

Small Group Discussion + Leader Guide

Sunday - September 13, 2026

Preached By: Matt Alexander

“The Standards for Shepherd”

Message #5

“Set In Order: God’s Design for His Church” 1 Timothy Series

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Homiletical Bridge:

CIT: Paul provided Timothy with clear qualifications for the office of an overseer.

Thesis: Our overseers must meet the qualifications provided by the apostle Paul.

Proposition: I want FC's overseers to meet the qualifications provided by the apostle Paul.

PQ: What are the qualifications of an overseer?

- 1. The Desire for the Work — v. 1**
- 2. The Discipline of His Character — vv. 2–3**
- 3. The Doctrine He Can Teach — v. 2**
- 4. The Demonstration of His Home — vv. 4–5**
- 5. The Durability of His Witness — vv. 6–7**

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Encourage group members to have their Bibles open to 1 Timothy 3:1–7 throughout the discussion. Remind the group that this passage is not only about evaluating leaders — it is an invitation for every believer to examine their own character in light of God's Word.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **The Desire for the Work** — A qualified overseer genuinely desires the work of shepherding, not merely the recognition of a title.
2. **The Discipline of His Character** — Being above reproach is the controlling qualification. A shepherd must govern himself before he can lead others.
3. **The Doctrine He Can Teach** — A shepherd must know God's Word well enough to understand it, explain it, defend it, and apply it.
4. **The Demonstration of His Home** — The home is a proving ground for shepherding. Faithfulness in God's house cannot be separated from faithfulness in his own house.
5. **The Durability of His Witness** — Giftedness can appear quickly. Maturity takes time. A shepherd's character must be proven over time — at church, at home, and in the community.

OPENING QUESTION

Use this question to get the conversation started. Keep it light and accessible.

Think of a leader — in any area of life — who genuinely earned your trust and respect. What was it about that person that made them trustworthy? What qualities stood out to you?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The Desire for the Work — 1 Timothy 3:1

1. Pastor Matt drew a distinction between desiring a title and desiring a task. Why does that distinction matter so much in pastoral ministry? Where else in life does that same distinction show up?
2. He quoted one pastor who said, "Don't be so concerned about the title, be concerned about your towel." What does a towel represent in the context of leadership? How does that image challenge the way our culture typically thinks about positions of authority?
3. Read 1 Peter 5:1–4. According to this passage, what motivations should drive an elder's service? What motivations should not? How can a congregation help cultivate the right kind of desire in its leaders?

The Discipline of His Character — 1 Timothy 3:2–3

4. Pastor Matt said, "A shepherd must govern himself before he can lead others." Why is self-governance such a foundational requirement for leadership? What happens to a church when its leaders lack it?
5. The sermon used the image of a crack in a wall — public giftedness can cover private character flaws for a season, but eventually the foundation shows. Have you seen this principle play out in real life? What does it reveal about the relationship between character and platform?
6. Paul's list in verses 2–3 touches on sexuality, thinking, appetites, temper, relationships, and money. Which of these areas do you think is most underestimated or overlooked when churches evaluate leaders? Why?

The Doctrine He Can Teach — 1 Timothy 3:2

7. Pastor Matt referenced Titus 1:9, where Paul says an elder must hold firm to sound doctrine so he can both instruct and refute error. Why is the ability to refute error just as important as the ability to teach truth? What is at stake when a shepherd cannot do both?
8. The sermon described two dangers: a man who communicates well but lacks biblical substance, and a man who has knowledge but cannot communicate it clearly. Which of these do you think is more common today? Which is more dangerous? Why?
9. The sermon said FC needs pastors who are "men of the Book — not entertainers, not motivational speakers." How can a congregation encourage and protect a culture of biblical depth? What responsibility do church members carry in this?

The Demonstration of His Home — 1 Timothy 3:4–5

10. Paul asks in verse 5: if a man cannot manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? What is the logic behind that argument? Do you find it compelling? Why or why not?
11. Pastor Matt said, "The platform can become the showroom. The home is the workshop." What does that mean practically? How should this shape the way a church gets to know its leaders?
12. The sermon was careful to note that Paul is not demanding perfect children — no father can regenerate his child's heart. What is Paul actually requiring? How do we hold this standard faithfully without applying it in ways Scripture does not intend?

The Durability of His Witness — 1 Timothy 3:6–7

13. Pastor Matt said, "You can grow a weed in weeks. You cannot grow an oak tree in weeks." What does spiritual maturity look like that simply cannot be replicated by giftedness or enthusiasm? How does time reveal things about a person that nothing else can?

14. Paul says the overseer must be well thought of by outsiders. Why does a leader's reputation outside the church matter? What does it protect, and what does it reflect?
15. The sermon warned: "Need does not erase qualification. Talent does not equal maturity. Popularity does not replace testing." Why is it tempting for a church to lower its standards when there is a perceived need? What are the long-term consequences of doing so?

The Good Shepherd

16. Pastor Matt closed by pointing to Jesus as the only perfect Shepherd, referencing John 10:11. How does keeping Jesus as the Chief Shepherd in view protect both pastors and congregations from placing too much weight on any human leader?
17. The sermon ended with an invitation for self-examination — not examining others, but allowing God's Word to examine us. What did this passage stir in you personally?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or two of the following to discuss or commit to as a group:

Pray specifically for your pastors. The sermon called the church to pray for their overseers' character, marriages, doctrine, humility, and endurance. Commit as a group to pray for your pastors by name this week — not just for their sermons, but for their lives.

Examine your own household. Whether or not you are pursuing pastoral ministry, the qualities Paul describes are the fruit of a Spirit-filled life. Take an honest look at how you lead, serve, and relate to those closest to you. Where is there a crack that needs to be brought to Jesus rather than covered over?

Encourage a godly man. Think of a man in your church who quietly demonstrates these qualities — faithfulness, self-control, care for others, love for Scripture, integrity at home. Reach out to him this week and encourage him. Sometimes the men most qualified to lead are the least likely to pursue it without encouragement from others.

Resist the pull toward celebrity. Reflect on where you tend to look for spiritual input — sermons, podcasts, social media accounts. Ask honestly whether you are drawn to gifted communicators or to men whose lives demonstrate the qualifications Paul describes. Make adjustments where needed.

Bring something to Jesus. The closing invitation called every person to respond — whether to salvation, repentance, reconciliation, or surrender. If God's Word exposed something in you through this sermon, do not let it remain unaddressed. Bring it to Christ this week.

CLOSING PRAYER PROMPTS

Close your time together in prayer. Consider praying through the following:

- Thank God for the gift of faithful shepherds and for the perfect leadership of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd.
- Ask God to raise up qualified men in your church who love His Word, love their families, and love His people.
- Confess any area where your own character does not reflect the fruit of the Spirit.
- Pray for those in your group who may be wrestling with the gospel invitation from this sermon.

"And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." — 1 Peter 5:4