



TRAITS OF A GODLY LEADER

BIG IDEA: We are all called to set an example to those inside and outside the church.

DATE: Wednesday, October 8 and Sunday, October 12, 2025

SCRIPTURE: 1 Timothy 3:1-13

OPENING QUESTION

Reflect on the different bosses you have had throughout your life. *What qualities did the best bosses have? What qualities did the worst bosses have?*

Today we are going to look at the qualities needed in a godly leader. What do you think are the three most important qualities for a church leader to possess? Why?

SETTING THE STAGE

Paul offers essential qualifications for the offices of the church. Most of these qualifications did not align with the cultural norms of his day. This was intentional, for Paul wanted to stress to Timothy that the Christian life does not align with the norms of secular society but with the truth of Christ. The church is to be the stabilizing force of God's truth and grace in the world. It must share in community life, grounded in the mystery of Christ, and thereby serve as a witness to the world. After all, what the world knows of God will be based on the life and witness of His people.

LEADERS, SHARE WITH YOUR GROUP BEFORE READING THE SCRIPTURE: In these verses you will hear the term leader and in some translations *overseer* or *bishop*. These terms refer to the Lead Pastor of a congregation. You will also hear the term *deacon* and this means "one who ministers or serves." At Chets Creek Church our overseers include our Lead Pastor and our Campus Pastors. Paul also uses the word "elders" in 1 Timothy 5. At Chets our elders are our pastors and ministry staff. Our deacons refer to our LifeGroup Leaders. We place a high value on our LifeGroup Leaders as they minister to the group God has entrusted to them. This is where you see the hands and feet of Jesus – providing prayer, acts of service like hospital visits and meals and celebrations over birthdays, anniversaries, marriages or new babies, etc. LifeGroups are a key way for a large church to feel small and connected.

STUDY THE BIBLE

1 Timothy 3:1-13 (NLT)

This is a trustworthy saying: "If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position." ² So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful

to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. ³ He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. ⁵ For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?

⁶ A church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. ⁷ Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap.

⁸ In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money. ⁹ They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons. ¹¹ In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do. ¹² A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well. ¹³ Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus.

DISCUSSION

READ: 1 Timothy 3:1-5

Paul makes it clear there is nothing wrong with a person aspiring to hold the position of leader/pastor for this is a noble pursuit. What seven positive qualities does a Pastor need to be mature in? (see verse 2)

Paul next adds five negative qualities that aspiring leaders are to avoid – many of which were found in the false teachers in the church. What are those five qualities that those seeking Christian maturity must avoid? (see verse 3)

READ: 1 Timothy 3:6-7

The word *novice* or *new believer* in this passage derives from the Greek word for "newly planted." What is the risk of placing a new believer in an important leadership role? (see verse 6)

In addition to spiritual maturity and healthy relationships, it was essential that prospective leaders had a "good testimony," or good reputation, with those outside the church. Given Paul's overarching mission to the Gentiles, why was it so important for a church leader to have a good reputation among people outside the church? (see verse 7)

READ: 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Paul now provides positive and negative qualifications for deacons (think LifeGroup Leaders). What is the one positive quality that they must possess? What three negative qualities are they to avoid? (see verse 8) How do these compare to the qualifications for pastors/leaders in verses 2-4?

The Greek word translated "their wives" can refer to the wives of deacons serving with them or women serving as deacons. What qualifications does Paul say they must have? (see verse 11)

The truth is we are *all* ambassadors for Christ (inside and outside the home) and should aspire to these qualities. Which of these qualities do *you* need to further develop in your life? What practical steps will you take to grow in these areas?

RESPONSE

Pray for our pastors, pastoral and ministry staff, and your LifeGroup Leaders. Pray for their families and for protection from the enemy. Brainstorm tangible ways you can bless their faithfulness and encourage them.

PRAY TOGETHER: Take some time in LifeGroup to pray for the above together. Also pray for wisdom for our Pastor Search Team, Advisory Team and for God to guide us to our new Lead Pastor. May God begin preparing his heart for Chets even now.

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COMMENTARY

VERSE 1

The word translated *overseer* describes the office of pastor. Scripture uses three words to describe this role. The concept of overseeing relates to the spiritual leadership with which a pastor guides a congregation. It does not diminish the responsibility of the congregation in church decisions. The two other terms for the office of pastor are “elder” and “shepherd.” The first word refers to spiritual maturity (1 Tim. 3:6; 4:14), while the second describes the caring nurture a pastor uses in ministering to the flock of God (Eph. 4:11). In Titus 1:5-7, the terms *overseer* and *elder* are interchangeable. Two scriptural passages use all three words in various forms to refer to the office of pastor (Acts 20:17-28; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). Paul consistently addressed the pastor and deacon as the two offices of the church. (See Phil. 1:1.)

Paul affirmed that a man could aspire to be a pastor. To *aspire* should not be confused as blind ambition but as an earnest longing prompted by the Holy Spirit. The second phrase of this *trustworthy* saying uses a synonym—*desire*. It paints a word picture of someone reaching out for something.

The idea that the aspirant would be male finds support not only in Paul’s use of the word *he*, but also by the qualifications listed in the following verses. This restriction does not mean women cannot serve the church, but Scripture limits the office of pastor to men.

Paul described the office of pastor as *noble task*. To be an overseer should not be viewed as an honor to be achieved, but a *task* to be accomplished. Nor was this work simply another way to earn a living, but rather it was a task that was morally good if undertaken properly.

Within the guidance of Scripture, believers must consider what roles God desires them to fulfill in their churches. God wants every Christian to serve, but He calls some men to minister in specific roles as pastors or deacons.

VERSE 2

Not everyone who wants to be a pastor fits the biblical qualifications. Churches need to give careful consideration to the character of any potential pastor. Anyone who aspired to be an *overseer* should be *above reproach*. The single word translated *above reproach* means the pastor should be above criticism. It does not mean the pastor will never be criticized. Rather, this point requires that a pastor's character reflect well on Christ whom he serves.

Faithful to his wife translates a Greek phrase that is literally, "a one-woman man." This has been understood in different ways. One approach suggests a prohibition for having multiple wives. However, while people in the pagan cultures often had more than one wife, monogamy was standard among Christians. If all believers were monogamous, why would Paul feel compelled to emphasize this requirement for pastors?

Another issue involves pastors who have never been married. Is a single man unqualified to serve as pastor? Obviously, Paul did not intend this interpretation since he was unmarried. A third and most common approach would understand this passage to mean the pastor should not be divorced and remarried. It is also scripturally reasonable to understand the statement as referring to a man who is faithfully and unquestionably devoted to his wife, as translated in the New International Version. Churches should exercise biblical responsibility for interpreting and applying this passage.

Continuing the list of character qualities, Paul noted the pastor should be *temperate*. Someone who bears responsibility for the flock of God cannot make rash decisions or live irresponsibly. This characteristic matches that which follows: *self-controlled*. Together these words describe a leader who thinks before he speaks or acts, who is reasonable in human interactions, and who is known for sober-mindedness. As a result, a person who lives in this manner would be known as *respectable*, someone who behaves in a well-ordered manner. Being *hospitable* certainly involved hosting people in their homes but also includes an attitude of cordiality. Also, the pastor should be *able to teach*. A primary role of spiritual leadership involves making disciples through preaching, teaching, and mentoring.

VERSE 3

A pastor should not be *violent or quarrelsome* but should be *gentle*. Gentleness describes a kind manner in dealing with others. Pastors need to know how to get along with people and not use their positions to intimidate others.

Like ministers today, some pastors in the early church received financial support from their churches while others maintained secular vocations to support their families. Paul's admonition for pastors not to be *a lover of money* related to their attitude toward money, not only in compensation from the churches but also in all areas of life. This instruction should not be misused by a church as an excuse for failing to provide financially for their pastors. Churches should take care of their pastors' families as well as they expect the pastors to take care of the church families.

VERSES 4-7

The pastor should *manage his own family well*. This directive does not mean that he is a dictator in his home, but that he should exercise spiritual leadership in his family. The concept of *household* includes not only his wife and children, but also all areas of life. Paul expected the competent management of the pastor's *household* to include seeing *that his children obey him*. However, this injunction does not mean a pastor remains responsible once they become adults.

The phrase *in a manner worthy of full respect* applies to the way the pastor manages his household,

including the manner in which he raises his children. It also describes the respect children should have for their parents.

While all fathers have similar responsibilities for their families, pastors have an additional reason for proper leadership in the home. Paul tied the way the pastor managed *his own family* with the manner in which he would *take care of God's church* *care for God's church*. The culture of Paul's day held fathers in high esteem. Children were expected to obey their parents and follow their examples. If a pastor could not guide his family properly, he would be incompetent in leading the church.

Pride remains a major challenge to any Christian but can be especially so for a pastor. Public prominence places pastors in precarious positions. Consequently, Paul argued that the pastor should not be a *recent convert*. A believer needs a certain level of biblical knowledge and spiritual maturity before assuming the role of pastor. Too, the natural inclination of church members to encourage or praise the pastor can lead a new Christian to *become conceited*.

Pride was the original sin of the *devil*, who presumed to become like God. (See Isa. 14:13-14.) Paul was concerned that a new convert would be subject to the same *judgment*. When people become believers, the church needs to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord before they assume roles of leadership.

At the other extreme from pride is *disgrace*. Another *trap* of the devil involves tempting pastors and other Christian leaders into lifestyles of sin. Not only among church members, but also with *outsiders*, pastors should maintain a *good reputation* by living in an undeniably Christlike manner.

The word for *reputation* literally means *witness*. If the pastor's conduct does not produce a good witness, non-believers could disparage the name of Christ. Believers can affirm men who demonstrate the characteristics of a faithful pastor. Whether in personal behavior, character, or leadership of his family, a good minister of Jesus Christ provides a role model the flock of God delights to follow.

VERSES 8-10

Deacons were never intended to be a board of directors or supervisors of the pastor. The apostles asked the congregation to select these men to serve under the direction of the pastors in order to free the pastors for prayer and proclamation of the Word. (See Acts 6:3-4.)

The term *deacon* means "one who ministers or serves." It is similar to the word Jesus used when He said He "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). Jesus provided the example of servant leadership that both pastors and deacons would do well to emulate.

The phrase *in the same way* suggests these qualities required for deacons are similar to those of pastors. Deacons should be *worthy of respect*. Paul used three negative terms to illustrate his meaning of the phrase *worthy of respect*. First, deacons should *sincere*. They cannot say one thing to one person and something else to another. Deacons must maintain integrity in all their interactions. They cannot put forth a righteous image at church while behaving like unbelievers in other dealings.

Second, like pastors, deacons must not be *indulging in much wine*. Deacons and pastors should set the example for the church of holy living.

A third qualification involved the deacon's attitude toward money. Deacons do not receive income

from the church, so this instruction obviously relates to business and personal financial affairs. They should not be greedy. Their attitude toward money ought to be generous, fair, and considerate of other people's needs. Sincere, sober, sacrificial living will result in the respect of the congregation and the world at large.

Understanding verse 9 requires comprehension of the phrase *deep truths of the faith*. Paul often referred to the mystery of the gospel. (See Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 6:19.) One aspect of the mystery involved God's making salvation available to Gentiles as well as Jews. The larger issue was the fact God would save people through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus and through His Spirit live within believers. (See Col. 1:25-27.)

Paul's admonition not only meant deacons should be followers of Christ, having the mystery of the faith personally, but also that they should *keep hold of this mystery with a clear conscience*. The word *keep hold* means not only to possess, but to preserve. Earlier in this epistle, Paul urged Timothy to have faith with a good conscience, unlike Hymenaeus and Alexander who "suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19-20).

Just as pastors should not be novices, prospective deacons should *first be tested*. Testing reflects the need for them to demonstrate consistency between the faith they profess and their daily practice. The congregation needs time to observe their faithfulness.

Only if there is nothing against them can they serve as deacons. The idea of having *nothing against them* does not mean they have achieved sinless perfection. Rather, prospective deacons should live so no one can accuse them of wrongdoing. Their reputations should be unblemished and merit the respect of the church.

Nowhere in Scripture does the idea of a deacon board appear. Paul used the phrase *serve as deacons* to describe what deacons do: they serve. Only those with servant hearts should be added to this group.

VERSE 11

While some translations render the word in verse 11 as *women*, and others support the use of "wives." Verses preceding and following this verse apply to the deacons. The insertion of descriptions for these women is more natural if the verse is a continuation of the deacons' qualifications.

If this verse refers to the deacons' wives, then, for men to serve as deacons, their wives also must be *worthy of respect*. Like the three qualifiers in verse 8, the definition of *worthy of respect* for the deacons' wives includes three examples. They must not be *malicious talkers*. No one should accuse them of gossip or speaking ill of others. They also should be *temperate*, vigilant to maintain proper personal conduct. In summary, these women should be *trustworthy in everything*, whether it is their families or their service in the church. We see examples of men serving as deacons in Acts 6:1-7 and of women as deacons in Romans 16:1.

VERSES 12-13

Like the pastors, a *deacon* should be *faithful to his wife*. The same arguments related to verse 2 apply here. Servants of the church should be faithful to their wives in every sense of the word. At the same time, deacons ought to *manage his children and his household well*. If these men are to serve the church well, they must demonstrate competency in leading their families.

Deacons should prove themselves worthy because of the privilege in serving the church. If they have served, they receive two benefits. First, they *gain an excellent standing*. Faithful servants earn the respect of the church. Second, by maintaining godly lives, they can exhibit *great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus*. The witness of their lives validates the witness of their words as they lead the church and share Christ with unbelievers.

Believers, especially church leaders, should honor God through their service to His church. In their personal reputations and their public actions, pastors and deacons have the opportunity and responsibility to glorify the Lord.

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