

1 Timothy 3 Standards for Servants

Why should this be interesting to me?

1. No secrets in Christianity – no hidden or deeper truth. It’s all laid out here for you; we’ve all got access to the same data. Pastors and others aren’t initiated into any special, hidden, mystic knowledge.

- Many religions give power to their leaders and no one is allowed to question the leaders. Not so with Christianity. It’s a built in system for keeping leadership accountable.

2. It shows us how we should be doing church - there should be leaders

- This is the downside of home group style movements or doing your own thing.
- God appoints leaders and endows them with gifts for serving you, and gives you gifts for serving others.

3. Although they specifically apply to leaderships and servant positions in the church, these are lists of desirable behavior and character for us all. The goal for every Christian, regardless of title, is Christ-likeness and these verses spell out for us some of what that looks like.

- Remember: Christianity is not just the message of what God saves you *from*, it is also about what He saves you *to*. After He has plucked your life up out of the pit, now what? How should we live, by His strength and under His instruction?

- o Mega-theme of 1 Timothy- right doctrine leads to right living – its got to be right in your head before your heart and your hands can reflect it. And then, if you truly believe it, you be trying to truly do it. That’s the true test of faith – these lists are a set of external proofs of internal commitment and change
- o by the end of the chapter we’ll also see how its possible

- The bottom line for these qualifications is that they represent men and women who are governed, who are under authority, and who, as a result of being governed, can be expected to govern well themselves – at home, at work, and in the church.

1 This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, [\[fn1\]](#) he desires a good work.

bishop – literally, overseer (NIV/ESV) ἐπισκοπή *episcopo*

- Three terms used interchangeably
 - o Elder – presbuteros – describes the man
 - o Bishop – episcopos – describes the ministry/position
 - o Pastor – poimainno (shepherd) - describes the method

- Different types of church government – no one type required by the NT
 - o Bishop – one man who leads – Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopalian, Methodist
 - o Presbyterian – a group who leads – Presbyterian
 - o Congregational – the group leads themselves - Baptist – (democratic) influential on US politics – if you can rule yourself in church, why not on earth?
 - o Ours – a hybrid of all three – based on the model of Moses in the OT
 - I lead, teach
 - Assistant Pastors minister – ours are older, wiser, more experienced men
 - Board directs
 - Congregation is equipped for ministry including unappointed deacons.

“It’s a good work” - How you get into ministry in CC?

- Start doing something – see a need and meet it
- Be confirmed – are you effective in it – desire, joy, and effectiveness
- Be called – first by God, recognized by the body and leadership
 - o Usually, they all kind of occur together, there are not distinct phases
- Be found faithful – wear well with it, ministry isn’t always “fun,” will you keep going even when it’s not? That really exposes your motive – are you serving for yourself, or for God?
- And, as all of this is going on, you continue to grow in your walk with God because they are some proofs that people will be looking for:

Qualifications

2 A bishop then must be

blameless, (NIV/ ESV above reproach)

- with no proven charges against them – then general tenor of his life is righteousness
- moral failure = step down, rebuke in the presence of all

the husband of one wife,

- Literally “a one-woman man” – does not prohibit those who have been married before and then divorced, and does not prohibit those who are not married – it’s just saying that his present conduct should be that of a man who is totally and completely devoted to one woman – his wife.
 - o We don’t have a problem with physical polygamy in the West, but we do have a problem with virtual polygamy – so this means no paper wives, no digital wives, no dream wives (accept her as she is)
 - be satisfied with who you have, don’t be dreaming of or desiring anyone or anything else, be content.
 - Remember, Jesus is always after your heart – it doesn’t matter how good your relationship looks from the outside – your heart can still be this nasty, cancerous, festering wound – so let Him heal that and give yourself totally to one God and one woman.

temperate, (NIV/ESV – self-controlled)

sober-minded,

of good behavior, (NIV – respectable)

hospitable,

- Approachable, you ought to be able to talk to him
- Difference between hospitality and entertaining

able to teach;

- different men have different giftings – pulpit, home group, counseling – not all have to be the best speakers, but they should know the truth and be able to communicate it well in some setting

[3](#) not given to wine, (NIV - not given to drunkenness; ESV – not a drunkard; literally, “not lingering beside the wine”)

- problem is not with consumption, it’s with being controlled – remember the major focus here in these lists is that elders and deacons are in control of their lives.
- Jesus drank wine, in chapter five Paul will tell Timothy to drink some wine to help his stomach, we see people drinking wine throughout the Bible – there’s not a problem with *drinking it*, there is a problem with *being controlled by it*. There is a definite prohibition against getting drunk.
- Drinking is becoming ‘cool’ among certain Christians today who want to show off that they can have a glass or have a beer because it’s not forbidden in Scripture – I don’t have a problem with a Christian having a glass of wine or a beer, but two things should always govern your actions
 - o #1 be aware that others might have a problem with it, and be sensitive to that, don’t go causing unnecessary problems – don’t flaunt your liberty in a way that harms others
 - o #2 with all reverence, Jesus is your drinking buddy – if it was OK for him to have a glass, it’s OK for you, but you need to ask yourself – can I toast Him? If not, it’s probably time to stop.

not violent,

not greedy for money, (NIV/ESV – not a lover of money)

- important because you have your hands on the Lord’s money and resources, and you will give an account
- Both poor and rich can be lovers of money, but both can also be free of this disease

[\[fn2\]](#) but gentle,

not quarrelsome,

not covetous;

- we can even covet good things, i.e. another person's ministry – “how come they get to..?”
- what's the difference then between coveting and desire? Who do you most want to see satisfied – yourself or God and the people?

4 one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

- Being a parent teaches you some things about how to minister to others – the two are linked – I am a WAY better pastor now that I am a dad and I hope that as the kids grow I will grow too because God teaches you stuff as a parent that applies to how you serve others.
- The important criteria here is ruling the house well – the emphasis is on the rules, not the outcomes.
 - o kids will always be defiant at some point or in some way, no one has perfect kids, and pastor's kids face some special pressures
 - o what is important is that the rule of the house is obvious, even if there is rebellion
- we all rebel against authority at times – even God's kids rebelled against His good rule.

6 not a novice (NIV – recent convert), lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

- people may not like you because they don't like Jesus, but never let somebody not like Jesus because of you.
- If even the unbelievers who know see a problem in your life and character, you definitely shouldn't be in church leadership.
 - o But don't just accept that – if that many doctors are pointing out the disease, come to Jesus for healing and be changed!

8 Likewise deacons

- We don't appoint them, but if you know what they do, you'll know who they are
- Elders/pastors primarily meet spiritual needs, deacons primarily meet physical needs, more of a “hands on” ministry.
 - o but had spiritual requirements
 - Acts 6 full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom
 - Instruction Jesus gave to the 12 Disciples – (Speaking about the difference between leaders in the Greek culture were so highly esteemed and better than those they ruled) Mark 10:43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant (deacon). 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served (deaconed), but to serve (to deacon), and to give His life a ransom for many.”
- We should all be part elder, part deacon
 - o Elders – never be too good to roll up your sleeves

- Deacons – never be afraid to speak
- After all, we do it all to follow the example of Jesus, and with His strength – if it needs to be done, do it.

must be reverent, (NIV – worthy of respect; ESV - dignified)

not double-tongued, (NIV – sincere)

not given to much wine, (ESV – not addicted to much wine)

not greedy for money, (NIV – not pursuing dishonest gain; ESV – not greedy for dishonest gain)

9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

- not required to be able to teach, but need to have a good understanding of the gospel.

10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless.

11 Likewise, *their* wives

- question here as to whether this means the wives of deacons or deaconesses – ‘their’ is not there in the Greek – it’s just ‘Likewise, women’ – so the question is, can women serve as deacons all by themselves, or only as part of a husband wife team? Well, the answer we seem to find throughout Scripture is that they can definitely serve.
 - Romans 16:1 – Phoebe, a servant (deacon) of the church there
 - Women who followed Jesus and provided for Him
 - Practical outreach of hospitality, making the church comfortable, responding to the practical needs of families – meals, etc. It’s all ministry, and it’s pleasing to God and a blessing to those who receive it.

So, these women who serve, either on their own, or with their husbands,

must be reverent (NIV – worthy of respect; ESC - dignified), not slanderers,

- slanderers – Grk: diabolos – Spanish: Diablo – devils; Satan – ha satan “the accuser”
- be careful of what you say about one another – love covers over a multitude of sins “if you can’t say something nice, you probably shouldn’t say anything at all.”
 - Even on Facebook and Twitter – you don’t need to type everything that enters into your mind

temperate, faithful in all things.

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well.

13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

So, most of the requirements for elders and deacons are the same, and they’re qualities that we should all aspire to. They can be summed up like this:

When looking for leaders and servants in the church you are looking for people who

Think right – good doctrine

Speak right – not only teach the right things, but the right things come out of their mouths

Act right – their lives are an example of what they say and what they believe

How is all of this possible?

[14](#) These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; [15](#) but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. [16](#) And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God [\[fn3\]](#) was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.

It's Jesus that makes this all possible.

The Gospel – God forgives us, but He also empowers us, and gifts us

Is there a desire in you to serve Him? If so, you desire a good thing and you need to ask for more. There is nothing in your past that can keep you from serving Him in the future if you will just surrender yourself to Him today.

This is what we were made for – we all spend our lives serving something – are you giving yourself away to a false God, or to the one, true, living God? Take some time today and come up with the answer because different jobs have different qualifications and you are either serving someone or something that is pulling you away from God, or you are serving Him and building His kingdom and growing in Christlikeness along the way.