimulation followed by instant misery. This condition is the opposite of spiritual endurance and has destroyed many Christian workers in all parts of the world.

The mechanics of obtaining spiritual endurance are simple, salvation plus edification. Stability and endurance come through the daily intake of the Word of God accompanied by the continuous filling of the Holy Spirit and application of doctrine to the life through faith. Eph. 4:1-13.