

Understanding Church leadership: elders and deacons 1 Timothy 3:1-15

Last week we talked about God giving leaders in his church for the purpose of building it up. When we talked about the nature of the church we said besides being global, it is also local. We are told in the book of Acts how these local congregations came about. Paul and Barnabas were apostles and they traveled preaching the good news of Jesus. They established churches in every city they went. These churches were led by a group of elders. **Acts 14:23 (They appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed)**

What did these elders do? They were given to the church to care for it.

Acts 20:17, 28 Paul sent for the elders of the Ephesian church. In this text we find three words used to talk about the same group of people.

Elders (presbuteros, older)

-shepherds (pastors)

-Overseers (Episcopos, supervisor, guardian)

What were the criteria for choosing these leaders? 1 Timothy 3 helps us see what they looked for in these men when choosing them for positions of leadership in the church.

1 Timothy 3:1

To desire to be an elder is to desire a noble task, it's (noble, good, honorable). However, Paul lists a number of qualities to look for in the candidates for eldership.

Verse 2. The overseer

The overseer must be above reproach: This means blameless, one who gives no ground for accusation; irreproachable.

The husband of one wife: not a polygamist, a one woman man.

Temperate: sober, one of vigilant mind, (to be calm); "wineless" not under the influence of wine; a **person who demonstrates good mental behavior and spiritual sobriety**, a self-controlled person who is not controlled by the outside circumstances or substances.

Self-controlled: prudent; a man who is balanced, sensible, reasonable, and sound of judgment

Respectable: *honorable, orderly, modest*

Hospitable: given to hospitality, Hospitality means: receiving and entertaining strangers with kindness and without reward; kind to strangers and guests;

Able to teach: This means that he can exhort believers and refute false teaching; to be able to teach imply that he should have knowledge of Scriptures, the readiness to teach it to others and the ability to communicate it. (**Titus 1:9**)

Not given to wine (v.3)(one who is not addicted to wine) this explains why we heard about sober minded and temperate, for one addicted to wine is not self-controlled.

-Not violent but gentle (pugnacious but gentle): A pugnacious man is a fighter. He is quick-tempered and easily drawn into a physical confrontation. This man is quarrelsome and is self-confident enough to physically assault others.

Gentle means (peaceable), patient forbearing, gentle, kind.

Not quarrelsome: Not a brawler; not contentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered.

Meaning: **"Without fighting."**

Not a lover of money: (free from the love of money: covetous) Not a materialistic person.

Verse 4: Good manager of his own family (rules his home well, children obey him and respect him). Rules well his own house. His children are faithful, not accused of rebellion (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6). *The children obey him in all things with reverence and dignity.*

“**Managing well his own household.**” This is a man who takes active oversight of his family. His family is led by his positive spiritual example and teaching. If this is not true of him, how can he properly manage the household of God?

Verse 5 If a man does not know how to rule his family, how can he take care of the church (God’s house).

Verse 6 He must not be a recent convert (Not a new convert) an overseer (elder, shepherd) must not be a baby Christian or beginner in the faith, for he will not have the maturity to lead the church, no matter how zealous, old (chronologically); knowledgeable or spiritual they may seem to be.

-So that he will not become conceited (puffed up, being lifted up with pride)

And fall into the judgment as the Devil (Satan’s problem was his pride, his arrogance got him in trouble)

Verse 7 He must have a good (reputation) Marturian = testimony among outsiders (those outside the church)

So that he doesn’t fall into reproach (disgrace) **and the Devil’s trap** (snare) I have known people who don’t come to church or become Christian because they have known certain leaders and they know how their testimony in their community.

Deacons: (diaconos, ministry=diaconia)

In the same way deacons. (servants/ministers)

Verse 8 Deacons, likewise (refereeing to the overseers) (servants: those who serve on tables) must be men of respect, honor (a dignified (noble) person.

Sincere (not double-tongued, deceitful)

Not addicted to much wine (turning his attention to much wine; give too much attention to wine; **not addicted to too much wine.**

Not a greedy person (greedy for money)

Verse 9 Holding to the mystery of the faith (the subject matter of the faith, the substance of the faith. (NIV “keep hold of the deep truths of the faith”)

In pure conscience (with a pure, clean conscience)

Verse 10: And these (the deacons/servants) must be tested first (this testing is in relation to what has been said about these men; the qualities mentioned earlier, the things expected of deacons, must be tested.)

If being found blameless, without reproach, then let them serve as deacons. Before they are appointed, they must be tested against what is expected of them. They should serve as deacon only if they pass the test.

Verse 11 Women (wives) likewise, must be worthy of respect (v.8) worthy of honor or a dignified person.

Not slanderers (malicious talkers), but temperate (**Temperate:** sober, one of vigilant mind, (to be calm); “wineless” The same quality we find back in verse 2 referring to the overseers.
Faithful in all things.

Verse 12 Deacons must be the husbands of only one wife (a deacon must be a one woman man, no polygamist allowed)

Good rulers or managers of their children and their households. (If they fail in being good managers of their families then they should not serve as servant leaders or deacons).

Verse 13 For those who serve as deacons obtain a high standing (degree)
And great confidence (boldness) in faith that is in Christ Jesus

The reason Paul left these instructions to Timothy: (v.14-15)

“I am writing you these things, in case I am delayed, so that people should know how to behave in the **household of God** (the church of God: not a building but gathering of God’s people); which is the church of the Living God.

The pillar and foundation of the truth (the pillar and ground or support of the truth). The church contains the truth in this world.

These were the instructions given to Timothy in choosing elders and deacons in the church where he was the pastor.

The churches appointed people who exhibited these qualities. These things were expected of them in order to be chosen in a leadership position in the church. **They were put in charge of the affairs of the church. To care for it, shepherd, protect it from outside influence.** The servant leaders were responsible to manage the various ministries of these congregations. (Distribution of food for widows and collections for famine relief)

God gives these people in the church in order to equip and build it up. **Eph.4:11-12**

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelist and some to be pastors (shepherds) and teachers to prepare God’s people for the works of ministry (service), so that the body of Christ may be built up.