

1 Timothy Lesson 9

1 Timothy 3:1-16 – Elders, Deacons, and the Common Confession

INTRODUCTION / REVIEW

Paul wrote 1 Timothy to Timothy around AD 62-67, after his release from Roman imprisonment, to guide him in confronting false teachers in Ephesus and establishing proper assembly function. This letter, preserved for us, helps us understand God, Jesus Christ, and proper conduct in God's household. Paul begins with his apostleship by God's command, addressing Timothy as a beloved, faithful protégé.

We are completing 1 Timothy 3. Paul has moved from defending sound doctrine and the gospel of grace (chapter 1) to proper conduct in prayer and assembly life (chapter 2), into the necessary character of those who would lead and serve God's household (chapter 3).

Last time we worked carefully through verses 1-7: the qualifications for overseers (elders/pastors). We saw that the office is a noble aspiration when a man already demonstrates proven character in his home, his habits, and his handling of the Word. We answered the first two interpretive questions, and we need to answer the third.

CONCLUSION / ELDERS

Question 3. What are not listed in the qualifications that are typically thought of as qualifications for evangelical churches? Are these biblically legitimate?

- Demonstrated prior ministry experience, like serving in associate roles or missions.
- Biblical counseling ability and experience.
- Ordination or formal licensing by a church body or association
- Formal theological education, such as a seminary degree (e.g., Master of Divinity), is often required for in-depth doctrinal training.
- A confirmed internal calling from God.

Are these legitimate?

- Experience is good, and elders are supposed to be tested. The question is how this qualification is implemented. Today, I think this is necessary, but do not force a strict experience ladder.
- I love biblical counseling. A pastor should be helping people in personal discipleship, guidance through problems, keeping a biblical perspective, etc. All of this aligns with being a shepherd for the flock of God. However, one must be very careful. Most “biblical counseling” courses and books are theological, not exegetical, and garbage.
- Ordination or a formal license can provide some assurances for other churches that do not know the candidate well. This all depends on who is doing the ordination. But

1 Timothy Lesson 9

1 Timothy 3:1-16 – Elders, Deacons, and the Common Confession

this is extra-biblical. Ordination does not give someone divine or the Holy Spirit's permission, and there is no uniform process.

- A formal theological education is not a bad thing (depending on the school). It is good to branch out and understand different theologies (especially ones that are wrong) to demonstrate stability and ability to defend the truth. But to make that mandatory misses the point of training and education. If the candidate can demonstrate a level of hermeneutics and theological prowess without a degree, what is the point of getting a degree?
- Internal Calling – This is unbiblical. A subjective feeling or skill is not a calling from God, and the gift lists have been misinterpreted and applied to elders/pastors. There is zero indication that a person has to be called. The first line is that a person desires it, stretches for it. A calling is a mandate from God.

In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul affirms aspiring to oversight as noble, providing qualifications centered on character and Biblical skill to protect the assembly and model godliness. The overseer role, synonymous with elder/pastor, emphasizes watchful care. Traits like fidelity, self-control, and teaching ability ensure leaders reflect doctrinal maturity, countering false teaching. This guides assemblies today: Select leaders who embody grace, fostering growth in truth (Ephesians 4:11-16), living in accordance with identity.

Challenge: How have you evaluated a pastor, a church? Where do we need to change our minds to make sure we conform with biblical truth?

DEACONS LIKEWISE

1 Timothy 3:8-13 — Deacons Likewise

“Likewise” (ὡσαύτως) – the same high standard of observable character applies to this list as it does to elders. The list is shorter because for deacons, it would appear, (διδασκτικός didaktikos) teaching is missing. The fact that they are to be tested (examined, approved after evaluation) indicates that this is not simply a volunteer's position rather it is one that must be evaluated and found to have a good character and solid spiritual maturity.

The word “deacon” here is a noun, the word “διάκονος diakonos.” This word is used 29 times in the Greek New Testament. Four times this word is translated as “deacon,” two of which are here. Seven times it is translated as minister. Minister means “a servant, attendant, or agent who performs duties for another; one who administers or provides aid.” Minister is a transliteration of the Latin and simply means servant or attendant.

Twenty times “διάκονος diakonos” is translated servant. The use of this word seemed to take on an official capacity where there were recognized individuals who were designated

1 Timothy Lesson 9

1 Timothy 3:1-16 – Elders, Deacons, and the Common Confession

as servants of a local assembly. But let's ask a question. What do deacons do? Notice that this section does not outline the responsibilities. Their domain is found in the name, faithful service. All of the "office of deacon" laid out by various denominations are extra-biblical, or they try to list out what "services" they are responsible for. Some have this as a paid position. Having a listed position where candidates are considered and a title, and in some cases, a salary is fine. But to tie it to a biblical office of "deacon" is not the intent of this passage. A "διάκονος diakonos" is simply a servant of the church, one who is relied upon for whatever needs arise. Plus, in the context of elder/overseer/pastor, this seems to be a proving ground.

Verse 11 – γυνή gunē – The question of women deaconesses has the faulty assumption that this is a leadership office in the church. Can a woman be a recognized servant of a local assembly? Yes, but notice that the bridge is cut to overseer due to them being separated out.

Verse 12 – This reiteration tells us that any recognized servants in the church need to have a positive example in their home life.

Verse 13 - Being a good servant to the local body is a high standing.

High standing – βαθμός καλῶς bathmos kalos – The word for standing is rooted in "baino," which indicates an embarkment. The meaning of the word means to step or rank; the idea is a reward platform. What is not usually picked up on is that this is the same word group for "bēma," the evaluation seat. To serve the body formally is a highly rewardable work.

What this should not be is a sought-after position for power or prestige within the local assembly. What this has become for many churches is not the exact intent of this passage.

Deacon is both the activity (serving) and the recognized role. People who provide a faithful service are indispensable to the health of a local assembly.

Verse 14-15 – Paul states that what he has written thus far has a simple main point; the behavior of the people in the confines of the household of God, and the current pillar and disseminator of truth is the Church represented in the local assembly.

THE PRIMARY TRUTH

Verse 16 is the primary truth: Who is Jesus? This "common confession" is simply about Jesus and some basic facts; this is not everything about Jesus, but it is some of the most prominent things. Written to Timothy in Ephesus, a city saturated with emperor worship, Artemis cult, and magic, this common acknowledgment is the direct antithesis to the culture of the day, but as we know, it is also the antithesis for every culture.

1 Timothy Lesson 9

1 Timothy 3:1-16 – Elders, Deacons, and the Common Confession

Revealed in the flesh – The eternal Son took on humanity (John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-7; Hebrews 2:14). This is the incarnation, God entering history in a physical body. Revealed in the flesh may also have a secondary reference to his death, since one can only die if in the flesh, which counteracts any idea that Christ only "appeared" human.

Vindicated in the Spirit – "Vindicated/justified;" declared righteous. At the resurrection, the Holy Spirit publicly declared Jesus to be the righteous Son of God (Romans 1:4: "declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the Spirit of holiness").

Seen by angels – Angels witnessed the entire career of Christ: at His birth (Luke 2:13-14), temptation (Matthew 4:11), resurrection (Matthew 28:2), and ascension (Acts 1:10-11). They are spectators of the drama of redemption (1 Peter 1:12 - "things into which angels long to look").

Proclaimed among the nations – The gospel has gone out to the Gentiles; this is the present reality of the mission (Romans 16:26). Ephesus itself was a major center for this proclamation.

Believed on in the world – People from every nation are being persuaded that the message about Jesus is true. This is the response God desires (1 Timothy 2:4).

Taken up in glory – The ascension (Acts 1:9-11). Christ is now enthroned at God's right hand, and believers are waiting for His return and to be co-heirs when He takes His throne.

1 Timothy Lesson 9

1 Timothy 3:1-16 – Elders, Deacons, and the Common Confession

1 Timothy 3:1-16 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

Ephesians 4:11-16 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Philippians 2:5-7 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

1 Timothy Lesson 9

1 Timothy 3:1-16 – Elders, Deacons, and the Common Confession

but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Hebrews 2:14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

Romans 1:4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Luke 2:13-14 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

Matthew 4:11 Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.

Matthew 28:2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it.

Acts 1:10-11 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

1 Peter 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

Romans 16:26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith.

1 Timothy 2:4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Acts 1:9-11 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”