

# CHOOSING A GOOD LEADER / Sunday School- March 13, 2011

## Unifying Topic: QUALIFICATIONS OF WORSHIP LEADERS

### Lesson Text

#### I. The Church's Spiritual Leader (I Timothy 3:1-7)

#### II. Qualifications Of The Deacon (I Timothy 3:8-13)

**The Main Thought:** Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. (I Timothy 3:9, KJV)

**Unifying Principle:** People are looking for trustworthy and sensible leadership. How shall we choose our leader? This passage suggests that spiritual maturity is an important factor when choosing leaders.

**Lesson Aim:** To help students appreciate the importance of the roles of the pastor and deacon.

**Life Aim:** To teach how pastors and deacons are to maintain mortal, spiritual lives that represent spiritual maturity and discipline that are practiced at home, in the Church, and in the community.

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

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

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

3:4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

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

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.

3:8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre.

3:9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

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

3:11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanders, sober, faithful in all things.

3:12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

3:13 For they that have used the office of a deacon, and great boldness in the faith which is Christ Jesus.

### HISTORY:

What had been a discussion of what the church and certain groups in the church ought to do, become a discussion of what leaders in the church ought to be. 1&2 Timothy and Titus are known as the "Pastoral Epistles." These were letters written by Paul giving instructions on qualifications necessary for those who would serve as bishops in the local congregation (1-7) —or pastoralship. A similar list is included for those who would be deacons (8-13); including his wife. When Paul wrote to Titus (Tit.1:5), giving him similar instructions, he used the title "*elder*". Paul uses bishop and elder interchangeably. This letter is addressed to a young evangelist named Timothy, charged with the responsibility of working with a congregation and guiding them in the right way.

### LESSON:

#### I Timothy 3:1-7 The Church's Spiritual Leader

**V1** This is a true saying meaning a true doctrine, trustworthy, and faithful is the Word. This is the second true or faith sayings (1Tim.1:15). Perhaps the problems in Ephesus had led some to regard the offices with suspicion and disrespect. If so, a reminder of the honor and importance traditionally attached to the position might restore some of that respect and instill confidence in carefully chosen leaders.<sup>ii</sup>Christian groups always have some form of leadership. Protestant churches typically refer to their leadership as "*ministry*." Ministries vary in roles somewhat from denomination to denomination, but they can be divided into two general categories: professional clergy and non-professional ministry (sometimes referred to as "*lay ministry*" or "*tentmakers*" in some circles). In the early church, some pastors and Apostles received financial support from the believers so they could devote themselves full-time to preaching the Word; others, like Paul and all those who traveled with him in planting churches, supported themselves through secular jobs.

**V1b** Therefore, **If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.** The term "*bishop*" is translated overseer. The term is used interchangeably with "*elder*" and "*shepherd*" (i.e. pastor). The importance of this passage cannot be overstressed when it comes to the building and protection of God's church/people. <sup>iii</sup>Bishop, elder, or pastor were not three distinct offices, but different ways to describe the men and their work - cf. Easton's Bible Dictionary, Moody Handbook of Theology. The work of bishops (elders, pastors) was to oversee the flock, leading and guarding the sheep. This helps us to understand why Paul calls it 'a good work'. Such a work required qualified men. The qualifications are found in two places (1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9). Two things are noted. 1) The office of bishop or pastor is a "good work." The word "*good*" (*kalou*) means honorable, excellent, beneficial, and productive. 2) And the office of bishop or pastor is to be "desired."

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The word "*desire*" means to seek after with strong desire; to set one's heart upon. God stirs some hearts to seek the office of pastor or bishop and to dedicate their lives to Him. The Greek word Paul uses is *episkopos*, where we get our word "*Episcopal*" (governed by or recognizing the office of bishop). The bishop or pastor of God must be qualified; he must meet some personal qualifications; he must be a person of great Christian character.

## V2 Qualifications for the office of Pastor or Bishop:

1. **Must be blameless:** (*anepilempton*) above reproach; not open to attack; not able to be criticized by the enemy at all (The Pulpit Commentary, Vol.21, p50).
2. **Husband of one wife:** From the earliest times of church history, this qualification has been interpreted differently. "The Jewish law allowed divorce. Marriage was indeed the ideal but divorce was permitted. The Jews held that once the marriage ideal had been shattered by cruelty or infidelity or incompatibility, it was far better to allow a divorce and to permit the two to make a fresh start. The great tragedy was that the wife had no rights whatsoever. Another view is that "*husband of one wife*" means polygamists cannot be a Bishop. There was evidence of polygamy being practiced in some Jewish circles at that time. We must understand the state of the world in which this was written. Also "*husband of one wife*" means not a philanderer, not attracted to every skirt that walks down the street, not constantly eyeing somebody or someone else's wife. It is to be very evident that a pastor or bishop is committed to one woman, his wife, whom he loves.

The Pulpit Commentary comment on this point:

"If we consider the general laxity in regard to marriage, and the facility of divorce, which prevailed among Jews and Romans at this time, it must have been a common thing for a man to have more than one woman living who had been his wife. And this [was] a distinct breach of the primeval law (Genesis ii.24), [and] would properly be a bar to any one being called to the 'office of a bishop'....It is utterly unsupported by any single passage in Scripture that a second marriage should disqualify a man for the sacred ministry. As regards the opinion of the early Church, it was not at all uniform, and amongst those who held that this passage absolutely prohibits second marriages in the case of a [bishop], it was merely a part of the asceticism of the day" (Vol.21, p.51).

A.T. Robertson very simply says, "Of one wife [*mias gunaikos*]; One at a time, clearly" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol.4, p.572).

William Barclay says, "In its context here we can be quite certain that this means that the Christian leader must be a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity" (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.87).

As this provoked many discussions, and some of the interpretations bear a closer look, every minister, believer, and church must go before the Lord and seek the meaning of this qualification for him or herself. But we must be honest and open to hear the Lord and then beg of Him the courage and discipline to do what He says.

In the Work of the Holy Spirit, the essential qualification for the ministry is that the person was raised to the position by the revelation of the Holy Spirit in the group of Pastors. It occurs within the Body. The person does not appoint himself to the ministry, God does. The congregation does not vote on which pastor to appoint. The Holy Spirit makes the appointment, and the body recognizes the Spirit's appointment. It is not required that the pastors have formal theological training or make the ministry their full-time job, however it would be beneficial for the body. The effectiveness of a given ministry is purely the function of the Holy Spirit's operation not personal talents or efforts.

3. **Must be sober:** (*sophrona*) be sober minded; having a mind that is sound, sensible, controlled, disciplined, and chaste ; a mind that has complete control over all sensual desires; a control that would not lead to excessive behavior.
4. **Must be of good behavior:** (*knosminon*) well-behaved, orderly, composed, solid, and honest. It is a person who has good conduct, whose character and behavior stands as the ideal and pattern for others.
5. **Must be given to hospitality:** (*philoxenon*) to have an open heart and home; "*showing love or being a friend to the believers, especially strangers or foreigners*" (Amp. NT). The ancient world was very careful of the rights of the guest. The stranger was under the protection of Zeus Xenios, the Protector of Strangers. In the ancient world, inns were notoriously bad. In the Church there were wandering teachers and preachers who needed hospitality. There were also many slaves with no homes of their own to whom it was a great privilege to have the right of entry to a Christian home. The New Testament enjoins all believers to practice hospitality (Rom.12:13; 1 Pet 4:9), but the Pastorals mention it only in connection with those who would serve (5:10; Tit 1:8), who are then to be examples.
6. **Must be apt to teach:** able, capable, skillful, and qualified to teach. Relates more directly to the ministry connected with the office of overseer. This is a very important requirement because the sheep need teaching. There are some that fulfill these character requirements but they may not have the gift of teaching. They must be able to expound the Scriptures, to correct those who are misusing them and recognize error when it appears.

V3 As the list continues to probe the background of the candidate for leadership, it prohibits five characteristics of behavior.

7. **Not be given to wine:** not be a drunkard; not sit around drinking (refers to alcoholic beverages) all the time. The church cannot afford to be led by those who allow themselves to be controlled by intoxicating substances - which enslave the user and inhibit decisive thinking or emotions. They are signs of a loss of control.
8. **No striker:** (*plekten*) not combative or violent, not contentious or quarrelsome, not a person who strikes out and contends with another person or who becomes easily upset, irritated, or aggravated with others. He uses neither hand nor tongue against anyone. The word really is "*stubborn*," not insisting on one's own point of view at all costs. This tendency will betray an inability to get along with and accept the views of others, and perhaps deeper personality flaws as well. The false teachers in Ephesus were known for their quarrels (1:5; 6:4-5). Many a person have been hurt and damaged by the poisonous venom of a striking tongue. A leader prone to this weakness will produce discord instead of harmony. On the contrary he is to be kind, gentle, and longsuffering with others. A leader, or any Christian for that matter, who promotes peace among people will create and preserve the relationships necessary for building a unified church.
9. **Not greedy of filthy lucre:** not a lover of worldly gain or possessions. He must not be a person who is out to get, but a person who is committed to giving. Such a leader can be a model of generosity and simplicity of lifestyle because of the knowledge that whatever one's economic status might be, all that one has belongs to God and so must be looked after faithfully before him (6:17-19). But this applies to every believer. How much is enough? How can we know if we have begun to put money and material things before God? What does responsibility mean in this area of our lives? These are hard questions! Our attitudes and motivations where money and acquiring things are concerned must be brought before God for evaluation.
10. **Not a brawler:** (*amachon*) not contentious or a fighter, **but patient** (*epieike*): gracious, kind, gentle, forbearing, reasonable, soft, and tender; having a mild disposition. Christ, the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls is our example. How shall men teach others but in a peaceable manner with sensitivity. Do not let the roar from the inside come forth.
11. **Not covetous:** (*aphilarguron*) not a lover of money in an immoderate way; greedy of worldly substance and riches; seeking his own things, and not the things of Christ. He who loves money will stop at nothing in order to get it. Whereas, on the other hand, he will never do anything simply for kindness sake. He is to know that there are values which are beyond the all mighty dollar of greed. Again, our attitudes and motivations where money and acquiring things are concerned must be brought before God for evaluation.

The profile of the ideal candidate concludes with three conditions, each accompanied by a statement of basis/foundation.

**V4 (1) One that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity:** "*Gravity*"-propriety: means reverent modesty on the part of the children [Alford]; seriousness in one's attitude; proper behavior. He must preside over his home with loving leadership and not with a dominating dictatorship. The test of his calling and his success can be measured by the success in his home. His sons in the faith will turn out like the sons of his family. The position which he occupies in the church has a strong resemblance to the relation which a father sustains to his household. The first thing you look for is whether the man has a well-managed family. This does not mean he is not to have any problems ever to come in his family. Nobody can be free of problems. What this urges us to observe is how he handles those problems. Does he evade them by busying himself in his business, or does he tackle those problems?

**V5 (For if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?):** A church resembles a family. The pastor or bishop must not run from problems or refuse to face them. He must learn how to deal with them, and how to work things out in love and grace.

**V6 (2) Not a novice** (*me neophuton*), that is, a new convert or a new church member, but must have been a convert or church member for a long time...

- Long enough to have become rooted and grounded in the Lord and His word.
- Long enough to have become spiritually mature.
- Long enough to have proven his testimony for Christ.
- Long enough to be well known and respected by other believers.
- Long enough to be able to minister to others and to teach them to minister.

**V6b Lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil** (prideful; or be condemned by the devil). A new convert means well, but he cannot be trusted because he has not yet learned to put down self and to trust in Christ. In Ephesus conceit was the bane of the false teachers (6:4; 2 Tim 3:4). If he is put in office, the sudden exposure to public leadership will puff him up and make him proud, arrogant, and conceited which is the very condemnation the devil himself has achieved by his pride and arrogance. The testimony of the church falls as well. God will not use the flesh to bring about success in His kingdom. The reason is not lack of leadership potential but lack of spiritual maturity.

**V7 (3) Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil:** A pastor or bishop must have a good reputation, good testimony in the eyes of others. Of course, there are some who will criticize and slander any person who has failed and run with the world's way. Many in the world and some in the church do not recognize when a person has repented and received forgiveness—it is the simple fact that Christ can forgive and change a person's life. But when a person enters into ministry, he must have experienced such a significant change that it is clearly evident that he is now following Christ. The change in his life must be radical: a radical turning away from the world and self to Christ; even to the point where unbelievers can see it. Then and only then can he ever hope to reach the unbelieving world for Christ. If not, the unbelievers of the world will reproach, ridicule, and mock him; and he will fall into the snare of the devil. That is, he will hesitate to bear testimony for Christ and to fulfill his duties as a minister. He will tend to withdraw and keep silent and remain unseen as much as possible. The power of his ministry and testimony will be drastically weakened. The church's spiritual leader must pass inspection as a good soldier before his flaws are uncovered by God.

## I Timothy 3:8-13 Qualifications Of The Deacon

This passage discussed the second officer of the church, the deacon. The office of deacon is so important that the qualifications required are just as high as those demanded of a pastor or bishop. There are churches where deacons have appropriated to themselves authority which is contrary to New Testament teaching. The word "*deacon*" (*dakonous*) means "*servant*" or "*minister*." In the early church both ministers and deacons served in both areas, but each concentrated upon their primary call and mission. It is noted by some that the first reference to deacons is in Acts 6:1-7. Deacons were appointed to help in the ministerial and administrative duties of the church (Acts 6:2). Their function was to relieve ministers so that the ministers could give themselves "*continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word*" (Acts 6:4). In particular they were chosen to minister to the day-to-day needs of believers and to the needs of widows and widowers and the poor and sick of a church. They also will need to be qualified even for service.

**V8 Personal qualifications of the deacon:** These qualifications are pretty much as that of the bishop, that's why it says, "*likewise...*" Deacons must be qualified; they must meet some personal qualifications that will inspire respect.

1. **Dacons must be grave** (*semnous*): serious, honorable, worthy, revered, highly respected, noble; of honest report. It does not mean that he is to walk around with a long face, never smiling, joking or having fun. This serious-mindedness and commitment is to Christ first and to the mission of the church under the leadership of the pastor or bishop, moving in the same direction and having the same goals as the pastor or bishop.
2. **Dacons must not be doubletongued** (*dilogos*): bearing tales, gossiping, saying "*one thing to one person and something different to another [person]*" (Donald Guthrie. *The Pastoral Epistles*. "Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, p.84); saying one thing to a person's face and something else behind his back. He must be of integrity and honesty.
3. **Dacons must not be given to much wine.** It is not affirmed that it would be proper for the deacon, any more than the bishop, to indulge in the use of wine in small quantities, but it is affirmed that a man who is much given to the use of wine, ought not, on any consideration, to be a deacon.
4. **Dacons must not be greedy of worldly gain.** This is definitely to be recognized as a temptation to those who handle the congregation's money. The special reason why this qualification was important in the deacon was that he would be entrusted with the funds of the church, and might be tempted to appropriate them to his own use, instead of the charitable purposes for which they were designed.

**V9-10 Spiritual qualifications of the deacon:** the deacon must meet three very important qualifications.

1. Deacons must **Hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience** – hold within his heart the mystery of faith; possess and cling to it; must believe the whole gospel (mystery) and not deceive the church by being hypocritical about his belief. He must not accept the call and office of deacon and then shirk his duties, but share it faithfully with both believers and unbelievers.
2. Deacons must **first be proved** or tested, tried out first before they are called to the office of a deacon. This indicates an ongoing evaluation of the deacons' character and service by the church.
3. Deacons **must be found blameless.** The cross alone can guarantee such.

**V11-12 Family qualifications of the deacon/wife:**

1. Deacons must have a committed wife. As a deacon visits and ministers to the women of the church, he needs his wife with him if she is able to accompany him. A strong picture of marital and family love and commitment to Christ are needed. Therefore, the deacon's wife must be as strong in the Lord as he is.
  1. The deacon must have a wife who is as committed to the Lord and to the church as he is.
    - a. The wife of a deacon **must be grave**: serious-minded, honorable, respected, and noble.
    - b. The wife of a deacon must **not be a slanderer** (*me diabolous*): a talebearer, gossip; a person who

goes about talking about others and stir up mischief and disturbance.

- c. The wife of a deacon **must be sober**: serious; clear-headed, and temperate; clear-thinking reaction or attitude
- d. The wife of a deacon must be **faithful in all things**: completely trustworthy as a wife/mother, and believer.

She must be faithful to the Lord...

- a. in her personal devotion and loyalty to the Lord.
- b. in her call as a wife and mother.
- c. in her commitment to the church and its services and ministry in carrying out assignments.
- d. in her ministry in serving with her husband.

Then no one can doubt the character of such a woman, that it is not desirable that her husband should be an officer in the church. She has proven herself to be an influential and responsible helpmeet.

2. The deacon must be **the husband of one wife**. Deacons are to be men who, if they are married, have their eye only for one woman. Paul himself was not married, nor was Timothy.
3. The deacon must have a **controlled family home**. He is to be one who presides in a proper manner over his own house, or who had a well-regulated family.

**V13 Rewards:** The faithful deacon experiences two results:

1. Community respect. He **gains a good degree or good standing** and testimony before both God and man. The word **purchase** means obtained, gained, or acquired.
2. Spiritual boldness. He gains **great boldness or great confidence and security in the faith**. He experiences more and more assurance and freedom in the Spirit of God; confidence and assurance to speak with authority.

The point is: they **have used the office of deacon well**—with diligence and faithfulness, with simplicity and cheerfulness; taking excellent care of the minister, the poor, and of the discipline of God's house.

### SUMMARY:

The congregation, under Christ and by His Word and Spirit, uses its authority to recognize and affirm leaders whom God calls. The work of the Bishop and Deacon is that of constant service and study. The qualifications are stiff. The distinctions are important. By definition, bishops are those godly men who are elected by the congregation and given the primary responsibility of overseer of the church's well-being. The deacons serve at the bishop's direction, serving in various ministry areas. Being a pastor or bishop involves caring for the entire church; being a deacon involves serving in a specific ministry area. Both are leadership positions but being an elder involves a broader view, more responsibility and more authority. The words pastor, elder, bishop, and overseer are used interchangeably and one might be of a higher degree in the list of qualifications. The most important qualification as Paul states, he "*desires a good work*." A man must want the job. There should be a God-given desire in his heart to help lead the Lord's people. Not all pastors or bishops will be equally strong in each area. Some will be strong in teaching while another will be unusually devout. At times he may not be gentle, but that's okay because his got reputation will go before him. What is he suppose to do?

1. Shepherd the Flock – guide and protect (Acts 20:28).
2. Lead through Example – role model (1Pt.3:3).
3. Teach and Exhort – know and defend (Tit.1:9).
4. Oversee the Church of God – setting the direction (1Tim.3:5).
5. Pray for the Sick – personal contact (Jam.5:14-15).

The deacons likewise are walking so closely with the pastor, bishop or elder in building stepping stones that lead in a purposeful direction of structure. Their training is most important to the church.

The overseers are given the direction from God over all aspects of church life. As a part of that administrative direction, the pastor, bishop or elder guide the church as spiritual leaders, delegating major areas of responsibility to the deacons so that they (the pastor, bishop or elder) can maintain their major priorities and not be bogged down in the minute details of church life. However, all are servants of Christ.

Paul is not simply talking about an "*office*" but about the quality of the people who fill that "*office*." Being in such a high calling will take the power of the Holy Spirit's leading when choosing such leaders for these offices and having these qualifications. With men and women serving together, not in competition but in cooperation—the church will begin to fulfill its destiny and become a force for good in the midst of an evil world.

### APPLICATION:

Earnestly pray that God will raise up such godly men and women, and that we may properly recognize them as true servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Also pray for those who already hold offices in the church, to help give smooth running of the church.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/1Tim/Leadership-Qualifications>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.maranathaglobal.org/latest/284#more-284>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://executableoutlines.com/1tim/1ti3\\_1.htm](http://executableoutlines.com/1tim/1ti3_1.htm)

<sup>iv</sup> <http://theparkwaychurchofchrist.com/SermonsM-S/order7.htm>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.studylight.org/com/bnn/view.cgi?book=1ti&chapter=003>