

Shepherds & Servants 7

Lead The Church

1 Timothy 3:1, 8, 14-15

Memory Verses: 1 Timothy 3:15

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

In 1 Timothy, Paul tells his son in the faith, Timothy, that he should; 1) protect the Gospel, 2) praise God for his mercy, 3) hold to the faith, 4) pray for the people, 5) know and obey God's call, and 6) partner with women.

For you, as covenant partner with the church, you must do these in order to show your love for the church and Christ. But for the Elders and Deacons these things are necessary for leadership. Everything we've discussed and are going to discuss through this book is directed first to the Spiritual Shepherds and Sacrificial Servants of the Church. If the church doesn't have the proper leadership in place representing both the office of Elder and Deacon, and if those leaders aren't qualified according to scripture, it doesn't matter how energetic, exciting, wealthy, or popular your church is... it will at the least remain unhealthy and ineffective or at worst it will fail spectacularly.

You've all heard of churches or ministries that were at the top of the mainstream Christian world and without warning crashed like a meteor. All of them failed primarily because of poor leadership. Leadership is crucial to a church.

I need a volunteer. You see that bucket over there? I need you to put this ball in that bucket okay? But first I need you to be blindfolded. The way you are going to do it is I am going to lead you by my instructions. So I have to be a good leader and you have to be a good listener and it will all work out right? Okay. **Leads but answers phone and ignores them.** Oh, I'm sorry. I got a text I had to answer. The point is if you don't have the right leadership in place you will fail. Elders support Deacons, and Deacons support Elders. One without the other is like having distracted leaders leading the blind. And we can't afford to have leaders who are distracted, unengaged, or unqualified to lead, or they will lead the people astray and wreck the church.

With the proper leadership we will become all that God wants us to be and reach those he wants us to reach. With poor leadership we will sink like the Titanic. Just look at Paul's purpose for writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:14-15. We need to know how we ought to behave in the household of God; the church, as to show the world the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Nothing about a dying or failing church brings God glory. And all churches will fail without godly leadership. The point is

simple; **Without both qualified Elders and Deacons leading, a church cannot succeed in bringing God the glory He deserves.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First let's look at Elders. **The Church Must Have Elders Who Lead As Spiritual Shepherds.** So for over two months now you have heard us use the terms Elders and Deacons, referring to Elders as Spiritual Shepherds and Deacons as Sacrificial Servants. And so far we've tried to show you how everything Paul is saying is first to those who would hold one of these two offices and secondly to the rest of the church. So Paul begins to address the Elders specifically concerning their qualifications. Look with me at 1 Timothy 3:1. "If anyone desires the office of overseer, or elder, he desires a noble task." We will come back to this next week, but for now the point is being an Elder is considered a noble task. It is a noble calling to be called to lead in this way.

But you may be asking, how do we know that Elders and Deacons are specifically the two leadership offices prescribed to the church according to scripture? Once again, we are moving to an Elder / Deacon model for one noble reason, we believe it is Biblical. So where do we find it in the Word? 1 Timothy chapter 3.

Let's look at what the Bible says about Elders throughout the New Testament and take note of what we find here. First, note that **Elders are called as the primary spiritual leaders and overseers of the church.** They are the shepherds in charge and care of the local flock. Look with me at 1 Peter 5:1-2a, 1 Timothy 5:17a, and Acts 20:28. They shepherd, they give oversight, they rule, they give careful attention to the flock, and they care for the church.

Second, note that **Elders are called to Shepherd through teaching the word of God.** Look with me at Acts 6:4. The reason the office of Deacon was instituted was solely for the fact that the Elders needed to devote themselves to the ministry of the word. In 1 Timothy 5:17c we see that they labor in preaching and teaching. Look also at Titus 1:9. And according to 1 Timothy 3:2, the only requirement for Elders that is not included with Deacons is "able to teach." Denoting that their unique calling is to teach the Word. This means they are to preach the exhortation of scripture with sound doctrine. But it also means they are to care for individuals by discipling and counseling them in scripture. There is no one you should be able to trust more with scripture than your elders.

Third, note that **Elders minister through prayer and intercession for the sick.** Look at James 5:14. No one should pray more than the elders. To be an elder means to be a prayer warrior and intercessor. When asked, elders need to be ready to pray for the sick and anoint them with oil for healing.

Lastly, note that **there must be a plurality of Elders in the local**

church. Every single place where the leadership of the local church is mentioned the word elder is pluralized. On occasion, when referring to a particular elder, it will be used in the singular, but it is clear that the Bible prescribes a plurality of eldership. The church in Jerusalem had elders – **Acts 11:30**, **Acts 15**. The church in Lystra had a plurality of elders in every one of their churches – **Acts 14:23**. The church in Ephesus had a plurality of elders – **Acts 20:17**. You see the working of the plurality of elders in Antioch as they pray for, ordain, and send off Barnabas and Paul – **Acts 13:1-3**. There were elders in every dispersed church Peter speaks to – **1 Peter 5:5**. And as we've already seen, the sick call the elders (plural) to pray for them. – **James 5:14**.

Biblically there is not arguing this point. Every local church is called to have a plurality of elders who function as the overseers, teachers, and spiritual shepherds of the church body! If you are to have a healthy, bible based church, you must be led by Spiritual Shepherds. **Without both qualified Elders and Deacons leading, a church cannot succeed in bringing God the glory He deserves.**

So we see that the church needs elders and but also.... **The Church Must Have Deacons Who Lead As Sacrificial Servants**. But the office of elder is not the only one prescribed by the Bible. Deacons are the second office which is needed to lead a healthy church. We see Elders mentioned starting in **1Tim 3:1** and we see Deacons mentioned starting in **1Tim 3:8**. "Deacons likewise." Meaning, like Elders, Deacons lead. And again, according to **3:14-15** they lead in the correct order and behavior of the local church to promote truth and the glory of God. Without both Elders and Deacons we will not have a church in order that serves as a pillar of the truth of God.

We can see the institution of the office of deacon by the elders and apostles in **Acts 6:1-6**. Note, that **deacons sacrificially serve the church body**. The first order of service prescribed here is specifically to help serve the widows. You will notice later in 1 Timothy that Paul dedicates almost an entire chapter to the care of widows. It is a big deal to care for widows and those who are in need. In order to free up the Elders for their ministry, this duty is appointed to the deacons. But that doesn't mean that deacons only serve food to widows. I think the principle shown here is that deacons, serve in every facet of local church ministry in order to free up the elders for the ministry of oversight, prayer, teaching and discipling. They should serve as leaders of financial matters. They should serve as leaders of facility issues. They should serve as leaders of ministry areas; students, kids, benevolence, missions, etc... And less we see the office of Deacon as a lesser ministry, **1 Timothy 3:13** reminds deacons of what's at stake. When they serve the church they are looked upon with respect as leaders. Serving as a

deacon also increases the faith of the body of Christ because they can tangibly see the hands and feet of Christ. They represent the best leader, Jesus Christ, who led as a servant. So if you are to have a healthy, bible based church, you must be led by Sacrificial Servants called Deacons.

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Application

So how does this affect our church going forward? Well on October 18th we will be voting for the new Constitution and By-Laws along with new Standing Rules which basically outline a change in our leadership structure here at the church so that we will have a plurality of Elders and a team of Deacons who lead specific areas of ministry in the church.

You may ask, why the change. It is really two fold. First, it is biblical. For the greater part of our history as a church we have functioned as a Deacon led church with a singular lead Pastor. While this model isn't sinful, it isn't exactly what I would call faithful to scripture. If your Deacons function as Elders then we are just splitting hairs over semantics. I think our problems extend beyond the definitions of words. Even if our Deacons were functioning as elders then who were our deacons? And what was the pastor if not an elder along with the deacons? If the pastor was an elder and the deacons functioned as both deacons and elders then where was your plurality of eldership. It's confusing isn't it. We don't want there to be confusion. Rather, we want to know exactly how we are to behave in the correct order of the church. The biblical model of a local church is a plurality of elders who lead and a team of deacons who serve in specific ministry areas as designated by the elders.

Secondly, it is functional. We believe this model gives more leadership, not less. We also believe this model allows for more clarity in roles and ministry responsibilities. It also gives more ownership to leaders and partners in the particular ministries they serve in. More importantly it gives us a working organizational chart which can easily be followed. Elders lead in the various oversight and teaching ministry areas of the church and designate deacons to lead the specific ministries in those areas. For example, let's say I am designated the Elder of teaching and oversight. I may have a Deacon serving under me as the deacon of finance and another as the deacon of trustees and another as the deacon of missions. Maybe another one of our Elders is the Elder over adult discipleship and he has deacons under him serving over growth electives, prayer, small groups and d-groups. And maybe, not that I've thought about it too much, another Elder over our Next Gen ministries and they have a deacon of children's ministries and a deacon of student ministries under them.

Conclusion

The Bottom line is that we need to have a biblical leadership structure and we think this is it. We truly believe this will bring us in alignment with scripture and be a better way for us to function as we move forward as a church. We've prayed about it. We've studied it. We've dedicated a year and a half to this and we are asking you to come along side us in prayer and in study to vote in unity with us over these changes. **Without both qualified Elders and Deacons leading, a church cannot succeed in bringing God the glory He deserves.**

One last thing, you may ask, how do we know who can or will be Elders or Deacons. I'm glad you asked. Over the next two weeks me and Steve Dishman are going to be going over the qualifications of Elders and Deacons as stated in 1 Timothy 3. This is our primary indicator of who is an Elder or Deacon and who should serve as one at Stone Creek Church. So don't miss the next two weeks.

Right now as we close would you pray for us as we move towards this change in our church?