

Unit Theme: Timothy, Titus, Philemon

June 23, 2024 (Lesson 4)

TEACHING ON CHURCH LEADERSHIP

- 1. Qualifications for Pastors** (1 Timothy 3:1-7)
- 2. Admonitions for Pastoral Leaders** (1 Timothy 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9)
- 3. Exhortations for Deacons** (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

Central Truth: Qualified Christian leaders ensure proper care for God’s household.

Focus: Reveal and uphold the standards for ministerial offices.

Evangelism Emphasis: Godly leadership promotes the Church’s Gospel mission.

Golden Text: “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1).

Five times in his pastoral epistles, the Apostle Paul used the term *pistos ho logos*, translated in our Golden Text as “This is a true saying.” Various English translations render the phrase in different ways in its various appearances (1 Tim. 1:15; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). Paul always used this phrase to emphasize a trustworthy truth, a message not to be contradicted. Paul used it here to introduce his discussion of the Biblical qualifications for local church leaders—qualities not to be debated or modified. This is revealed truth, henceforth all ministry leadership was to be measured thereby.

The message here is someone is not necessarily being presumptuous if they desire a position in church leadership. To desire to be a bishop must not automatically be viewed as selfish ambition or carnal self-promotion. Rather, Paul says, if some have such an inclination, they desire a “good work.” He emphasizes church leadership entails much more than just holding a position of authority; it means carrying out many important duties and responsibilities. He then proceeds to outline the necessary leadership expectations for church leaders.

1. QUALIFICATIONS FOR PASTORS

A. At Home and at Church (1 Timothy 3:1-5)

1 This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Paul used the Greek word *episkopos*, which means “over” (*epi*) “watcher” (*skopos*), translated “bishop” here. This person is an “over-watcher” or an “overseer” of the congregation. This is identical to the word used by Paul in Acts 20:28, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Paul was referencing those who have the pastoral oversight of a congregation.

As surely as the Ten Commandments were not “ten suggestions,” the standards given here by Paul are not merely recommended guidelines; these are inviolable requirements. The pastoral leader must possess an impeccable reputation at home, in the church, and in the community. The word “blameless” (v. 2) refers to righteous temperament and a lifestyle above reproach. According to *Enduring Word Commentary*, to be *blameless* means the pastoral leader must have nothing in his life that others can use against him and the church. As we proceed through the text, Paul expands on all that is encompassed in being blameless. Simply stated, when it comes to ministry leadership, “a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold” (Prov. 22:1).

The ethical and moral standards of a pastoral leader must always be above reproach, and there must never be the slightest hint of marital unfaithfulness. Some scholars use 1 Timothy 3:2

to contend a divorced and remarried person cannot be a pastor, while others suggest it harkens back to the ancient practice of men having multiple wives. Still others use this verse to say a single person or a woman may not be a pastor because they are not the “husband of one wife.” We are not to assume this passage prescribes a minister cannot remarry after the death of a spouse, or even when one has been Biblically divorced. Likewise, it does not require that a person be married to be a pastor. The word rendered “husband” (*andra*) here is also translated “man” in no less than fifteen passages in the New Testament, and the word “wife” (*gynaikos*) is translated as “woman” in eleven of the twenty-two times it is found in the Bible. Perhaps a more literal understanding of Paul’s instruction to Timothy is that the married pastor is to always be “a one-woman man.”

Socially and behaviorally, the pastor is required to be exemplary. Being “sober-minded” (v. 2 NKJV) does not mean a pastor cannot have a healthy sense of humor; rather, it suggests knowing when to be serious and thoughtful. A certain level of dignity is required of the pastorate, described as “good behavior.” The godly pastor is not given to extremes, will not demean the ministry by addictive or questionable behaviors, and will not be quarrelsome or violent. The phrase “apt to teach” may suggest the pastor provides instruction through godly conduct as well as through formal teaching. Later in this epistle (5:18), Paul says a minister is to be appropriately compensated for their services, but financial gain must never be a pastor’s primary motivation (3:3).

It has been said the reason preachers’ kids are sometimes rowdy is because they play with the members’ kids (and vice-versa). Paul instructs Timothy the pastor is to be the leader in the home as well as in the church (vv. 4-5). Elsewhere, Paul describes God’s divine order for the home with the husband as the head, followed by mutual submission between husband and wife, and the

children in subjection to their parents (see Eph. 5 and 6). If the pastor is to expect order in the church, he must first be the leader of divine order in the home. In short, pastors must not neglect their family while overseeing the work of the church. Both the pastor and the members of the congregation must realize the pastor's first priority is ministry at home.

§ *List several characteristics that should (v. 2) and should not (v. 3) mark church leaders.*

B. In the Community (1 Timothy 3:6-7)

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Almost in the same breath where Paul says the pastor must have a good reputation outside the church, he says the pastor must be a seasoned believer and “not a novice” (v. 6). He alludes to this again in 5:22 when he warns against ordaining ministers prematurely. This requirement refers to one's newness to the faith and their level of spiritual development rather than to chronological age. Timothy was a young man (at least much younger than Paul), but he was already in a pastoral role under the tutelage of Paul.

Untold harm can be done to churches when individuals are installed into pastoral positions before they have developed in their knowledge of Scripture, and in the disciplines outlined by Paul. Too many times, talented and enthusiastic young ministers have been set forth before being given adequate time to develop strong theological roots and godly character. In some such cases, their giftedness can take them further than their character and spiritual depth can sustain them, which is unfair to either them or the congregation. They might become “puffed up with pride” and “fall into the same condemnation as the devil” (3:6 NKJV), thus bringing reproach on themselves and the church.

Those who would succeed in ministry are expected to demonstrate Christian character outside the church as well as among other believers (v. 7). It matters not how eloquently one may preach or teach; if their public conduct in the community is suspect, Paul says they may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. The godly minister will always guard their conduct, giving careful attention to where they go and to the social activities in which they are engaged, and to how they interact with others. Impropriety in how one deals with the opposite sex (or same sex), as well as how timely one pays their bills and takes care of personal finances, will have a profound effect on both the minister and the church.

An Awesome Responsibility

As the famous author Mark Twain was growing up, he knew church elders and deacons who owned slaves and abused them. He heard men using foul language and saw them practice dishonesty during the week after speaking piously in church on Sunday. He listened to ministers use the Bible to justify slavery. Although he saw genuine love for the Lord Jesus in some people, including his mother and his wife, he was so disturbed by the bad teaching and poor example of church leaders that he became bitter toward the church.

Indeed, it is a privilege to be a pastor or an elder, a deacon, a Sunday school teacher, or a Bible club leader. But it is also an awesome responsibility. Let's make sure we attract people to the Savior rather than turn them away.—Source Unknown

2. ADMONITIONS FOR PASTORAL LEADERS

A. Worthy of Double Honor (1 Timothy 5:17-20)

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. 19 Against an

elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. 20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

Having warned ministers to not be greedy, Paul now teaches godly ministers should be appropriately compensated for their services. Some ministers are reluctant to accept remuneration and, sadly, some churches have a reputation for being stingy with their pastoral compensation. Verse 17 says “good leaders . . . especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching” (CSB) should be compensated well. The word “honor” (*timēs*) means “price,” so ministers who “labor in the word and doctrine” are worthy of double price, or “double pay.” Paul likens inadequate pastoral compensation to withholding food from a beast of burden that is working hard in a farmer’s field (v. 18).

Preachers who are truly called of God do not preach for money. A godly minister will always preach the Word without charge; however, to the best extent possible, the church should properly compensate its pastor so they do not have to be entangled with secular employment. This leaves the minister available for church administration, for pastoral care and visitation, and most importantly, for prayer and study of the Word.

Verse 19 says extreme caution must be exercised in the church regarding any accusations against its spiritual leaders. Unless a claim can be verified by two or three credible witnesses, such charges are not to even be entertained. Many good reputations have been destroyed by unfounded rumors. Furthermore, the ninth commandment says, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor” (Ex. 20:16), placing this sin on the same level as murder, adultery, idolatry, and theft. Not only must there be two or three witnesses with any accusation, the credibility of the witnesses must also be considered. The Old Testament tells the story of an

innocent man, Naboth (1 Kings 21:7-14), who was executed because of false witnesses. “An honest witness does not deceive, but a false witness pours out lies” (Prov. 14:5 NIV).

While unsubstantiated accusations against spiritual leaders are to be rejected, an elder could be guilty of wrongdoing and may require correction (“them that sin,” 1 Tim. 5:20). This is not to suggest leaders must be perfect, nor does it insist they should be brought up on charges for every mistake in judgment. Leaders, just as others, must always remain open to correction and instruction by the appropriate authorities. Of necessity, leaders are held to the highest possible standard (see James 3:1), and great harm is done to the church when spiritual leaders fall into sinful practices. Where there is credible evidence that a leader has done so, the leader must be disciplined according to the seriousness of the offense. Such discipline might deter others from falling into sin (“the rest will be warned,” Amp.).

A Prayer for My Pastor

“Our Father, let me be a pillar of strength to help hold him [my pastor] up and not a thorn in his back to pull him down. Let me support him without striving to possess him. Let me be unselfish in what I do for him and not selfish in demanding that he do more for me. Let me strive to serve him and the church much and be happy as he serves me less and the church and others more.”—Senator Robert Kerr

B. Steward of God (Titus 1:5-9)

5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: 6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober,

just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Paul's instructions to Titus practically mirror his words to Timothy, except for the unique use of the term "steward of God" (v. 7). A steward (*oikonomon*) is a manager, showing the pastor does not only preach and teach but also must give careful oversight to all that pertains to the work of God through the church.

This statement is reminiscent of the parable told by Jesus in Luke 16:1-8. In the story, a rich man called his steward to give a report on how he had managed his business. The steward was coming up short in some of his accounts, so the rich man asked him, "What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer" (v. 2 NIV). Paul assigned such a stewardship of the church to the pastoral leader, who is responsible to steward the ministries, the finances, and the people of the church. As he wrote those words to Titus, he was echoing what he had said to the Corinthian church: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

§ *Why did Paul leave Titus on the island of Crete?*

3. EXHORTATIONS FOR DEACONS

A. Clear Conscience (1 Timothy 3:8-10)

8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

The position of the deacon was initiated in the early church to provide adequate care for widows. Faced with their priority of preaching and teaching the Word, the apostles chose "seven

men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:3) to administer the benevolence ministries of the church in Jerusalem.

Today, whether a congregation calls them deacons, elders, the church board, or the church and pastor’s council, there is to be no competition between these individuals and the pastoral leaders. The same word translated “serve” (v. 2) concerning deacons is used also to denote the “ministry” of the apostles (v. 4). The deacons did not constitute a board of directors over the church and pastors, nor were they merely “yes men” for the pastoral leaders. Pastors and deacons were to be ministry partners in carrying out the work of the church. It is a mistake to see either the office of pastor or deacon as being any more or less important or prestigious than the other. Neither are about position or status; both are about calling and responsibility.

The moral and ethical qualifications for deacons are practically identical to those for pastors. While not necessarily licensed, commissioned, or ordained in the same sense as pastors, the standards are nevertheless just as high. They are to have “a pure conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9), which is possible because of their adherence to the ethical prescription given in verse 8. As with the pastor, those who serve in this office must be of impeccable character and dedication. The word translated *grave* means “reverent,” or “dignified.” These are to be Spirit-filled individuals who conduct themselves appropriately in public and in private.

Deacons must work with both the pastoral leadership and the people, and must therefore be trustworthy and truthful. Not “doubletongued” (v. 8), they must not speak one thing to the people and another to the leadership. Deacons must have deep personal conviction. They must not say one thing while meaning something else, and they must not be prone to change their position based on whatever is expedient or convenient.

Some contend from this passage that while pastors must be teetotalers when it comes to strong drink, deacons may drink so long as they are “not given to much wine” (v. 8). Such is clearly not the intent of the passage. In that era, wine was sometimes used for medicinal purposes. Because of an obvious illness, Paul instructed Timothy to “use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities” (1 Tim. 5:23 NKJV). This is a far cry from approval of social drinking! In 3:8, the language used (“much wine”) is called *hyperbole*—exaggeration to make a point, not to be taken literally—a style used by other Biblical writers elsewhere. For example, Ecclesiastes 7:17 exhorts, “Do not be overly wicked” (NKJV). Are we then to conclude wickedness is acceptable in moderation? Peter warned believers not to engage with those who are involved in “excess of riot” (1 Peter 4:4). So, is riotous living acceptable if we don’t riot excessively? Hardly. In modern terms, if a guest in one’s home has a cough, it would be appropriate to give them a dose of the host’s cough medicine, but not appropriate to help everybody in the room feel better with a glass of wine! This commitment to abstinence enables the deacon to maintain “a pure conscience” before God and the church (1 Tim. 3:9).

Our Conscience

The conscience is fluid. It’s not fixed. Almost all people adjust their consciences between childhood and adulthood, and the adjustment is almost always downward. That is, we learn how to turn the volume of our conscience down so that our ethics align with how we want to live and not how God tells us we should live.—R. C. Sproul

B. Excellent Standing and Great Assurance (1 Timothy 3:11-13)

11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13

For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

There is considerable debate as to whether verse 11 refers to the wives of male deacons or to women who would aspire to hold the office of deacon. That this verse references female deacons might be plausible, since Paul made no similar direct reference to pastors' wives in summarizing pastoral requirements earlier in this chapter. Why would he instruct the wives of deacons but not wives of pastors? The word translated "wives" is the same as in verse 2 (*gynaikos*), which is rendered "woman" in the KJV as often as it is translated "wife." In Romans 16:1, Paul identified a woman named "Phoebe" as a *diakonon* (deacon). Although the translators rendered that word as "a servant of the church" (Rom. 16:1), Paul originally used the noun form of the same word Luke used for the role of the seven deacons in Acts 6:2. Either way, these godly women are to be "worthy of respect, not malicious gossips, but self-controlled, [thoroughly] trustworthy in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11 Amp.).

Paul concluded, although the pastorate may be more important to some, those who become deacons have attained "a good degree" (v. 13). The NASB says they "obtain for themselves a high standing" in the church.

Where a church has adequate qualified persons, the pastor should not be expected to clean the church, mow the grass, fill the baptistery, or change the sign. While pastors have oversight of the financial business of the church, collecting and counting funds and keeping records should be handled by the "servants of the church," not by the pastor. The deacons (church and pastor's council), in cooperation with the pastor, encourage spiritual growth in the congregation, approve the disbursement of church funds, and maintain proper physical facilities for the congregation

and the pastor. As servants of the church, deacons free up the hands of the pastor, whose primary role is the spiritual oversight of the church.

§ *Describe the “boldness” (v. 13), or “confidence” (NASB), deacons must have, and why.*

THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

Many scholars believe Timothy’s position at Ephesus was a temporary one. Paul was hoping to return soon but was also leaving room for the possibility of a delay (1 Tim. 3:14-15). Paul had placed Timothy there to care for the church while the apostle took the Gospel to Europe via Macedonia, which borders modern-day Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia. Paul gave instructions for maintaining proper order in the church for which he had such high regard.

Paul saw the church as it should always be seen by all pastors and deacons—not as the church of Paul, or of Timothy, but as “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (v. 15 NKJV).

Daily Devotions

- M. Good Character Required for Leaders (Exodus 18:13-24)
- T. Remove Barriers From the Past (Judges 6:24-32)
- W. God Vindicates Falsely Accused Leaders (Amos 5:10-17)
- T. The Lord Selects His Laborers (Matthew 9:35—10:4)
- F. Recognize and Support Emerging Leaders (Galatians 2:1-10)
- S. Follow and Imitate Faithful Leaders (Hebrews 13:1-8)