

Discussion Questions

1. Where does charismata (gifts of the Spirit) fit in leadership appointments in the church today? - do we have different views now on leadership qualities to Paul's time in Ephesus?
2. How does 1 Timothy chapter 3 inform the testing and appointing of leaders in your church today? What would you keep from Paul's teaching and what needs some transposition to our time?
3. How do the leadership structures in your denomination of the church align and find relevance to the leadership we see in the New Testament churches today?
4. Given the lack of defined structure for all churches in the New Testament, what variety of leadership arrangements can we embrace today? What, in your preferred leadership arrangements, will best help guard sound doctrine of promote loving and ethical behaviour in the church?
5. How does Jesus' example as one who serves (Luke 22:27; Mark 10:45) impact on leadership in the church?
6. What support should we offer leaders in the light of Paul's bottom line in verse 7?



The first letter to timothy



Small Group Notes

Lessons on Life in the Church #How to be a good leader

Study No. 4

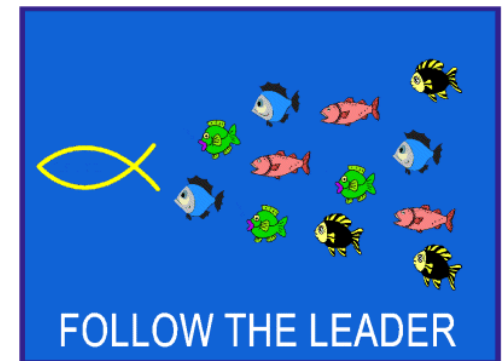
1 Tim 3:1

"Here is a trustworthy saying: whoever aspires to being an overseer desires a noble task."

READ 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Warm Up Exercise

1. Name a leader, living or deceased, we admire and why (include the attributes that make you admire them)
2. Are the attributes listed in 1 Timothy outdated?
3. What distinctions between secular leaders and Christian do you expect?



Recap

In our previous chapter, the apostle addressed several problems in public worship assemblies. Timothy had been charged with the task of a clean up operation regarding false teachers and their teaching in Paul's absence. In this chapter, the need for leaders who take "office" comes front and centre. What sort of leaders will the church at Ephesus (everywhere?) need? He talks about two groups: i) *episkopoi* or overseers, and ii) *diakonoi* or deacons, and then comments briefly on some women in vs. 11. This, once again, raises questions of gender. Was it reflective of a cultural context at Ephesus that women are mentioned only as wives, not as overseers or deacons? Is there an argument for a universal preference for men?



Church Leadership in the 1st Century AD

A New Testament survey might suggest that both overseers and deacons come under the umbrella category of *presbyteroi* or elders (originating from Jewish synagogue leaders e.g. Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7). *Episkopos* comes from Greek municipal leadership. Rather than looking for a set arrangement of church order in this letter, we should note with caution that the major denominations of the Christian church have all appealed at one time or another to this chapter of 1 Timothy to support their varying



views! The letter is written to an occasion and context, not as a treaty on holy orders in all churches. Paul is correcting abuses of theology and behaviour in churches. Timothy is an "itinerant on special assignment" according to Gordon Fee. We do not have here the settled arrangements of Bishop Ignatius (AD110), for example; no monarchical bishop. Like Paul, Timothy was to set an example in Christian behaviour (1 Tim 4:12). Apostolic functions like teaching, exhorting, rebuking, were also functions for elders and for Timothy. Acts 14:23

suggests that several leaders were appointed in the churches as Paul travelled. In the earliest New Testament letters there are *proistameno*i or those who are "over" the flock. Interestingly, none of the New Testament letters is written to these people directly to tell them to take charge of order or heresy. Philippians 1:1 for the first time in the New Testament is addressed to overseers and deacons, plural. So we can picture churches in

Q.11 Deacons must be "tested" before they serve according to vs. 10, and perhaps this means, "no less than bishops" as in the (NEB). But what testing should they receive? (vs. 2 perhaps?)

Note that the list of qualities in chapter 3 is not distinctively Christian, but intersects in places with the highest qualities expected in Hellenistic culture of the day. Thus Paul is insisting not only that they show Christian character (see 4:12 and 6:11,12), but that they also reflect ideals that will be aligned with the best of the culture of the day.

READ 1 Timothy 5:22, 24-25

Q.12 Note these criteria for disqualifying or disciplining erring elders. How do these correspond with the positive qualifications in the letter?

Q.13 What are ethics of appointing Christian leaders should be considered and where does forgiveness sit in the debate should they fall from grace?

Conclusion

Acts 20 suggests that, unlike in Crete (Titus 1:5), there already exists a number of elders at Ephesus where Timothy is instructed to minister in this letter. Why then this instruction in chapter 3? Again, it is the issue of false teachers and false teaching that governs the purpose of Paul's writing and must be considered in our interpretation. We've seen that chapter 3 gives qualities not a job description with duties.

Note that verse 7 points to Paul's "bottom line":

7 (the overseer) must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so as not to fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

DEACONS

Vss. 8-13 “Men” (NIV) does not appear in the Greek, but it is assumed in the context. Paul may mean “wives” in verse 11, and not, “women” as is possible, but whether he is speaking of wives of deacons or more broadly to a group of “women helpers” as is possible, we can’t be sure. If, like the NIV, we assume “wives” as correct, then the whole section relates to deacons and doesn’t include a special order of women in verse 11. Given the description of some women at Ephesus in 1 Tim 5:11-15 and 2 Tim 3:6-7 we have a stark contrast here. Some suggest that deacons are associated with the “seven” in Acts 6:1-6 but those men are not called deacons. *Diakonos* were table-waiters in the Greek world and that was part of the role of the “seven”. But they were also ministers of the Word among a specific group in response to a need. But how are deacons different in function to overseers in 1 Timothy 3? Apart from qualities and an implied bent towards service in their title, and the exhortation to serve in verse 13, we do not know what that serving looked like in particular at Ephesus. There is also reference to their attention to the Gospel (vs.9) to consider. What matters then, is not to seek to replicate the “office” today, but to look to the qualities required in the context for any leader/minister.



Q.9 What parallels and distinctive qualities can you find in these verses for deacons and women compared to those listed for overseers earlier in the chapter?

Q.10 Note the absence of “able to teach”. How does the reference in verse 9 to “deep truths” (see one of Paul’s favourite terms for the Gospel in 1 Cor. 2:7; 4:1; Eph. 3:3-9) affect our view of the difference between a deacon and overseer here?

many places with a number of leaders in partnership. When we look at key passages (1 Tim.3:1-2, 8; 5:17) and compare Acts 20:17 and 28, a partnership of various leaders seems likely at Ephesus, rather than one bishop over all. What did these “elders” do (overseers and deacons)? Interestingly this is not the focus of Paul’s letter. We do know they were to teach and to manage and care for the local church (1 Tim 3:3, 4-5; 5:17; Titus 1:9). Beyond that, we have no information here. It would make sense, given our last study notes and the commands in 1 Tim 2:11-15 that at this point in Ephesus there was no provision for women to lead. As suggested in the last study, this was not the case in some other churches in the New Testament, but a necessary limitation of the participation of women existed here. There is a cultural presupposition that most people would be married, thus an instruction about wives might be expected (1 Tim 3:11).



Study the Text– 1 Timothy 3:1-13

OVERSEERS

Vs. 1 Q.1 Is the “saying” pointing to the person or the position? What implications does this have?

Vss. 2-3 Being “**above reproach**” pertains to observable conduct, and is

Virtues of an Overseer in 1 Tim 3:2-3

E.g. “one wife” = faithful in marriage; fidelity

the umbrella for the following eleven qualities that should characterize an overseer. List the eleven in your own words:

Q.2 Which of these (qualities) would be most difficult for people aspiring to being a church leader in today's context in your opinion?

Vss. 4-6 Paul addresses two other concerns:

1. A leader must have an exemplary family (4-5)
2. Must have some experience of faith (6)

It can be argued sociologically and implied in biblical texts that heads of churches were often also heads of households in the 1st Century (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:16; 16:17). The early churches often met in houses (e.g. Acts 5:42; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Philemon 1:2). This helps make more of 1 Tim 3:5. The Greek word *oikos* is "family" or "household", and the word for "govern" or "manage" is the same used of those who were put "over" congregations in the early church. Home and *ekklesia* (church) had a strong connection where no church buildings were in place.

Q.4 What impact does this cultural background have on our reading of verses 4—6 for those aspiring to leadership in the 1st Century?

Q.5 What link between managing a church and managing a family might have existed?



Q.6 NB. "to rule" and "to care for" are linked in verse 5. What, then, might distinguish a Christian household from others of that time? How does Jesus teaching about "ruling" and his own example impact on our understanding of a leader's way of governing?

Vs. 7 The end of verse 6 might imply that a bad reputation with the onlooking pagan society (as was Paul's concern in 2:2, 11-12) might lead to the devil's trap. Paul had to defend himself in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-10 from a perceived reputation issue.

Q.7 Can you cite examples of church leaders today being slandered (rightly or wrongly) by the general public?

Q.8 What are the implications of the overseer being disgraced in the public eye? Doesn't this promote a "keeping up appearances" issue?

