

1 Timothy 3

Read verse 1

1. Paul says, “If a man aspires to become an overseer (NIV, NASB) or bishop (NKJV) or church leader (NLT) it is a noble task or a good work or an honorable position. Part of the problem with this verse is the Greek word used by Paul is “*episkopē*” which as you see can be translated as “overseer” or “bishop”. Today many translate it as “pastor”. It is one who leads the church. For our church, it works well to say the word translates as “pastor”, who is our spiritual leader.
2. Paul says in this verse that it is a noble task or a good work but it is a hard work. Holman New Testament Commentary says, “Scripture has listed the duties for this position in a number of places: to lead (Acts 20:28); equip (Eph. 4:12); rule (1 Tim. 3:4–5); teach (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:15); shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1–4); and to set an example for others (1 Pet. 5:3). With these serious responsibilities, it is no wonder the qualifications were high.”
3. Pastor Larry’s grandfather, a Baptist pastor said, “If you are called to be a pastor then don’t do anything else but if you are not called, then do anything but become a pastor!” It is a calling. Paul uses the word “aspire” (NIV) but I believe it is more.
4. Pastors are held to a higher standard than anyone else in the church, blameless. James 3:1 says, “*Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*” This applies to pastors too. Together with verse 1, it is good to want to be a pastor but make sure that you know that God will hold you accountable for leading your flock in the wrong direction.
5. Last week when Paul covered prayer, he said to pray for your leaders. Do you pray for your pastor? He has a God given responsibility for his flock. He has to make sure that he does not lead them through the wide gate that leads to destruction.

Read verse 2

6. In verses 2 through 7, Paul gives us the qualities of a pastor. Some people think that the pastor should behave like Jesus himself. We must always remember that our pastor is a special person but should not be put upon a pedestal. The pastor is still a human and just like us he can make mistakes too.
7. In verse 2, Paul says the qualities of a pastor include being “*above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.*” The term “*above reproach*” does not mean perfect but his background or his habits cannot cause concern in the church.
8. He must have one wife. This was written at a time when men, especially Gentile men, took more than one wife and there is nothing biblical about multiple wives. It was also written at a time when a man could divorce his wife on a whim. Some people believe that divorced men could not be a pastor but I don’t believe that this is what Paul is saying. Consider a man who is married to a woman who is not a believer or does not want the life as a pastor’s wife. Paul would say that these couples should not stay together but it should not make it impossible for him to answer the call of God as a pastor. I believe that Paul is saying that a pastor should be devoted to his wife.
9. The next qualities are based on behavioral aspects of the pastor. The NASB says that a pastor should be “*temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable*”. Oxford Languages defines “temperate” as “moderation or self-control”. Holman’s commentary says the word “temperate” “comes from a word meaning “sober,” or “calm in judgment.” It carries the idea of objective thinking and clear perspective.”
10. So far none of these qualities would keep you from being hired in the secular world and they would be difficult to determine in a couple of interviews. The pastor and his wife are a team and in most cases they are interviewed together. The NLT says, “*He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation.*”

11. A pastor should be hospitable which the NLT says, “*He must enjoy having guests in his home*” and Holman says, “open to strangers”. From this quality you get a sense that a pastor should be welcoming or a people person.
12. The final quality of a pastor in verse 2 is “*he must be able to teach.*” This is what I consider Paul’s greatest gift. Sometimes he may have been a little weak in interpersonal skills but then Paul did not desire or aspire to become an overseer. He would get the church started and then move on. He would insert Timothy or Titus in to pastor the church. The Apostle John was the pastor of the church at Ephesus for a while.

Read verses 3 - 7

13. In verses 3 through 7 the list of pastoral qualities continues. Below is a list of these qualities from the NASB. I could go into detail about each of these qualities but I view them as self-explanatory.
 - a. *Not addicted to wine or pugnacious* (The NLT says, *heavy drinker or be violent*).
 - b. *but gentle, peaceable*
 - c. *free from the love of money*.
 - d. He must be *one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity*. Verse 5 says that if a man cannot manage his own household then how can he be expected to manage God’s household.
 - e. *not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil*.
 - f. *And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*

Read verses 8 – 10 and 12 – 13

14. In these verses, Paul gives the qualities of a deacon. Holman defines a deacon as “those who serve people in the name of Christ and the church. He did this so the church would know how to select for this office men and women who serve well and please God.” The deacons in our church fit in as spiritual leaders like an elder or overseer but also serve as deacons or servants of the

church. They fit somewhere between an overseer and a deacon as defined by Paul.

15. The word “deacon” translates as a servant. In the Bible, deacons were originally selected to ensure that widows had food and take care of the practical part of ministry so that other disciples could focus on teaching and spreading the Gospel message. Acts 6:1-6 describes the first time that deacons were chosen to serve.
16. A deacon should possess many of the same qualities seen in an overseer or pastor. Paul may have said it slightly different but many qualities are the same.
 - a. *Men of dignity* – NLT says “*well respected*”.
 - b. *Not double-tongued* – NLT says “*has integrity*” or Gusik says “A man who speaks the truth the first time, with no intent to deceive.”
 - c. *Not addicted to much wine* – Just like an overseer, not a drunkard.
 - d. *Not fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience*. NLT says, “*dishonest with money. They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience.*”
 - e. *Husbands of only one wife* – Just like an overseer
 - f. *Good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.* – Just like an overseer
17. Verse 10 says that a deacon should be tested. Holman says, “This is not a formal, written exam but the test of public scrutiny. A life which withstands observation is the best credential for a ministry of service. If no charge can stand, then the person is free to serve.” The way he lives his life is to be looked at. In our church, no one can serve on a board in the church without attending for at least one year. This is the test. We must get to know him.
18. Many of the qualifications for becoming a deacon are the same as becoming a pastor or overseer. Today, the biggest difference would be the educational

background. Although it may not be necessary, pastors go through seminary. A deacon is selected from the congregation while a pastor is called from outside the church. Although Paul doesn't say it but much prayer is necessary before calling either a deacon or a pastor. Filling either position should not be taken lightly.

Read verse 11

19. In the middle of Paul's discussion of deacon qualifications, Paul adds a verse to discuss women. The NLT actually says "wives" but most theologians believe that Paul is speaking specifically about the wives of deacons and some believe that Paul is speaking about "deaconesses". The Greek word used is "gynē" which can mean woman or wife.

"The big debate swirling around this verse is whether these qualifications were intended for the wives of deacons or for women who served in the church in some official capacity. We cannot argue too conclusively for either position." Holman New Testament Commentary

20. In Romans 16, Paul mentions a woman named Phoebe who the NIV calls a deacon and most other translations call her a woman who is a servant. The NIV says, "*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae.*" The NASB says, "*I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchreae*". There have been women deacons in our church in the past.

Read verses 14 – 16

21. In these verses, Paul gives the reason for his instructions. The first reason is in case Paul is delayed at reaching Ephesus. "This verse makes it clear that Timothy's position was a temporary one; he was acting as St. Paul's representative at Ephesus." (White)
22. The second reason is so that Timothy knows how to conduct himself as a leader in the church at Ephesus. Paul refers to the church at Ephesus as the "*household of God*" and "*church of the living God*." Guzik says that it is God's church because:

- He is the Architect.
- He is the Builder.
- He lives there.
- He provides for it.
- He is honored there, and He rules there.

23. Pastor Mickey was once asked, “So, is this your church?” He replied, “It is God’s church and he lets me preach here.” We should always come here and expect to see God.

24. Guzik calls verse 16 “an early hymn to express the foundation of Christian truth.” The NIV says, “*Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great*”. To true believers, the Gospel message is “Beyond all question”. There are times that Satan attacks and makes you doubt your salvation but most of the time you doubt whether or not you are good enough. The true Gospel says that “*Everyone who calls on the name of the lord will be saved.*” (Romans 10:13) Salvation comes from what Jesus did on the cross and not what Satan tells you.

25. Let’s break down the next 6 statements in this verse.

- a. “*He appeared in the flesh,*” – Jesus was born of a woman. He walked this earth, just like us.
- b. “*was vindicated by the Spirit,*” – Matthew 3:16-17 tells us, “*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”* The Spirit of God called Jesus, “My Son“.
- c. “*was seen by angels,*” – Mark 1:13 says that after Jesus was tempted by Satan then He was attended to by angels. When He was in the Garden, Luke wrote “*Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.*” (Luke 22:43)
- d. “*was preached among the nations,*” – Paul can testify to this statement, preaching all around the Mediterranean Sea.

- e. “*was believed on in the world,*” – Again Paul can testify to this statement, having been considered one of the greatest believers ever and having converted an unmeasurable number of people to Christianity.
- f. “*was taken up in glory.*” – This statement tells us of Jesus’ ascension. (Luke 24:51 – “*While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.*”) There were witnesses there when Jesus was taken up.

Takeaways:

- Church leaders are meant to be models in character, family life, and relationships.
- There are clear guidelines about how church people should live and behave. Church leaders have a greater weight of responsibility because of their influence on others.
- Our Christian commitment is based upon the life of Christ—his incarnation, ascension, and redemptive achievements.
- We are God's people on earth, his representatives. We must live in close relationship with him. Our lives should model the intimacy and power we receive from him.”

Larson, Knute. Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.