

The character of a church leader

1 Timothy 3:1-13

¹ Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ² Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

⁸ In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹ In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

¹² A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Titus 1:5-9

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1) First considerations of a leader

- They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.
- He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

2) The leader and his family

- Faithful to his wife
- The husband of one wife (KJV & ESV)
 - In some cultures, more than one wife is acceptable. However, that wasn't the case from the beginning. God created one woman for one man.
 - The church leader is to set the example of God's godly order within the home of being faithful to one wife.
- Is a good leader in the family
 - A man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.
 - He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

3) The leader and other people – how he treats others

- Jesus taught a lot, if not primarily, on how his disciples – the first leaders of the church – were to treat others.
- The summarizing statement is found in Matthew 7: 12
 - Matthew 7:12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
- Paul highlights some ways how a leader ought to treat others
 - Not overbearing
 - Not violent but gentle
 - Hospitable
 - Not quarrelsome

4) The moral character of the leader – how others perceive him

- A leader might treat other people well, but then have other noticeable character flaws that would hinder his walk with the Lord, and ruin his ministry.
- On the other hand, a good character is an example of Christlikeness in the leader, drawing others to Jesus.
 - He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap
 - The very first thing which needs to be said about Christian ministers of all kinds is that they are "under" people as their servants rather than "over" them (as their leaders, let alone their lords). Jesus made this absolutely plain. The chief characteristic of Christian leaders, he insisted, is humility not authority, and gentleness not power. *John Stott*
- Some examples of the leaders' character
 - Above reproach / Blameless upright / holy
 - Self-controlled / disciplined / temperate
 - Respectable / worthy of respect
 - Not given to drunkenness / not indulging in much wine
 - Not a lover of money / not pursuing dishonest gain
 - Not quick-tempered
 - Loves what is good
 - Sincere
 - Not malicious talkers
 - Trustworthy

5) The leader and ministry

- As we've seen not all leaders are teachers or preachers, but all ought to hold on the sound Biblical doctrine
 - Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
 - Must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.
- Elders / overseers ought to be able teach
- Although deacons are called to practical ministry in the church, let us look at the qualities of the first deacons in the church in Jerusalem
 - Acts 6:1-6 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."
 - ⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.
 - It's the Elders' responsibility to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word of God, not to look after the practical needs of the church members
 - It's the deacons' responsibility to take care of the practical needs of the church members
 - Deacons are to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, full of faith
 - They are instituted into their office of deacons by the laying on of hands and prayer
- Deacons can be as anointed for ministry as the Elders
 - Acts 6:8 Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.