

1 Timothy 3:1-16

"What God's Leaders Look Like"

Ch 3 of 1st Timothy gets to the heart of what God's leaders look like. What you discover as you narrow the scope is that the single most critical factor found in the Christian leader's life is *character*... Being a good business man doesn't make a good Christian leader, being charismatic doesn't indicate that one is a good Christian leader, being popular, powerful, or wealthy as it pertains to this world doesn't qualify anyone to be a leader in the body of Christ. It's all about proven character. How a man acts, or reacts in a given situation. In short, the nature of Christ needs to be on display in his life.

It's not even about spiritual gifts, as we survey this particular portion of scripture whereby Paul gives the qualifications for Christian leadership he doesn't highlight a need to prophesy, or speak in tongues, or work miracles. God can give the gifts of the Spirit to whomever He chooses at the drop of a hat. God is way more interested in the evidence of proven character than the elevation of spiritual gifts.

In 2nd Chronicles we read it like this, *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."*¹ God wants to do great things, but He's looking for those whose heart is *loyal* to Him, truly *committed* to Him, not just in word, but in life. There are lots of *mouths* that are loyal to God, but not many hearts.

In the book of Ezekiel God said, *"So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one."*² What you discover there is that the reason God couldn't find anyone to stand in the gap on behalf of the land is that Israel's leaders were wicked. They weren't right in the sight of God.

Be it a family, be it a nation, be it the church, they all rise & fall w/their leadership. Thursday evening at our men's group we were thinking through 1 Samuel Ch 2. There they were, Hophni & Phinehas, doing priestly service, serving as leaders at the tabernacle & they didn't even know the Lord! The results were catastrophic! (Can you imagine establishing leaders in the body of Christ who don't even know the Lord! It happens all the time... the results are catastrophic)

Paul was facing a similar problem here in Ephesus, & so he dispatched Timothy to deal w/it. The last time that Paul saw the Ephesian elders he said, *"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."*³

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (2 Ch 16:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Eze 22:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Ac 20:29-30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He's saying that some of the leadership in the Ephesian fellowship will stray from the truth & do damage to the body of Christ. So now Timothy is there dealing w/it. So Paul reaffirms to him what he's to be looking for when it comes to seeing the hand of God on a man's life, raising him up into a position of leadership.

Now, I want to say this. Although the *interpretation* of this text belongs to Christian leaders, the *application* of this text belongs to Christians, period. I would challenge you to find one quality or characteristic in these lists that are irrelevant *any* believer's life...however they should be *emphatic* in the leader's life.

Vs 1

Ok, Paul has just established the fact that men are to be overseers in the body of Christ. However it takes more than simply being a man to qualify. No one is qualified to be a spiritual leader in the body of Christ on the basis of gender alone. There are qualities, characteristics that need to be in place... 16 of them to be precise (as it pertains to this particular list).

Having said that, it's a noble desire to want to be an overseer in the body. Paul begins w/both commendation & clarification. He says, "Hey, it's valid, it's noble to aspire to church leadership." We spoke last time of the fact that often times men are lazy & lethargic when it comes to assuming their God given role/responsibilities in the body of Christ. Paul says, "When you have a man who has it in his heart to rise up & lead, it's a good thing! That's a noble aspiration."

Now the word here "bishop", is literally "overseer", as you study the NT you will discover that the terms like "elders", "bishops", "overseers", "rulers", "pastors", though they can take on different contextual connotations, for the most part they're interchangeable terms that speak of the same basic thing. If you wanted to break it down a little bit you might understand it something to the effect of "elder" is who he is (in terms of maturity) "overseer" is what he does (in terms of his service in the body of Christ [he watches over God's people]).

So Paul begins w/commendation, "It's a noble desire to place leadership in the body of Christ as your goal." However here comes the clarification... it's not a good "position" or a good "pay scale" or a good "retirement plan" that you seek. It's a good "work". Ministry is work. It's a "good" work. But it's *work*. It's not about titles, it's not about honor & glory; it's about work. Perhaps you remember when the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God, who would be in that place of *exaltation* among them...

Again Jesus brought clarification. He said, *"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."*⁴ If you want to lead, recognize that strange hours, base tasks & hard work will be involved.

Ok. As Paul prepares to launch into the list of prerequisites he's preparing us to understand that a good, noble & honorable work, demands a good, noble & honorable man. Notice.

Vs 2-7

It seems to me that many of these things go w/out the need for extensive explanation so rather than focus on each one for any lengthy amount of time we'll highlight a few of them along the way.

The very 1st prerequisite emphatically eliminates us all ☺. An overseer then "must be blameless." Well, that pretty much disqualifies everyone I've ever met ☺! Having said that we're glad the word is "blameless", not "faultless" or "sinless".

Something else we want to point out is that none of us will have all of these things completely mastered in our lives. **There are strengths & weaknesses in every man & Christ is the only Man who had character w/out flaw, w/out blemish, He *alone* is the spotless Lamb of God. As for the rest of us, the question is, are these things evident in us & do we long for these things w/our whole heart? Do you aspire to have these things a present reality in your life?**

What does it mean to be "blameless"? In short it means that your moral conduct is not in question. You don't furnish grounds for accusations. That doesn't mean that people won't accuse you, it means it bettered not be true... The idea here is that even if you're blamed, there's no way it could stand up against impartial examination. **You seek to live your life above reproach. In 1st Peter he spoke of having a good conscience & good conduct, so that even should someone defame you as an evildoer that in the end they would be ashamed. Don't give them anything to grab on to so as to accuse you of something inappropriate or ungodly... you get the idea.**

"The husband of one wife." Or "a one woman sort of man". In Paul's day in the Greek culture they encouraged a mistress for entertainment, a concubine for sexual fulfillment & a wife to bear your children. **Paul says, "The church doesn't operate like that." Going back even as Jesus did to the beginning, God created one man & one woman. That's God's design. So no polygamy & no promiscuity in the church.**

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mk 9:35]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

One man, one wife. It's not saying that you can't lead if your spouse has died, or your marriage has dissolved on biblical grounds. If that were the case Paul would've just said that. But he didn't, he said, "One woman, one man."

Now some have said that you have to be married because you're to be the husband of one wife. That's not what he's saying either. Paul himself wasn't at this time married & Jesus wasn't married so... married or not isn't the issue. The issue is that if you *are* married, you're to be a one-woman kind of man.

Btw this is another reason why we see that men are to be the Sr Pastor of the church. It's hard to be the husband of one woman if you're not a man... Yet that's a requirement of being an overseer (you need to be man if you're to be a husband). Perhaps I'm overstating the obvious but you get the idea.

"Temperate," not given to extremes, crazy mood swings, never knowing who's gonna show up, Jekyll or Hyde. "Sober-minded," thinking clearly & w/clarity, "of good behavior (dignified), hospitable, able to teach." As far as "able to teach goes", it's not necessarily saying that you must be able to teach in an expositional format like what we're doing today. But that you know the word, you're skilled in the word & can articulate the word, be it one on one or in a group setting. You can teach sound doctrine & refute unsound doctrine.

Vs 2 list the things that *are* to be happening in the leaders life, Vs 3 the things that are *not* supposed to be happening.

"Not given to wine." Meaning, not addicted to wine, given over to alcohol. Ok, does the bible demand abstinence from alcohol? No, does it discourage the use of alcohol, yes. You guys, context of the scriptures & motive of the heart are everything. In Paul's day the water wasn't filtered, it wasn't good for you, they would often add a little alcohol for purification purposes. So the use of wine in Paul's day Vs supporting the alcohol industry of *our* day are world's apart.

In our day alcohol is primarily for social purposes or outright drunkenness, our culture identifies alcohol in a totally different light than did Paul's. We would do well to pay close attention to Rom 14:21, *"It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak."*⁵ Write it down & look it up later 1 Cor 10:31-32.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). (Ro 14:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Remember the 1st prerequisite? “Blameless”, don’t give people a reason to accuse you, be wise. Alcohol not only looks questionable in the believer’s hand, it clouds your judgment, blurs your senses, makes you emotionally unstable.

Perhaps you remember, it’s found in Leviticus Ch’s 9-10. It’s inauguration day, the priestly ministry is beginning, Aaron presents a burnt offering for himself, a burnt offering for the people; he lifts his hands & blesses the people. He & Moses make their way *into* the tabernacle, as they come out & bless the people the glory of God appears *to* the people & fire comes out from before the Lord in front of the people & consumes the sacrifice. When the people saw that, the bible says that they all shouted & fell on their faces...

It was at that point that Nadab & Abihu (Aaron’s sons) each took a censer, put fire *in* it & incense *on* it & offered profane fire before the Lord that God had not commanded. So fire went out from the Lord & devoured them & they died on the spot before the Lord...

& We read that the Lord spoke to Aaron & said this, “Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.”⁶ The implication being that his sons had been drinking & therefore weren’t discerning. Here’s the point: when you lead the people of God you need all your wits about you, you need to be thinking clearly, discerning accurately & distinguishing between right & wrong, clean & unclean. We’re to be sober-minded. Again, not just the leaders, that’s applicable to us all.

“Not violent, not greedy for money, gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous.” Hey, if you think they may have a temper that’s prone to physical confrontation, they’re not fit for leadership, if they’re greedy, looking to fight/debate all the time, never satisfied w/God’s provision for their life. They don’t have the character that God requires for leadership.

“one who rules his own house well.” Leadership begins in the home, it’s true that children rebel from right on homes. Is that because of the parents or in spite of the parents? Again will there be stress or strife or struggles in the home of the godly leader? Yes, from time to time. How is it handled? Are we working through it or just not caring about it? All of these things come into consideration.

⁶ The New King James Version. (1982). (Le 10:9-11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Next Paul says, “Not a novice” meaning not a new believer. A new believer needs time to establish roots, gain perspective, some experience & wisdom. You’re looking for someone who has little bit of mileage on them, who’s been down the road a ways. If not Paul says, “Pride is waiting for them & will be the downfall of them.” What was the downfall of Satan? Pride (Isaiah 14:12-14 [write it down, look it up l8r]).

Finally he needs a good reputation outside the church as well. Not someone who puts on his church game on Sunday, but is someone else on Monday. Or someone who never pays his bills, or shows up to work, or whatever. There needs to be a godly consistency about him across the board.

Vs 8-10

So we see the office of the elder & the deacon. The word “Deacon” simply means “servant”. It’s that which Jesus said when He said to His disciples, *“For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”*⁷

As we read the list of qualifications you’ll see that it’s basically the same as for the elder w/the exception of the need to be able to teach. Really, as we survey the scriptures we get the picture of the elders/overseers watching over the local church, teaching the word of God while the deacons work alongside them tending to practical matters so that the elders can exercise their ministry effectively.

It’s found in Acts Ch 6 where a problem arose in the early church as to how the widows were being taken care of & so the apostles said, “Hey, we need to stick to praying & teaching God’s word so find men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit & wisdom & we’ll appoint them over these practical ministries so we can continue to excel in the word of God & prayer.”

So the elder/deacon relationship has nothing to do w/status, one office more prestigious than the other, it has to do w/calling & how God desires to use your life.

Deacons need to be respectful (both toward God & man), not 2 faced (double-tongued) saying 2 different things to 2 different people (deceptive).

Same basic standards (as the overseer) regarding wine & money; adhering to proper doctrine from a sincere/genuine conviction (that is, w/a pure conscience).

Again not a novice, “let them 1st be tested” let them get a little of life’s experience under their belt, ups & downs, a few disappointments, see how they handle themselves. “Then” let them serve as deacons (again being found *blameless*).

⁷ The New King James Version. (1982). [Lk 22:27]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 11

Now there's a little discrepancy here because the Greek allows it to reference the deacon's wife, or possibly just women (meaning women who would serve as a deaconess i.e. Phoebe, Rom 16:1). Being tucked in this section dealing w/deacons it seems to lean toward the deacon's wife, but I'm not dogmatic on the point.

Any woman of God should be respectful, not a gossip, not given to radical mood swings (temperate, again Jekyll/Hyde); & faithful in all things.

That's what I mean... yes Paul is highlighting leadership qualities, but these things should be on display on any & all believer's lives.

Vs 12-13

The world may look on the protocol of the deacon as menial tasks, God sees it as faithful service. It won't surprise me a bit to see the deacons in heaven w/greater rewards than many of the pastors/elders. It's that "servant of all" frame of heart & mind Jesus taught & modeled so prevalently.

The deacon who serves well obtains a good standing in the body of Christ; primarily because their service is such a blessing to people; 2^{ndly} they receive that assurance, that confidence/boldness; his ministry will build confidence in the sincerity of his own faith toward Christ.

Vs 14-15

"the church of the living God, the pillar & ground of the truth." What is the function of a pillar, or a foundation? It's to hold something up, right? What is it that the church is to hold up for all to see? The truth, the truth of God's word, the Word of life, the truth of J.C. the only begotten Son of God crucified for the sins of the world.

The truth of God's Word, the reality of J.C. is upheld both in principle, & in the practical display of our ongoing everyday life. You, the church are to let your light so shine that men might see your good works & glorify God who is in heaven, you're to (I'm to), we're to preserve, preach & practice the truth of God's word.

Vs 16

I'm not sure of another area of scripture that declares more clearly the deity of J.C. Several do, this one is about as plain as it gets. W/out controversy great is the mystery of godliness, god-like-ness. God is love, God is light, God is holy, God is righteous, God is pure, how am I to be like God? It's a mystery, yet the mystery of godliness is solved in J.C. The bible says that Jesus is the brightness of God's glory, the *express image* of His Person.

It says that, "...in Him (in Christ) *dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*"⁸

In the beginning was the word, the word was w/God & the Word was God... & the Word was made flesh & dwelt among us & we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace & truth... & of His fullness we have all received, & grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses but grace & truth came through J.C.

God was manifested in the flesh. Justified in the Spirit, not in the sense of a sinner made righteous, but in the sense that the Spirit ratified the fact that He was all that He said He was, namely at the resurrection. The resurrection is the proof positive that Jesus is the sinless Son of God crucified for the sin of the world & that through faith in Him we will not perish but have everlasting life.

"Seen by angels". The bible tells us that God dwells in unapproachable light. & Though we could say that angels seen Jesus & ministered to Jesus more than once throughout His earthly ministry it's possible that it wasn't until the incarnation that they beheld God w/their eyes. Now (Heb 1) all the angels of God worship Him.

Preached among the Gentiles, (faith comes by hearing, & hearing by the Word fo God, we preach J.C. & Him crucified) believed on in the world, received up in glory... It's the mission & the message of the gospel. God manifested in the flesh in the Person of J.C. laying down His life, shedding His blood upon the cross. Raised from the dead, the good news going out into the world & Jesus ascending into heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father.

We shouldn't think it coincidence that this section on godly leadership closes w/all eyes on Jesus. It's how we're made the men & women that God has called us to be, by focusing on & drawing near to Jesus... Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

Lord teach our hearts to draw near to You. Lord, to the extent that You use us, whatever You want to make of us is up to You, we just want to be near to You. Usable by You, bringing *glory* to You. We want to be those men/women who will make a wall & stand in the gap on behalf of others, whose hearts are loyal to You. Have Your way in this place.

God was manifested in the flesh, but He wasn't honored among men, He was despised & rejected by men. He was delivered up to the cross for our offenses, & He was raised from the dead for our justification. Jesus said that God has so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son, so that if you will just believe upon Him, you will never perish, but have everlasting life. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Col 2:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.