

**Week of March 3, 2013**  
***The Character of Leadership***

**Passage Outline:**

1. Above Reproach - 1 Timothy 3:1-7
2. Worthy of Respect - 1 Timothy 3:8-13
3. And Not Just the Leaders - 1 Timothy 3:14-15

**What's This About?**

Our study is about what a church should expect of its leaders and what God expects of His church. Our study will help us affirm church leadership and hold them and ourselves accountable to godly standards.

**1. Above Reproach - 1 Timothy 3:1-7**

<sup>1</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup> Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. <sup>5</sup> (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. <sup>7</sup> He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Paul reminded Timothy, a leader in the church at Ephesus, of the second saying he described as trustworthy. These were likely cherished beliefs first-century Christians held and frequently voiced in Sunday worship. The sayings also served as theological bench-marks regarding Christian beliefs that mattered most to them. The specific saying here was “If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work.” Throughout the New Testament the words *overseer*, *elder* (Acts 20:17), or *pastor* (Eph. 4:11) refer to a church leader. Today we usually refer to this specific church leader as pastor. Every local church must have leadership as its backbone. A church leader must first and foremost be a person of godly character, which Paul described in our text. While the text talks about the qualities of a Church leader, specially a pastor, these are also qualities that should shine in every Christian and all leadership within the congregation.

**Please read the article “Overseers and Bishops” found in the Heavy Duty Packet of preparation for this Sunday.**

Paul wrote that a pastor does a noble work, meaning honorable or excellent. He also portrayed the local church ministry as a calling one aspires to (meaning sets one’s heart on, longs for) and desires. Rather than running from the calling to church leadership, one should embrace it wholeheartedly.

Church work is work! Whether as pastor, deacon, Board member, or other, ministry within a family of believers doesn’t come easy. We rejoice when successful and moan when we experience failure. Responsibility often feels heavy on our shoulders—sometimes extra heavy. We pray joyfully and sometimes sadly. We can feel lonely in ministry even though believers are within reach. Physical, mental, and emotional weariness can set in and hang around for a while. When ministry succeeds, we rejoice with great gladness that hopefully lasts forever. It doesn’t, or course. You know about all this; I do too. We then agree with Paul—church work is work.

Paul has a long list of qualifications for those aspiring and desiring the leadership role within the congregation. The first requirement is above reproach, meaning a spotless character with such integrity that no one, whether Christian or non-Christian, can successfully charge him as unfit to lead. Paul left no room for moral laxity in the life of a pastor.

Paul will list several moral qualities to describe the leader's “moral character.” First is husband of one wife,

a phrase describing a one-woman husband, a man devoted to the wife he deeply loves and thus is not sexually promiscuous. In the first century, immorality was the norm; Paul demanded Christian leaders reflect the sanctity of the Christian home.

Self-controlled refers to being sober-minded, clear-headed, free from rash actions. Sensible describes a person whose judgment is thoughtful, evenhanded, and thus trustworthy.

Respectable refers to an orderly, disciplined lifestyle that reflects inner steadiness. A chaotic personal lifestyle cannot create and maintain order in the church.

Hospitable is demanded of a Christian leader in God's church. It reflects the attitude and action of keeping an open house to Christian servants, especially in the first century when traveling believers needed a place to eat, rest, and sleep. While this may not be so necessary today in our homes, it is especially important that we are hospitable to visitors here at our worship services. How we make these guests comfortable and at home is very important.

An able teacher is the one quality on Paul's list. God calls and equips pastors to skillfully teach correct doctrine, refute error, and build up the Christian flock in God's Word.

Leaders are not to be given to wine. This is Paul's first negative qualification. The overseer must control his use for alcohol. Frequenting bars and getting drunk is unacceptable behavior. Better to avoid it altogether. Additional negatives are not violent, we would say "a bully" and not quarrelsome. A man who forces believers to do what he wants, who chooses fists over reasonable arguments to get things done, doesn't have the right stuff for church leadership.

Instead of looking for a fight, the leader must be gentle, kind, forbearing, willing to show flexibility to others' points of view. Not greedy is another negative requirement of a church leader. Greediness is bad; generosity is good.

What about the leader's home life? In verse 4, Paul says that the leader is to exercise in his home proper authority with sensitivity and care. Of course, Paul did not mean the leader's home is a perfect model of home life with no problems. But rather that the leader manages his home with dignity, love, truth, and discipline. Little Jason was riding home in the family car following the baptism of his baby brother. Jason was crying in the back seat. His father asked him three times what's wrong. Finally, Jason said, the Pastor said he wanted us to be brought up in a Christian home, but I wanted to stay with you guys.

The final two qualifications are not be a new convert and a good reputation among outsiders. Without spiritual maturity, not necessarily maturity in age, conceit may swell up in a spiritually immature leader's heart. Then the Devil steps in with condemnation, trapping the leader in the grip of trouble, loss, and ruin. Last on the list is that the leader must have a good reputation among outsiders (that is, non-Christians). The leader's good standing and name in the community of unbelievers is important as a witness to them.

In light of Paul's stress on godly leadership in the church, ask yourself, Is this teaching the foundation for successful ministry in my church? Many churches today emphasize worship style, image, slick advertising, or even dress as the means to church success. The emphasis is always godly leadership, and not some perceived cutting-edge ministry style. A leader's godly character is not secondary to one's ability to get things done—it is primary.

## **2. Worthy of Respect - 1 Timothy 3:8-13**

<sup>8</sup> Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>9</sup> They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. <sup>11</sup> In the same way, their

wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.<sup>12</sup> A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.<sup>13</sup> Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul next laid down eight similar qualifications for believers who serve in God's church. The word translated *deacon* means servant. In a general sense, God calls all believers to ministry. Some Christians even have a special spiritual gift for service (Romans 12:7), while others hold elected within the Church

**Please read the article “Deacons in the Early Church” found in the heavy duty preparation packet.**

Paul gives both general and spiritual requirements for the office of leadership within the congregation (v. 8). The first is worthy of respect, meaning dignified, stately, serious. The leader who lives this quality is not joyless, stern, or cold. Not hypocritical defines a servant who does not speak out of both sides of the mouth, not thinking one thing and saying another. Not drinking a lot of wine contrasts a person whose thoughts are continually preoccupied with drinking because of loving wine. Not greedy for money refers to a man who will not use the office to gain financially. Unhealthy attitudes toward money and pursuing questionable money-making schemes are off the table.

Paul continues in verses 9-10. A leader must maintain the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. *Mystery of the faith* is a descriptive way of referring to Christianity—Christ living in His people and their living in Him. Only the person who lives, not just believes this mystery, has the qualification of lead in God's church.

Paul says that leaders must also be tested first before they step into that responsibility of leadership. While Paul did not explain what this testing should be, we can imagine it was both the testing of doctrinal beliefs as well as moral behavior.

Verse 11 is a surprise. Paul gives four qualifications of women who joined their husbands in serving in the church. Paul was not against women serving in the Church. He said that when women do, they are to be worthy of respect, the same requirement of male leaders in the church. They are not to be slanderers, meaning a person who damages another's reputation. The women were to be self-controlled, meaning self-disciplined in behavior. Clearly, Paul viewed women in the church as having important roles to fulfill as servants of Jesus Christ.

### **3. Not Just the Leaders but All Christians - 1 Timothy 3:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, <sup>15</sup> if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Paul expressed hope of returning to Ephesus soon (he likely was at Macedonia) but if he is delayed, Timothy would know what to teach in the Church. This may have been what prompted this letter to Timothy. Whether Paul later made the trip to Ephesus, we do not know.

What was the letter's purpose? Paul stated it clearly to Timothy—so he would know how people ought to act in God's household. The apostle's purpose was singular. He wanted his partner in ministry to understand clearly what was appropriate conduct for believers in Christ. To Paul, the church was not a building where Christians gathered for worship. It was people, God's household, who lived in ways fitting for members of His family.

Paul elaborated more on this household of believers. He identified it as the church of the living God, a pillar and foundation of the truth. Paul did not view the church as a building of stone pillars and marble foundations where worshipful devotion occurred, but the dwelling of the *living* God in the lives of believers.

Furthermore, God's household is the singular place where truth abides. The truth is Jesus. Your supreme mission and mine is to faithfully uphold the truth about Jesus no matter any threatening consequences. That mission is every believer's mandate, not just Christian leaders' responsibility. Without question, our remaining faithful to God's truth in Christ matters above everything!

### **Biblical Truths from This Lesson**

1. Pastors and leaders in God's church should live above reproach.
2. Be open to the possibility God is calling you to be a leader in your church.
3. Affirm church leaders, and hold them and yourself accountable to godly standards.
4. Recognize that how you act says something about who God is and the truth He has given.