

Destin Church of Christ

Fall, 2018

Lessons from I & II Timothy and Titus

Lesson 5 – “Roles in the Church: Elders & Deacons”

Texts: I Tim 3:1-13; 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9

Whoever leads in the church will determine what that church becomes. The life of the church, the ministry of the church, the testimony of the church, the impact of the church, the reputation of the church, the character of the church, and the emphasis of the church, is dependent on the leadership of the church.

When the church does not recognize the proper standards for leadership, and men rise to positions of leadership in the church who are unworthy to be there, the results are devastating. If the Kingdom of Christ suffers anything more than others, it suffers so often from a lack of godly-spiritual-competent leadership.

It is essential in the life of the church that it be led by godly leaders. All of the qualifications in reference to those godly leaders are from verses 2-7. These are character qualifications. They do not talk about duties, function, or performance. They talk only about character, virtue, morality, godliness, and spirituality.

These are the standards for leadership. If a leader does not live up to the standard in his leadership, he is subject, as chapter 5 says, to discipline in front of the whole church. It is a very sacred trust.

Elders = Bishops = Pastors

Three Greek terms that apply to the same leadership position in the church.

- presbuteros – elder, presbyter (spiritual maturity)
- episkopos – bishop, overseer (leadership responsibility)
- poimen – pastor, shepherd (feeding responsibility)

He is a mature spiritual person who leads and feeds the church. Whether you call him elder, bishop, pastor, overseer, or shepherd, it's all the same.



Verse 1 talks specifically about the call to church leadership, the call to be an elder, an overseer in the church. The first question that must be asked is: Is someone godly? The list of qualities can seem far out of reach. This passage, along with the passage in Titus 1, seem to blow the average guy out of the water!

The majority of the qualities listed in these passages are actually commanded of all believers in some fashion. The man called to ministry isn't some kind of super Christian who lives by a higher code. He is simply a called man with gifts.

In the first century, the work of an elder in a local church involved a tremendous amount of sacrifice. They were exposed to serious persecution, and their lives were often at stake. The word "honor" in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 means respect.

There six facets of this call to leadership that are in verse 1. The key statement we need to notice is "Whoever aspires ...".

1. It is an important calling.

"This is a true saying...." Paul uses this phrase to introduce something that is of great importance. (1 Timothy 1:15, 3:1, 4:9, 2 Timothy 2:11, and Titus 3:8).

2. It is a limited calling.

"...if a man desires the office of overseer ...". It is limited to men. The masculine form indicates that men are in reference here.

3. It is a compelling calling.

"...he desires a good work." Ambition for office corrupts, desire for service purifies.

4. The calling is a responsible calling.

If a man desires the office of an overseer in the church, he is taking on a great responsibility. It is a very responsible calling.

Some of the responsibilities of the elders are:

- Pray for the spiritual and physical well-being of members of the congregation. (Acts 6:2-4, James 5:14-15)
- Confront those who are teaching contradictory to biblical truth. (Acts 20:29-31, Titus 1:9)
- Intercede in and preside over issues that could serve to cause disharmony or division within its body of believers. (Ephesians 4:3, 1 Corinthians 1:10)
- Determine and enforce discipline, supported by Scripture, for the protection of the church. (1 Corinthians 5:1-13, Matthew 18:15-22)
- Guard and protect the members of the body, seeking to meet their needs and assist in any way possible. (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:9)
- They are to Set an Example of life.

"In biblical terminology, elders, shepherds, overseers, lead and care for the local church."

Some “scary” verses related to this responsibility:

- Matthew 18:6
- Acts 20:28
- Hebrews 13:17
- James 3:1

5. It is a demanding calling.

If you're looking for leisure, or looking for an easy time, you will not find it in the true exercise of the ministry. It is a demanding calling.

6. It is a worthy calling.

It is the highest calling to which anyone can ever be called.



Qualifications and Characteristics:

Some people say that the qualifications for elders are not really qualifications, but characteristics, and are only meant to present a general description of those who can serve as elders. This argument is made to defend the appointment of a man who does not fit all of the qualifications. Those who argue this will often say that since the list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 does not match the list in Titus 1, then we cannot combine the passages and strictly follow them because Timothy and Titus were able to appoint elders without having the other list.

There are two problems with this argument:

- 1 It assumes that Paul was writing to Timothy and Titus about something he had not discussed with them previously. (Titus 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 4:17)
- 2 It is difficult to imagine anyone who would qualify using one list but not the other.

You can define leadership in one word ... "influence." Influence primarily is a direct result of example.

It demands men of integrity, men of moral character, men of wisdom, men of dignity, and men of virtue. No elder or church leader is perfect.

We can simplify everything that is said in these passages as they qualify people for Christian service by recognizing that all the Lord is looking for is a heart that is right before Him. The qualifications are all about what we are. They have to do with spiritual life more so than talent, effort, or even willingness.

What kind of men are fit to lead in the church and what kind of men are to be chosen as elders? That's what this text deals with.



When it comes to qualifications, there is a general one, and then there are some specific ones.

“Above Reproach” (“Blameless”)

The first qualification for one suited for the ministry is an overseer must be blameless or above reproach.

This person is to be a model of godliness and of virtue. He is to be set apart as a standard against which every life could be measured.

This man must have a life without blame. This is the general basic overall requirement.

He must be a man whose life is not marred by some sin, vice, or evil.

That doesn't mean he's going to be perfect and that doesn't mean that there won't be times when he fails or does something wrong.

The one who is in leadership in the church is to be the pattern for everyone to follow. There's nothing that would mean that he couldn't be the supreme model for the congregation to follow.

When a man has a desire for the leadership of the church there are four areas of life by which the church tests that man: Moral Character; Home Life; Maturity; and Reputation. He must be known as a man who is, and has been, a godly man.



Next Lesson – “Roles in the Church: Elders & Deacons” – Part 2
(Moral Character – “Faithful to his Wife”)