

Do You Desire a Good Work?

Paul had just written that women are not to hold positions of spiritual authority over congregations, but he did not want to leave the impression that just *any* man is qualified because he is a man. In this chapter, Paul instructs Timothy on what qualifications to look for in choosing church leadership.

I Timothy 3:1

Bishop is from the Greek word *episkopos* which literally means “over” (*epi*) + “watcher” (*skopos*) - an overseer. In other places we see this same office also called *elder* or *pastor*. Actually they are interchangeable but represent the different roles of a leader. “Elder” represents spiritual maturity and wisdom. “Pastor” (shepherd) refers to how they care for the people. “Bishop” refers to the oversight that comes with the office.

He desires a good work - the person is not just desiring to be a leader for the position or status; Paul is telling Timothy that the work is good, noble, honorable work and he needs to look for good, noble, honorable men. Spiritual leadership in the church isn’t all about titles and honor and glory; it’s about **work**. The ministry is not an idle man’s occupation. He should earnestly desire it for the prospect he has of bringing great glory to God and leading people to Christ.

I Timothy 3:2-7

A bishop then must be...

God has specific qualifications for leaders in the church. They are not to be chosen at random, or just because they volunteer, or because they give a lot of money to the church, or because they are “natural leaders.” As we look at this list of qualifications, keep in mind that they are valuable to every person, not only those aspiring to leadership.

Blameless (v2)

- doesn’t mean without sin - but rather “above reproach”
- “above reproach” literally means “nothing to take hold upon”
- must be nothing in his life that others can look at and attack him or the church

Why is this important?

- Bishops are special targets of Satan; he will assault them with more severe temptation because they are on the front line and more visible
- Their fall has a potential for great harm; Satan knows that when a shepherd falls, the effect on the sheep is devastating

Husband of one wife (v2)

- a one-woman man; faithful to his wife; his love, affection, and heart are given to one woman - his wife
- does not mean that the leader must be married - that would disqualify Jesus, Paul, and Timothy from ministry
- nor is it the idea that the leader could never remarry if he was widowed or Biblically divorced

Dave Guzik says it this way: A Biblical leader is not a playboy, an adulterer, a flirt, and does not show romantic interest in other women, including the depictions or images of women in pornography.

Why is this important?

- Elders are prone to stumble in this area; they minister to women as Christ did: often this ministry happens when women are most vulnerable which makes it easy to fall; it's important we always pray for our church leaders

Vigilant (v2)

- Vigilant and watchful against Satan who can be a subtle enemy
- Must watch over himself and those who are entrusted to his care

Sober (v2)

- Able to think clearly and with clarity; moderate in his actions
- Not constantly joking and can deal with serious subjects in a serious way

“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 Gospel message by foolish behavior.” (Wiersbe)

Of Good Behavior (v2)

- The idea is “orderly”- the opposite of chaotic; dignified
- God is a God of order, not of chaos

Hospitable (v2)

- Given to hospitality, open-handed to strangers, and ready to entertain them according to his ability as one who does not set his heart upon the wealth of the world and who is a true lover of his brethren

Apt to Teach (v2)

- The only non-character qualification on the list
- Able and willing to communicate to others the knowledge which God has given him
- Committed to studying God's word and sharing it

Not Given to Wine (v3)

- Wine in those days was drunk by just about everybody because the water was not fit to drink; most wine was diluted - three parts water to two parts wine
- Timothy completely abstained from alcohol even though Paul encouraged him to “*take a little wine for your stomach's sake and your oft infirmities.*”
- One reason to abstain or limit the use of alcohol was so you would not cause someone to stumble or fall by following your example
- Another is that God wants us to serve Him with a clear head and clear mind

No Striker (v3)

- Literally translated means “not a giver of blows”

- One who is not quarrelsome, nor apt to use violence to any, but does every thing with mildness, love, and gentleness

Not greedy of filthy lucre (v3)

- doesn't use the ministry office to make money for himself or any kind of dishonest financial gain

Patient (v3)

- Describes the person who is considerate, genial, forbearing, gracious, who easily pardons human failure; remembers good, not evil; doesn't hold a grudge; when wronged, does not retaliate
- Looks to Jesus as his example rather than the latest action hero

Not Quarrelsome (v3)

- Not contentious; not arguers always fighting over something
- Can disagree without being disagreeable

Not Covetous (v3)

- The covetous man is never satisfied with anything and is always demanding something more or different

Who Rules His Own House Well (v4-5)

- He must be one who keeps his family in good order showing that he is capable of taking care of the church
- He must make his family a priority and not neglect them for ministry: Eli, the high priest, neglected his family and his children rebelled; because he knew of their rebellion and did nothing, God severely cursed him and his descendants -no one from his family would ever reach an old age

Not a Novice (v6)

- Not a new Christian or one who has not had time to put down roots and grow for he is apt to be lifted up with pride and then fall

A Good Testimony (v7)

- Have a good reputation outside the walls of the church; walks his talk

Quite a list! Who can live up to all of these qualifications? Actually nobody but one - Jesus. However, God will fit us for the work He calls us to. Our part is to continue to seek God and allow Him to change us into the image of His Son.

I Timothy 3:8-13

Deacons are first mentioned in Acts 6:1-6. They took care of the daily needs of the church: helping the ministers and providing for the poor. They served tables, while the ministers or bishops gave themselves only to the ministry of the word and prayer. Deacons should have a good character, because they were assistants to the ministers and appeared and acted publicly. He

should show proper **respect** towards both God and man; this doesn't mean he can never smile, joke, or have fun but means he is serious about his commitment to Christ and the church. **Not doubled-tongued**; that will say one thing to one and another thing to another; no intent to deceive; not a flatterer or a slanderer. **Not given to much wine**; does not drink to excess; being a drunkard does much damage any man's reputation, but especially to a Christian and a leader. It opens the door to many other temptations and gives a bad witness. **Not greedy of filthy lucre**: this would especially be bad in the deacons, who were entrusted with the church's money. If they were covetous and greedy of filthy lucre, they would be tempted to embezzle it, and convert that to their own use which was intended for the church. **Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience**: men who understand the message of the gospel and are living it out. We keep a pure conscience by confessing our sins and walking in holiness before the Lord. **Let these also first be proved**: They should not be given leadership over others until they have been first proved, found fit for the office they are to be entrusted with; the soundness of their judgments, their zeal for Christ, and the blamelessness of their conversation, must be proved.

Their wives likewise must have a good character; they must be serious about their calling, not slanderers, tale-bearers, carrying stories to make mischief and sow discord; they must be sober and faithful in all things, not given to any excess, and trustworthy in all that is committed to them. The last two qualifications are the same as for elders: the husband of one wife and managing their house well. The families of deacons should be examples to other families. Those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves which may lead them to a higher position in the church as well as building their confidence and boldness in the faith.

Conclusion

When God sought a new king for Israel, He looked for a *man after His own heart*. God is not looking for degrees, skills, and accomplishments. He looks for people with right hearts towards Him that He can use for His glory. He finds those with character and then gives them grace and the skills to do His work. As we have examined the qualities required of church leaders, hopefully it has challenged us to consider our own character as a follower of Christ and revealed areas that we still need to allow God to work on.

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.

II Chronicles 16:9