

June 16, 2019

1 Timothy 3:1-13: Focus on Leadership

Introduction In his book *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, John Maxwell wrote, “everything rises and falls on leadership” (Maxwell, 267). This axiom applies equally as well to a church as any organization. In fact, one key to the growth and development of any organization or church is leadership. Paul recognized this as he wrote to Timothy. In this week’s lesson, we will see what Paul had to say to Timothy about the importance of having the right leaders in place in the church.

A Pastor’s Heart (1 Tim. 3:1). In 1 Timothy 3, Paul gives Timothy instructions that are intended to help the churches in Ephesus identify qualified individuals for two specific functions in the church: pastor and deacon. The chapter begins with a general statement of commendation. Paul claimed: “If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work” (1 Tim. 3:1). In this opening statement, Paul acknowledges the value of desiring this office. Two words merit attention. First, consider the word “aspire.” This Greek term describes “an ambitious seeking.” To seek this office, in other words, is a good thing. The second key term is the word “overseer.” This Greek term means to lead or give oversight in various situations. So, according to Paul, it is a good thing for someone to seek to give oversight in the church. Next, Paul moves to list the qualifications for this office.

A Pastor’s Character (1 Tim. 3:2-7). Even though seeking the office of overseer is a good thing (1 Tim. 3:1), the following verses make clear that not everyone is qualified to be in that office. Paul explained to Timothy how crucial it was for pastors to have the proper character traits. The list of traits Paul gives covers both the attitude and the actions of the leader. For example, Paul began the list noting that the overseer should be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2). The pastor does not have to be perfect, but this concept strongly emphasizes the need for the pastor to live his life in such a manner that no one can point a finger at him and blame him for being less than what God desires. Next, Paul lists several qualities that should be considered when a church is looking for a pastor. This list ranges from attributes like self-control to being sensible to being hospitable. The pastor’s character should be manifest in all areas of his life.

A Deacon’s Character (1 Tim. 3:8-13). After discussing the qualities needed for the pastor, Paul next moved to describe the traits that should characterize the deacon. Paul began the list of qualities this way: “Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect” (1 Tim. 3:8). Just as he did for the pastors, Paul listed very specific attributes that should define the man who serves in this capacity. Some of those qualities include not being hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, and being tested before they serve (1 Tim. 3:8-12). In addition to the men, Paul also addressed their wives (1 Tim. 3:11). Due to the unique nature of the role of a deacon, even their wives needed to be characterized in certain ways.

Conclusion Leadership in the church is vitally important. As Paul sought to help the churches in Ephesus, he explained specific character traits that should describe those who serve both as pastors and deacons. These offices are important. Those who serve in these capacities should be qualified.