

1Timothy 3:1 ¶ This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

It was clear from the beginning of this letter that Timothy had been left behind in Ephesus to provide instruction and leadership to this body of believers for a period of time. This chapter begins with instructions regarding establishing local leadership for this body of believers, this church.

The term *bishop* is a reference to the one who superintends or is recognized as the leader of the group. The inference is clear that leadership is best provided by one who desires to lead; however, not everyone who desires to lead is qualified to lead. Therefore, Paul proceeds to provide guidelines for Timothy to share with the body of believers as to what qualifies one to function as a bishop/pastor or deacon. I'm not going to get into the differences that some denominations make between pastors, priests, elders, deacons, etc. In my simple logic each "church" or group of believers need a qualified leader (pastor) and group of assistants (assistant pastors, elders, deacons, etc. according to the size and scope of the ministry) to provide for the needs of the congregation and oversee its outreach into the community and/or world at large.

I think it is important to note that this leadership position is not an easy one; it is a position requiring *work*, which the Greek defines as toil and labor. Too many in leadership in the church today view this position as a means to making a name for himself and/or accumulating wealth and influence.

1Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

In this verse Paul begins listing the qualifications for serving as a church pastor; I think this would also apply to assistant pastors since they often serve in the place of the pastor and/or have specific areas in which they are the primary overseer.

- He must be *blameless*; the Greek defines this as inculpable (faultless, innocent) and unrebukable (not deserving of censure). In other words, his lifestyle is such that is not associated with practicing wrongdoing or even the appearance of it.
- He must be the husband of one wife. Many commentaries define this as referencing a man who is committed to one woman. Obviously, this eliminates a polygamist and makes it clear that any religion that promotes such a lifestyle is a false religion. It also directly refutes the legitimacy of the teaching of celibacy that is promoted in the Catholic Church. What is not so clear is its application to one who has been divorced. My own pastor had an unfortunate short term marriage before he was saved, and I tend to think that puts him in a very different category from one who claims to be a Christian and gets divorced for other than biblical reasons (adultery or desertion by an unbelieving spouse).

Matthew 19:9 "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

1 Corinthians 7:14-15 "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace."

The key point seems to be that one who is known for fidelity and commitment in marriage is more like to remain committed and faithful in his relationship to the Lord.

Lacking more specific scriptural definition, I consider this qualification to be one that leaves a bit of room for legitimate difference of opinion within the church. If a man is committed to his spouse and meets all others qualifications, it is quite likely that he will prove to be a good pastor.

- He must be vigilant, sober and of good behavior. In the Greek *vigilant* is defined as sober and circumspect and is from a root that means to abstain from wine. This goes hand-in-hand with being *sober*, which the Greek defines as safe in mind and self-controlled, and having *good behavior*. Self-control is necessary to having good behavior. Several translations use the word temperate in place of vigilant to indicate one who is in control of natural fleshly appetites and passions—one who is sensible and dependable. I found a quote by Warren Wiersbe that I liked in reference to being sober: "This does not mean he has no sense of humor, or that he is always solemn and somber. Rather it suggests that he knows the value of things and does not cheapen the ministry or the Gospel message by foolish behavior."
- He must be given to hospitality, which the Greek defines as fond of guests. One who expects to be an effective leader has to enjoy the fellowship of others. To be able to lead you must be able to relate to others and command their respect.
- He must be able to teach others; in context this would be in reference to the truth of God's word and how to apply it to one's life. This would presume that he is familiar with the scripture through regular reading, study and meditation.

1Timothy 3:3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

The list continues.....

- He must not be an alcoholic. This seems to be an exclamation point on the importance of his possessing self-control. I think proper application could be made to addictive behavior of any type.

- He must not have a violent temper or a propensity to quarrel with others. One who expects to lead others effectively would necessarily be known for promoting unity and not discord.
- He must not be greedy or have a love of money. Scripture is clear on the danger of the love of money.

1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil...."

This is one of the major identifying characteristics of false teachers in America today. The whole focus of their "ministry" is to fleece the flock of their hard earned money to support their lavish lifestyles. Scripture provides no legitimate basis for sending out prayer rugs, or sending in seed money, or requiring "donations" to perform healings. I am committed to freely sharing the truth the Lord shares with me and count it a privilege for every opportunity I am given to share that truth.

- He must be patient. The Greek for this word includes being mild and gentle. In other words, he must have a demeanor that is approachable with the ability to listen and respond with care and concern—not frustration.
- He must not be a brawler. This means that he doesn't have a short fuse and is known as a peacemaker, not one that quarrels and promotes discord.
- He must not be covetous or obsessed with getting "things." I think this ties in with not having a love of money. It's not saying that it is wrong for this person to possess money or nice things; it is saying that he is not focused on these possessions. He is focused on using his money and his possessions in living a life that honors God.

1Timothy 3:4-5 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Most people would recognize the wisdom of this instruction. A man who is not respected in his own home is not likely to be respected as a leader in the church. If he is diligent in training up his children according to God's word, he is more likely to be diligent in teaching and providing wise guidance to those in the church according to the truth of God's word.

1Timothy 3:6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

The Greek for the word *novice* is a reference to one who is new in the faith. Besides the obvious lack of familiarity with the word of God, one who is new in the faith is much more susceptible to pride that could result from being given too

much authority without proper preparation and the wisdom that comes from the knowledge of the word and getting the opportunity to prove your faith through obedience and service.

I believe pride is the root sin and scripture is very clear in declaring it to be the downfall of Satan.

Isaiah 14:12-14 "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

1Timothy 3:7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

This is an interesting qualification. You would think that if a person met all of the other character traits in this list, this would be a given. If you think about it, there are many people who come to faith in Christ carrying a lot of baggage. I guess one who has established enemies in the ranks of the unsaved would be more likely to find himself under attack in ways that would cause him difficulty in providing effective leadership, and I think the devil takes special pleasure in bringing down pastors.

1Timothy 3:8-9 ¶ Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

Paul now moves on to the qualifications for deacons. It was interesting to see the Greek for the word *deacon*: "an attendant, i.e. (genitive case) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specially, a Christian teacher and pastor (technically, a deacon or deaconess):—deacon, minister, servant."

People who are identified as such in the church should be those that have a servant spirit. Many of the qualifying character traits to serve as a deacon are similar to those listed for pastors. The Greek for the word *grave* made reference to one who is honest from a root that is connected to being devout in worship. One who is not *doubletongued* is known for being truthful and consistent in the testimony he exhibits. In other words, he doesn't pretend to be a servant at church and then exhibit selfishness and dishonesty in his personal life. "Not given to much wine" and "not greedy of filthy lucre" are identical qualifications to those for serving as pastor as discussed in the previous verses.

"Holding the mystery...." – This seems to be an emphasis on accepting the truth that God's salvation was always intended for all—Jew and Gentile. Paul clearly identified this truth in his personal letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 3:1-6 "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How

that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel...."

This seems to be a statement that emphasizes that the teachings of Christ as revealed to His apostles and inspired by the Holy Spirit are to be accepted as scripture just as surely as were the Old Testament scriptures.

1Timothy 3:10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless.

This verse establishes the requirement that one who is appointed to serve as a deacon should have shown himself worthy of the appointment through previous service and participation in the body of the believers. That time of proving will reveal him to be *blameless*, or of recognized good character.

1Timothy 3:11-12 Even so *must* their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

It's interesting to note that the testimony of the wives of deacons is specifically addressed, but not the wives of the pastor. However, when I read the first few verses of the chapter again, it crossed my mind that the qualifications in verses 2-3 beginning with *vigilant* could be read as applying to both husband and wife. Even so, logic tells me that whatever is required of deacons or deacons wives would be just as applicable to the pastor and his wife.

It is worth noting that in addition to being grave (honest and honorable) and sober (self-controlled) Paul includes the instruction that the wives not be slanderers, which the Greek identifies as false accusers and I think ties directly to gossip. Whether justified or not, the perception is that women have more of a propensity to be gossips than do men.

The reference to being "faithful in all things" has direct reference in the Greek to being trustworthy and dependable. I think this is a character trait that is no longer as valued in our culture as it once was. Every Christian should be known for following through on his/her word and being trustworthy, but especially those who are recognized as leaders and whose testimony is subject to much more public scrutiny. In fact, success in ministry is directly connected to the dependability and commitment of those serving in that ministry.

Just as with pastors, deacons are also to be committed to one wife and known for having children that are obedient and respectful.

1Timothy 3:13 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.

This verse basically seems to be saying that one who serves well (morally) as a deacon will be rewarded with the respect of those in the church and with possessing a faith that is strong and confident because he has rooted himself in Jesus Christ.

Frankly, I think this principle is applicable to every Christian. If we will choose to serve God well, according to the morals and principles established in His word, we too will earn the respect of other believers and will find ourselves in possession of a strong and confident faith through the work of Christ Jesus in the person of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1Timothy 3:14-15 ¶ These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

In this verse Paul declares his intent to come and visit Timothy in Ephesus soon. He is careful, however, to state that his plans are not firm and are subject to change. This letter is intended to provide Timothy guidance in the interim period that he is serving as the spiritual overseer, the pastor, in Ephesus. Paul had great confidence in Timothy and considered him as a son; and as any good father, he wanted to share with Timothy everything he could to make his experience successful. Timothy was a young man, as declared in 4:12, and Paul wanted him to be confident and strong as a spiritual leader in the church.

As he encourages Timothy, Paul reminds him that he is serving in the church of the “living God, the pillar and ground of truth.” I think this is a reminder of the power that is his through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and of the confidence he can place in the truth of God’s word. He has not been left to serve in his own strength; his strength is to be found in the living God that dwells within him.

1Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

This is a power-packed verse of amazing truth that Paul identifies as “the mystery of godliness.”

- God was revealed in the flesh in the person of His Son, the man Jesus.

John 1:14 “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

John 1:17-18 “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

- Jesus was proven righteous as He lived in complete submission and obedience to the Father through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in His life.

John 5:30 "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

John 8:29 "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

- This same Jesus was watched with amazement by the angels as He chose to humble Himself as a man and offered Himself as the redeeming sacrifice for man's sin.

Luke 2:10-13 "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God...."

John 20:11-14 "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus."

1 Peter 3:21-22 "... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

- The gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus was declared available to the Gentiles.

Matthew 28:18-20 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

- Many people in the world, Jew and Gentile, have turned and will yet turn to faith in Jesus as their Savior.

John 1:11-12 "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"

Hebrews 2:9-10 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

- Jesus publicly ascended to glory to the right hand of His Father to await the time that He will return to assume the throne of David and rule as King of kings and Lord of lords on planet earth.

Luke 24:50-51 "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

Luke 1:30-33 "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Revelation 20:4 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."