

1st Timothy Chapter 3 -- John Karmelich

1. Have you ever wondered if you are in the right church?
 - a) No church is perfect.
 - b) People are not perfect, and therefore, no church is perfect.
 - c) There is no such thing as the perfect church.
 - d) Yet, there are biblical “models” for how churches are to be organized.
 - e) There is some debate on this. That is why there are different denominations and lots of independent churches.
 - f) Not that any one denomination or non-denomination is the perfect model, it is mostly different interpretations of the Bible as to how a church should be organized.
2. Chapter 3 focuses on how a church should be organized, and more importantly, what are the qualifications for the people who lead in the church.
 - a) Every now and then, the person writing a book of the Bible states the purpose of writing that book, or that particular section of the book.
 - b) Personally, I love when they do that, because it makes my job a lot easier! ☺
 - c) Chapter 3 is one of those places. Let us read ahead to Verse 14-15 of this Chapter:
 - i) “I (Paul) am writing you (Timothy) these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household,”
 - ii) That’s it in a half a sentence. Paul is writing this section so that people know how to conduct themselves in “God’s household”.
 - a) “God’s household” can specifically refer to gathering together as believers.
 - b) It can more broadly refer to our conduct in any form of contact with other believers, such as at home or at work.
 - c) I say this because most of the chapter is about the qualifications required for the leaders. Many of these qualifications describe characteristics of people’s home life and work-life.
3. Therefore, this chapter is to be studied by those who are to be leaders in a church.
 - a) Since we are all accountable to God, it is also to be understood for the members of the church so they know who to vote for as their leaders.
 - b) Whether or not your particular church allows you to vote, you have the right to vote none-the-less. If you believe the leaders of your church do not fit these qualifications, this would give you a good biblical reason to vote-with-your-feet and leave, or at least talk to the people in charge about taking the Bible seriously.
 - c) Getting on my soapbox for a second, my first recommendation for any church you join is the question “do people take the Bible *seriously*?”
 - i) Personally, I don’t expect my church to have the exact same interpretation of the Bible as I do. Everybody has the right to be wrong. ☺ I am mainly concerned is that my church takes the Bible *seriously* and is trying to apply the principals of this book to that church and to their lives as best they can.
 - a) Further, there is what I consider the essential issues, and debatable issues.
 - b) On the essential issues, there is no compromise. There are only a handful of essential issues. These are usually obvious when you think about them:
 - (1) Jesus is the promised Messiah.
 - (2) Jesus is God.
 - (3) Jesus redemptive work on the cross as payment for sins.
 - (4) The “Trinity”: God is one, but God in three persons.
 - (5) There might be something else obvious I’m missing, but you get the point. The other issues are less important in comparison.

4. There are only 15 verses to cover in this chapter, but as usual, I have a lot to say. ☺
5. With that, let's get going: Verse 1: Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.
 - a) First question, what is an overseer? It means what it says, to "over see" something, as to be in charge of a project.
 - b) The Greek word is "episkope", from which we get the Episcopal denomination.
 - c) There is a similar word in Greek that means "elder". The Greek word is "presbyteros" from which we get the word "Presbyterian".
 - i) In Paul's letter to Titus, Paul appears to use these words interchangeably.
 - a) "An elder ("presbyteros") must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer ("episkope") is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless (Titus 1:6-7a, NIV).
 - d) A classical debate question is: Does this letter refer to head-pastors or church-elders?
 - i) The answer can be both. Part of it depends upon the structure of the church.
 - ii) The majority of commentators believe this section of scripture deals with the elders of a church.
 - a) Some churches set up elders like a board-of-directors of a corporation.
 - (1) The elders are the people to which the pastors are accountable.
 - (2) The elders in turn, are accountable to the congregation.
 - (3) Many denominations have structures similar to this model.
 - b) Other denominations emphasize deacons (i.e., "bishops") as the key people in the church.
 - iii) Because this verse *can also* refer to the head pastors, many churches, particularly small ones, have the head-pastors being the head person of that church.
 - iv) The point is there are many models that can be interpreted biblically as a structure for the church. Most denominational models fit within the scope of the verses set out here in 1st Timothy and also taught in other places like Paul's letter to Titus.
 - e) Let's get back to Verse 1: Notice Paul says, "If anyone sets his heart on being..."
 - i) Other translations say, "if anyone desires".
 - ii) This means the role of an elder begins with that person, not with the church.
 - iii) If you want to get technical, I believe God puts that desire in our hearts.
 - a) "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4, NIV).
 - b) Given this verse, I don't see any problem with nominating yourself to be an elder in a church if that is the desire God put on your heart.
 - iv) Based on the qualifications over the next few verses, it is then up to the pastors and the congregation to see if you meet those qualifications.
 - a) Further, it is up to a pastor and the members of a church to *look* for the qualifications and see if a person deserves this honor.
 - v) Which leads us to the rest of Verse 1: It finishes with "he desires a noble task."
 - a) This can also be translated "desires a good ambition (TLB) or "desires a good work" (KJV, NKJV), or "it is a fine work he desires to" (NASB).
 - b) In summary, it is a good thing to be an elder.
 - (1) God puts that desire in your heart to be an elder, and he *rewards* those who seek that task.

6. Verse 2: Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,
- a) From Verse 2 through Verse 7, we have 15 requirements to be an elder of a church.
 - b) Before I go into each one, remember that people are not perfect.
 - i) I look at each one of these as a goal not a state of perfection to be achieved prior to being an elder.
 - ii) It is unrealistic to expect our elders to never have any faults or problems.
 - iii) What I do expect is to have an elder be *better* than a non-Christian in these aspects.
 - a) I expect an elder to *strive* to reach a goal for these qualifications.
 - b) I expect an elder to *pray* to aspire to these goals.
 - c) If I see an elder who is not fit one of these traits as a lifestyle, then there is a problem. That problem should be dealt with. Here is a model Jesus taught about how to handle that problem:
 - (1) “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. (Matthew 18:15-17, NIV)
 - c) The opening qualification is a summary of how an elder is to act: “above reproach”.
 - i) Other translations say “blameless” (KJV), or “a good man whose life cannot be spoken against” (The Living Bible”).
 - ii) I do believe elders of a church are more accountable than the congregation.
 - iii) What God desires of all of us is to grow in our faith as believers.
 - a) Therefore, God holds accountable those who are in charge.
 - b) They are held to higher standards than the average member.
 - c) It’s not so much about elders as it is about God’s reputation is on the line.
 - d) What I cringe at more than anything is when I read the newspaper and see the scandal of a church leader or elder. I know that nonbelievers are going to read that and laugh. They are going to think we’re a bunch of hypocrites. It becomes another excuse for nonbelievers to avoid church.
 - (1) Paul said, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal. 6:7, NKJV).
 - e) We as believers are God’s witnesses to the world. That is why God is calling elders to be above reproach. We need to live by a higher standard that the world does. Not by self-discipline, nor by trying harder, but by seeking God day by day, clinging to Jesus, and letting God work through us to make us better people.
 - (1) “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” (Romans 12:9-10a, NIV)
 - d) Let’s move on the next phrase: “the husband of but one wife”
 - i) Some churches don’t allow divorced men to be elders for this reason.
 - a) Personally, I disagree with that interpretation.
 - b) There are several places in the New Testament where Paul lists the sins of the “ungodly”. Continuation of those sins and lack-of-repentance is evidence of turning away from God. Never in those lists is divorce mentioned.
 - c) I believe divorce is frowned upon, but it is not a condemning sin.

- ii) Back to this verse, I like to translate this phrase as being “a one-woman man”.
 - a) It is not about letting divorced men or male-widows becoming elders.
 - b) It is about men being *loyal* to their wives. It is against adultery.
 - c) When Paul wrote this polygamy (married to more than one woman) was common. Although polygamy is never out-right condemned in the Bible, every time a Bible person has more than one wife, it always bring the man trouble. It’s tough enough making one wife happy. I can’t imagine multiples! ☺
 - d) Remember that the husband-wife relationship is a model of the church.
 - (1) “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (Ephesians, 5:31, NASB).
 - (2) God expects men to love their wives “as Christ loved his church” (Ephesians 5:25). That is why Paul puts this requirement of “one-woman man” as an elder requirement.
 - e) Whether or not marriage is a requirement is a debatable question.
 - (1) Personally, I would rather see married men be elders, mostly because men become more mature after they are married. They (we) learn to compromise and put other’s interest (i.e., or our wives) above our own.
 - (2) Reading this verse again, I would probably agree with those churches that argue that elders *should* be married, or at least have-been married in order to be an elder. That’s my interpretation.
- e) The next requirement is “temperate”.
 - i) “Temperate - not given to extremes; "blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be broken” David Guzik
 - ii) “The word “nephaliōs” (temperate) in classical Greek meant, "not mixed with wine." In later writers it came to have the broader sense of "temperate" or "sober." Bible Expositor’s Encyclopedia.
- f) The next requirement is “self-controlled”.
 - i) This can be translated “prudent” (NASB) or paraphrased “orderly” (TLB)
 - ii) I like to think of it as one who doesn’t lose his temper in a situation.
 - iii) An elder who takes control of a meeting by yelling at the other elders is not somebody who fits the qualification of an “elder”.
- g) The next requirement (#5 if you’re keeping count) is “respectable”.
 - i) This goes back to the idea of one’s reputation in the church and the community.
- h) The next one is “hospitable”.
 - i) In ancient Greek cultures, hotels were places for pagans and the food offered were usually taken from the idol temples.
 - a) Therefore whenever Christians traveled, they usually tried to stay at homes of other Christians as opposed to hotels.
 - b) When you study Paul’s travels in the Book of Acts, whenever he came to a new town, he sought out the local Christians and asked to stay there.
 - ii) A modern elder should have his door open to members of the congregation.
 - a) An elder is a “24/7” position. (i.e., 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.)
 - b) The “open for business” sign should always be open at their home.
 - c) An elder is one a Christian should turn to when there are problems or an issue. This is part of what is meant by hospitable.

- d) A corollary to that is we as Christians often expect too much of our pastors. They are just humans and not supermen. Pastors often burn out because they are overworked. Part of being an elder and a deacon (coming up!) is to help relieve the pastoral staff of some of the church burdens.
- i) The last one of Verse 2 is “able to teach”.
 - i) People watch what you *do* far more than what you *say*.
 - ii) Teaching is not just standing up and giving a lecture. It is more than writing a 10-page outline and e-mailing it to people. ☺
 - iii) It is how you live your life. It is teaching by example.
 - iv) The purpose of this letter to Timothy is how elders ought to conduct themselves.
 - v) The actual ability to teach a Sunday school class is a sub-set of what this verse is talking about. The key word is able to teach.
 - a) An elder makes himself *available* for teaching so God gives him the *ability* to teach others.
 - vi) Again, the word “elder” can also refer to the pastor of a church. One has to get out of the mindset of the modern denomination. When Paul went around starting churches, he appointed elders over those churches. I suspect some of them gave the Sunday sermons. With that said, I do believe a qualification for an elder is one who could either give a sermon or teach a class.
- 7. Ok, we made it to Verse 3. Unfortunately, it is still the same sentence. ☺: “not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.”
 - a) The first one is obvious: “not given to drunkenness”.
 - i) The Bible does not forbid drinking, just drunkenness.
 - ii) Where does one draw the line? That should be based on what the church sees of you and not what you see of yourself.
 - iii) Personally, I would rather error on the side of too little alcohol versus too much.
 - iv) It is about your and my reputation as a Christian.
 - b) In Paul’s 1st Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 8, Paul gives a speech about eating meat that was offered to pagan idols.
 - i) In Paul’s mind, whether or not we eat this meat is irrelevant, since these false gods are imaginary and don’t exist.
 - ii) Paul further states he won’t eat this meat if it causes a less mature Christian to “stumble” in his faith (“Oh look, Paul over there is committing idolatry!”).
 - a) “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1st Corinthians 8:13, NKJV).
 - iii) The point is the same principal needs to apply to alcohol and us.
 - a) Among the sins of the ungodly listed in the New Testament, drunkenness is listed among those sins.
 - b) Drinking alcohol is not a sin. But I am very careful about drinking any alcohol in public. It is not about being “under the law”; it is about not letting less mature Christians to stumble in their faith.
 - c) The next phrase is “not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome”.
 - i) This goes with being a drunk. Drunkenness often leads to violence.
 - ii) I also see this as a style of conduct in meetings of the elders. One should not have such a big ego that they violently put their will above everyone else’s.
 - iii) It is against being domineering as an elder.
 - d) The last phrase of this verse is “not a lover of money”.
 - i) The expression “money is the root of all evil” is not in the Bible.
 - ii) The express “For the love of money is the root of all evil” is in 1st Timothy, 6:10.
 - iii) It is actually an expansion of the 10th Commandment against “not coveting”.

- iv) Money is a tool. It can be used for good or for evil.
 - a) The *desire* of that money over God is the problem.
 - v) “If God took away all your possessions, would you still praise him?
 - a) Remember Job passed this test with flying colors after God took away all of his possessions:
 - (1) “And he (Job) said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb,
And naked shall I return there.
The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;
Blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21, NKJV)
8. Verse 4: He (an elder) must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)
- a) God uses the family as a model for how he wants his church organized.
 - b) God further instructs us to look at how elders act as fathers and husbands as a prerequisite as whether or not they should be elders.
 - c) This also leads to the problem of rebellious children.
 - i) God allows free will, even for older children.
 - ii) There are children who turn away from God, even when raised in a godly home.
 - iii) There are parents who are hypocritical about their faith in their home-life. Their children see through that, and rebel.
 - a) It is the latter that God is concerned about in the specific discussion of elder qualifications. There is not much one can do about the former situation except to continue to pray for those children.
 - d) I heard a wonderful theologian give this comment (I forget the source, paraphrasing):
 - i) My next-door neighbor may not know all the theological doctrines of being a Christian, nor understand how to have a personal relationship with Christ. But they know when my wife and I are having a fight.”
 - ii) Remember the key behind all of these individual qualifications is that God is concerned about us, elders in particular being his witnesses!
 - iii) Our neighbors may not know all the detailed Christian stuff, but they can hear the shouting of a fight. That is what God is concerned about.
 - iv) Going back to my early disclaimers, remember that God does not expect perfection. Don’t resign your elder commission because you had a fight with your wife. This is about *goals* to be achieved. Your reputation needs to be superior to those who are not elders.
 - a) As a corollary, you would be amazed how good of a witness you can be by simply *apologizing* to a neighbor when you have offended them by doing something “unchristian”.
9. Verse 6: He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.
- a) To paraphrase, don’t appoint a “newbie” to be an elder.
 - i) New Christians have to learn to walk moment-by-moment with Jesus. They need to grow in their faith to a point of maturity where they can lead others.
 - b) A common mistake churches make is to take a famous person who recently became born-again, and put them in a high position or ask them to go on the public speaking circuit.
 - c) This verse teaches us to give people time to mature as Christians.
 - d) This verse further teaches that Satan attacks elders by appealing to their egos.
 - i) “Hey, you are an elder now. You are in charge. Boy, God really likes you. You are really a good person”. You are better than all those common people.”
 - ii) Paul is preaching against conceit. Most of the qualifications we have read so far require humility as a key factor in being an elder.

10. Verse 7: He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.
- a) Your reputation as an elder must not only be in the church, but in the community.
 - i) “A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. (Proverbs 22:1, NIV)
 - b) I’ve already pounded this point home, so I won’t go on any further.
11. The next set of verses focuses on deacons. Before we jump in, let me talk about “men elders vs. female elders”.
- a) In the last chapter, we had Paul specifically state, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” (1st Timothy 2:12, NIV)
 - b) We don’t have Paul making a command statement like this in Chapter 3.
 - i) Then again, there are no chapter breaks between Chapters 2 and 3.
 - c) So the great debate question is “how dogmatic should a church be about men-only elders?
 - i) For the most part, I agree with churches that argue for men-only.
 - a) I’m not so dogmatic about this issue that I condemn churches that have female elders. I believe it is wrong, but I don’t want to burn the church. ☺
 - ii) There are denominations that allow women to be elders.
 - a) I tend to cringe at this, but I don’t believe they will burn in hell for it. ☺
 - b) To me, there is the Gospel message about salvation, and the rest is debate.
 - iii) All the pronouns in these sets of verses are in the masculine form. The original Greek is clear on this. There are no “hints” that a women-elder is ok.
 - a) The closest possible example one can get is the husband-wife couple of Aquilla & Priscilla in the Book of Acts. They had a church in their home. (1st Corinthians 16:9). Did that mean Priscilla was an “elder” of that church? It is debatable. Given the doctrinal teaching of 1st Timothy and also Titus, I still don’t see women as being elders.
 - b) It goes back to last week’s lesson how God wants men to lead.
 - (1) Often women have to fill that void due to a lack of male leaders.
 - d) On a related note, I do believe God called women to be deacons. This is another classical debate in Christianity, but we’ll get to that in a few pages.
 - e) Beginning with the next verse, Paul changes the topics to qualifications for deacons.

12. Verse 8: Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

 - a) Let’s start with the basic question of what is a “deacon”?
 - i) The literal translation is similar to our word for “waiter”. It means a servant specifically assigned for a task.
 - ii) In the Book of Acts, Chapter 6, the 12 apostles (the “11” plus Judas’ replacement Matthias) were getting bogged down in the details of church management.
 - a) Therefore they decided to appoint “deacons”.
 - b) Deacons were overseeing the charity and service functions of the church as well as doing them themselves.
 - iii) In the traditional sense, a deacon is anyone who is a “helper” in the church.
 - iv) Many denominations have formalized the roles of deacons.
 - a) They elect deacons to be in charge of certain tasks of the church.
 - v) Other denominations have informal tasks of deacons.
 - a) For example a church secretary could be thought of as a deacon.
 - b) A choir director could be thought of a deacon.
 - c) So could anyone under them. Somebody who puts the weekly bulletins together could be a deacon. Being a musician on Sunday can be a deacon.

- b) I also want to give a comment about elders vs. deacons. Neither one is considered superior to the other. We are all called to serve in some capacity before God.
 - i) “It is a mistake to see one office as more prestigious than the other, though “bishops” (or elders) have more responsibility before God; each is more a matter of calling than status.” David Guzik.
 - c) Because Paul focuses on deacon’s qualifications, I believe he is talking about the qualifications of those in charge.
 - i) Like the roles for elders, I do believe these are goals.
 - ii) If a newcomer to a church wants to volunteer to help, I do believe it is ok to give them a simple task to test them. Technically, that could be considered a “deacon”.
 - iii) Once they have *proved* themselves, I believe they should be rewarded with greater roles in the church.
 - d) Let’s get back to the deacons qualifications. The first is “worthy of respect”.
 - i) The primary factor to look for is their reputation.
 - a) Does the deacon respect God? How about fellow Christians? What does the outside community think of him?
 - e) The second qualification is “sincere”.
 - i) A similar word is “truthful”. Does the person have a reputation for being “a man of his word”? Does the deacon’s actions match up with his words?
 - a) Jesus said, “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:37, NIV)
 - f) The third qualification is “not indulging in much wine”.
 - i) Back in Verse 3, the elder must “not (be) addicted to wine.
 - ii) Here we have the phrase “not indulging in much wine”.
 - iii) They appear to be similar. I’m not sure which office has a stronger restriction.
 - iv) By the way, some Christians argue against any drinking of alcohol.
 - a) They will argue that the early apostles only drank grape juice.
 - b) These verses refute those arguments.
 - (1) If it was only grape juice, why should the amount be curtailed?
 - v) The primary aspect is the reputation of the person. Is he known as a “drinker”?
 - g) The last qualification of Verse 8 is they must not pursue “dishonest gain”.
 - i) I prefer the New King James where it says, “not greedy for money,”
 - ii) Is the person *more* concerned about making money than helping the church?
 - a) It is not about condemning working for a living. It is condemning an obsession with making money over being a servant for Christ.
 - b) It is condemning the workaholic.
13. Verse 9: They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.
- a) Let’s start with the first sentence. What does Paul mean by “the deep truths of faith”.
 - b) The idea is to be a devout follower of Christ. Not just saying “I believe in Jesus”, but one whose actions match their words. One could watch their lives and see they are truly depending upon Jesus, moment by moment to guide their actions. They are seeking God daily through prayer and through the Word for their actions.
 - c) The idea of a “clear conscience” is they are not bound by guilt. They understand the concept of confessing their sins and the concept that they are forgiven.
14. Verse 10: They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.
- a) I touched upon this idea earlier. It is the idea that one be given a lower aspect of responsibility before appointing them to a leadership role as a deacon.
 - b) A similar idea to simply to watch their conduct in the church. If they are the type of person to volunteer and help in projects, that makes them a good candidate.

15. Verse 11: In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.
- a) A classical debate in Christianity is whether or not women should be deacons.
 - i) There are very conservative scholars on both sides of this debate. There are churches where they do not permit women to be elders, but strongly believe women are called to be deacons. (Among those: Ray Steadman, John MacArthur)
 - ii) Others see this verse calling for men-only in formal-positions of deacon leaders.
 - iii) Let's look at different translations. The words *in italics* are not in the original Greek:
 - a) Women *must likewise be dignified*, not malicious gossips... (NASB)
 - b) Likewise, *their wives must be reverent*, not slanderers... (NKJV)
 - c) Women in like manner *must be grave*, not slanderers... (ASV)
 - iv) The point is this verse can be translated to allow women deacons.
 - v) I personally believe women are allowed to be deacons. Here is my support-text:
 - a) Paul said, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea." (Romans 16:1, NIV).
 - b) The same Greek word for "servant" in Romans 16 is the same word as "deacon" used also by Paul here in 1st Timothy.
 - b) Let's get back to the qualifications: The first is "worthy of respect".
 - i) In Verse 9, the first qualification of a deacon is "worthy of respect".
 - ii) So it either means women-deacons are to be worthy of respect or that the wives of deacons are to be worthy of respect.
 - a) If you are a male-deacon, this is about having a good Christian home in order to qualify as a deacon.
 - c) The second qualification is "not malicious talkers".
 - i) Ever met somebody who spends a lot of time putting down other people?
 - a) This would include spreading false rumors. I would further include it for people who spend too much time focusing on negative aspects of others.
 - b) We as Christians are to build each other up, not put each other down.
 - c) As one commentator put it, "Christians spend too much time organizing our firing squads in circles". ☺
 - d) The final qualification is "but temperate and trustworthy in everything".
 - i) The key to being a good deacon is not how well you perform your specific job, but it is your reputation. Give me somebody who meets these qualifications and I can guarantee you they will do a good job as a deacon.
 - ii) It is again important to emphasize the importance of balance.
 - iii) God does not expect "perfect" deacons. When it says "trustworthy in everything" this is a goal to be achieved. The key is the attitude and the reputation.
16. Verse 12: A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.
- a) One can translate this as either saying "the woman-deacon must manage *her* household well" or it can be translated "the male-deacon" must have one-wife and manage his household well.
 - i) This verse leans more toward the argument of male-only deacons, but I've already beaten that point to death. ☺
 - ii) The idea of a "one-woman-man" is similar to the qualification of an elder.
 - iii) I like the part about "his" children. This goes back to the pecking order that God intended for the family. It implies that men are held more accountable as the leaders of the family as to how the children are raised.

17. Verse 13: Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.
- a) So what is the reward for being a deacon? The answer is Verse 13:
 - i) 1) “An excellent standing” and 2) great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus
 - ii) Remember that God calls people to be elders and deacons.
 - a) God gives all Christians spiritual gifts. If you find it “easy” and a “desire” to get involved in the church as a helper or organizer that is a spiritual gift given to you by God. Further, God holds us accountable based on acting out those gifts.
 - b) “Excellent standing” is not just your reputation in the local church; it is your reputation as God’s witness to the world.
 - c) That is the reward for being a faithful servant.
 - iii) Remember how Jesus used a parable to describe our rewards in heaven:
 - a) “His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” (Matthew 25:21, NKJV)
 - b) The other reward is “great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus”
 - i) What does Jesus call us to do as Christians? The answer is in the Gospel of John:
 - a) “Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent (referring to Jesus himself).” (John 6:28-29, NIV).
 - b) That’s it. Our job as Christians is to *believe* in Jesus. By believing in him, God can work *through* us to draw us closer to him and make us better witnesses to the world.
 - c) Those who have served “well” as a deacon have *assurance* of their faith.
 - (1) That is what Paul is drawing out here as a reward.
 - (2) I should not add that it is an egotistical thing. It is not “hey look at all the goods things I’m doing for God.” It is about seeing the joy of people being *helped* by your service as a deacon. It is watching other Christians have lives that are better by your help. That is the reward of being a faithful deacon.
18. Verse 14: Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, ¹⁵ if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.
- a) We as 21st Century Christians tend to forget what it was like in these “pioneer days”.
 - b) Here was Timothy alone-as-leader in Ephesus.
 - c) With Paul gone, he couldn’t call him, or ask his advice. He couldn’t turn to commentaries for help. He didn’t have a complete New Testament to work with or even the “Gospels”.
 - d) Imagine being a young leader in that situation. Therefore, Paul wrote in the case he couldn’t make it there to help Timothy face to face.
 - e) Isn’t it interesting to realize that Paul wrote this letter out of practicality, and yet it has been studied for about 2,000 years on *how* to set up a Christian church?
 - i) The text of Verse 15 says this was written so people will know how to conduct themselves in God’s household.
 - ii) That is the purpose of this letter. That is why all the qualifications for elders, deacons, and men/women from the previous chapter were written. So we know how to conduct ourselves when we get together.
 - a) Of course that does not mean one can let go of our Christian values at home. This is about church structure and organization. It is about qualifications to look for in choosing our leaders.

19. Verse 16: Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.
- a) This seems like a strange way to end the qualification requirements. Here was Paul giving all these practical applications. He then ends this section by telling Timothy why he wrote this letter, as stated in the last two verses.
 - b) Now here in Verse 16, Paul breaks out in praise to give the Gospel message. Why?
 - i) I think Paul stopped to take it all in. I think he realized he was called to do something beyond comprehension. Paul was laying the groundwork for how to structure the worship services for God!
 - ii) I think Paul stopped to give the gospel message as to emphasize the center of our worship and the primary emphasis for the structure of Christian believers.
 - c) Back to this verse. What is the connection?
 - d) The connection is the church begins with Jesus Christ.
 - i) I believe every church that is set up ought to have Jesus Christ listed as the president or at least the chairman of the board of directors. He is the head of the church. Not the pastor, nor the elders, nor the congregation, but Jesus.
 - ii) That is what Paul is getting at with the phrase “the mystery of godliness” in Verse 16. Paul starts with the expanded-Gospel message.
 - a) That message is the foundation by which we worship God.
 - e) In the Greek the word “mystery” has a different meaning than in the English.
 - i) When we think of a mystery, we think of something that is *still* a mystery or is still mysterious.
 - a) For example, most people wonder about who killed President Kennedy. The debate has been going on for 40 years. That is our idea of a mystery.
 - ii) The Greek concept of mystery is something unrevealed until now.
 - a) The “mystery of godliness” is no longer a mystery.
 - b) The word “godliness” simply means to “be-like-God”.
 - c) The Gospel message, as preached in Verse 16 is God-in-flesh-being raised again. This is the (no-longer-a) mystery of godliness.
 - f) Let me take on the rest of the phrases and then I’ll call it a week. ☺
 - i) “Appeared in the body”: This is the idea of God becoming “human-flesh”.
 - ii) “Vindicated by the Spirit”: is when the Holy Spirit fell upon him after his baptism via John the Baptist. The purpose of that baptism was not to cleanse Jesus of his sins (he was sinless). It was to renounce the sins of the world (spiritually) through that baptism. (Mark 1:9-11, et.al.)
 - iii) “Was seen by angels”. Angels were at Jesus’ birth and his gravesite.
 - iv) “Was preached among the nations” – The word nations can also be translated “Gentiles”. It is a reference to the growth of the Gentile Church.
 - v) “Was believed on in the world” – This is another reference to growing number of believers.
 - vi) “Was taken up in glory” – this refers to the resurrection.
 - g) There is a belief that this may have been an early church hymn. The style of the Greek has a “rhythm” to it, suggesting it may have been an early hymn.
 - h) OK, time to wrap up. Let’s go interrogate our elders and deacons. ☺ Better yet, why don’t we pray for them that they may achieve the calling desires for them.

20. Let's pray: Father, we thank you for these practical lessons on setting up your church. We pray for our church leaders that they may better achieve these qualifications so that they could better serve you. We pray for those among us who you are working on to become future elders and deacons in your church, that you may continue to grow them into the saints you want them to be. Help us all to live these godly characteristics, so we may be witnesses to a lost and dying world. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Bonus Material – Below is the class handouts. It is a “summary” version of this lesson.

Notes for 1st Timothy – Chapter 3 (Page 1 of 6)

How to Conduct Yourself in Church and How to Pick Our Church Leaders

Introduction – Paul states the purpose of this chapter in Verse 14:

1. “I (Paul) am writing you (Timothy) these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household,”
 - a. “God’s household” can specifically refer to gathering together as believers.
 - b. It can more broadly refer to our conduct in any form of contact with other believers, such as at home or at work.
2. Most of the chapter is about the qualifications required for the leaders
 - a. Therefore, this chapter is to be studied by those who are to be leaders in a church.
 - b. Since we are all accountable to God, it is also to be understood for the members of the church so they know who to vote for as their leaders.
 - c. If you believe the leaders of your church do not fit these qualifications, this would give you a good biblical reason to take some appropriate action. (See Matthew 18:15-17)

Verse 1: “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” (NIV)

1. First question, what is an overseer?
 - a. It means what it says, to “over see” something, as to be in charge of a project.
 - b. The Greek word is “episkope”, from which we get the Episcopal denomination.
 - c. There is a similar word in Greek that means “elder”.
 - d. The Greek word is “presbyteros” from which we get the word “Presbyterian”.
 - e. In Paul’s letter to Titus, Paul appears to use these words interchangeably.
 - i. “An elder (“presbyteros”) must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer (“episkope”) is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless (Titus 1:6-7a, NIV).
2. If “anyone desires” to be an elder:
 - a. This means the role (desire) of an elder begins with that person, not with the church.
 - b. If you want to get technical, I believe God puts that desire in our hearts.
 - i. “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4, NIV)
 - ii. Given this verse, I don’t see any problem with nominating yourself to be an elder in a church if that is the desire God put on your heart.
 - iii. It is then up to the pastors and the congregation to see if you meet those qualifications.
3. If “anyone desires” to be an elder, he desires a noble task. What does that mean?
 - a. This can also be translated “desires a good ambition (TLB) or “desires a good work” (KJV, NKJV), or “it is a fine work he desires to” (NASB).
 - b. God puts that desire in your heart to be an elder, and God rewards those who seek that task.

Verses 2-7 list the requirements to be an elder of the church.

1. I look at each one of these as a goal not a state of perfection to be achieved prior to being an elder.
2. It is unrealistic to expect our elders to never have any faults or problems.
3. What I do expect is to have an elder be better than a non-Christian in these aspects.
4. If I see an elder who is not fit one of these traits as a lifestyle, then there is a problem.
5. Remember Jesus “4-step” program for dealing with sin in the church. (Matthew 18:15-17)

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 3 (Page 2 of 6)

Requirement #1 (Verse 2) to be an Elder – He must be “above reproach”

1. Other translations say “blameless” (KJV), or “a good man whose life cannot be spoken against” (The Living Bible”).
 - a. I do believe elders of a church are more accountable than the congregation.
 - b. What God desires of all of us is to grow in our faith as believers.
 - i. Therefore, God holds accountable those who are in charge.
 - ii. They are held to higher standards than the average member.
 - iii. It’s not so much about elders as it is about God’s reputation is on the line.
 - c. Paul said, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal. 6:7, NKJV).
 - d. “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” (Romans 12:9-10a, NIV)

Requirement #2 (Verse 2) to be an Elder – He must be “the husband of but one wife”

1. Some churches don’t allow divorced men to be elders for this reason.
 - a. There are several places in the New Testament where Paul lists the sins of the “ungodly”. Never in those lists is divorce mentioned.
 - b. I believe divorce is frowned upon, but it is not a condemning sin.
 - c. Back to this verse, I like to translate this phrase as being “a one-woman man”.
 - d. It is about men being loyal to their wives. It is against adultery.
2. When Paul wrote this polygamy (married to more than one woman) was common.
 - a. Although polygamy is never out-right condemned in the Bible, every time a Bible person has more than one wife, it always bring the man trouble. It’s tough enough making one wife happy. I can’t imagine multiples! ☺
3. Remember that the husband-wife relationship is a model of the church.
 - a. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (Ephesians, 5:31, NASB).
 - b. God expects men to love their wives “as Christ loved his church” (Ephesians 5:25). That is why Paul puts this requirement of “one-woman man” as an elder requirement.
4. Reading this verse again, I would probably agree with those churches that argue that elders should be married, or at least have-been married in order to be an elder. That’s just my interpretation. ☺

Requirement #3 (Verse 2) to be an Elder – He must be “temperate”

1. Temperate - not given to extremes; "blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be broken" David Guzik
2. “The word “nephaliōs” (temperate) in classical Greek meant, "Not mixed with wine." In later writers it came to have the broader sense of "temperate" or "sober." Bible Expositor’s Encyclopedia.

Requirement #4 (Verse 2) to be an Elder – He must be “self-controlled”

1. This can be translated “prudent” (NASB) or paraphrased “orderly” (TLB)
2. I like to think of it as one who doesn’t lose his temper in a situation.
3. An elder who takes control of a meeting by yelling at the other elders is not somebody who fits the qualification of an “elder”.

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 3 (Page 3 of 6)

Requirement #5 (Verse 2) to be an Elder – He must be “respectable”

0. This goes back to the idea of one’s reputation in the church and the community.

Requirement #6 (Verse 2) to be an Elder – He must be “hospitable”

1. In that time era, hotels were places for pagans. Food was usually taken from the idol temples.
 - a. Therefore whenever Christians traveled, they usually tried to stay at homes of other Christians as opposed to hotels.
 - b. When you study Paul’s travels in the Book of Acts, whenever he came to a new town, he sought out the local Christians and asked to stay there.
2. A modern elder should have his door open to members of the congregation.
 - a. An elder is a “24/7” position. (i.e., 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.)
 - b. The “open for business” sign should always be open at their home.
 - c. An elder is one a Christian should turn to when there are problems or an issue. This is part of what is meant by hospitable.
 - d. A corollary to that is we as Christians often expect too much of our pastors.
 - e. They are just humans and not supermen.
 - f. Pastors often burn out because they are overworked. Part of being an elder and a deacon is to help relieve the pastoral staff of some of the church burdens.

Requirement #7 (Verse 2) to be an Elder – He must be “able to teach”

1. People watch what you do far more than what you say.
2. It is how you live your life. It is teaching by example.
3. The actual ability to teach a Sunday school class is a sub-set of what this verse is talking about.
 - a. The key word is able to teach.
 - b. An elder makes himself available for teaching so God gives him the ability to teach others.
4. Again, the word “elder” can also refer to the pastor of a church.
5. When Paul went around starting churches, he appointed elders over those churches.
 - a. With that said, I do believe a qualification for an elder is one who could either give a sermon or teach a class.

Requirement #8 (Verse 3) to be an Elder – He must be “not given to drunkenness”

1. The Bible does not forbid drinking, just drunkenness.
2. Where does one draw the line?
 - a. That should be based on what the church sees of you and not what you see of yourself.
 - b. Personally, I would rather error on the side of too little alcohol versus too much.
 - c. It is about your and my reputation as a Christian.
 - d. “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1st Corinthians 8:13, NKJV).
 - i. The point is the same principal needs to apply to alcohol and us.

Requirement #9 (Verse 3) to be an Elder – He must be “not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome”

1. This goes with being a drunk. Drunkenness often leads to violence.
2. It is against being domineering as an elder.

Requirement #10 (Verse 3) to be an Elder – He must be “not a lover of money”

1. The expression “money is the root of all evil” is not in the Bible.
2. The express “For the love of money is the root of all evil” is in 1st Timothy, 6:10.
3. It is actually an expansion of the 10th Commandment against “not coveting”.

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 3 (Page 4 of 6)

Requirement #11 (Verses 4-5) to be an Elder – He must be “manage his own family well”

1. God uses the family as a model for how he wants his church organized.
2. God further instructs us to look at how elders act as fathers and husbands as a prerequisite as whether or not they should be elders.
3. It is about God’s reputation being on the line.
 - a. “My next-door neighbor may not know all the theological doctrines of being a Christian, nor understand how to have a personal relationship with Christ. But they know when my wife and I are having a fight.”

Requirement #12 (Verse 6) to be an Elder – He must be “not be a recent convert”

1. To paraphrase, don’t appoint a “newbie” to be an elder.
2. This verse teaches us to give people time to mature as Christians.

Requirement #13 (Verse 7) to be an Elder – He must have a “good reputation with outsiders”

1. The reputation as an elder must not only be in the church, but in the community.
 2. “A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. (Proverbs 22:1, NIV)
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Verses 8-12 list the requirements to be a deacon of the church.

1. What is a deacon?
 - a. The literal translation is similar to our word for “waiter”.
 - b. It means a servant specifically assigned for a task.
 - c. In the traditional sense, a deacon is anyone who is a “helper” in the church.
 - d. Many denominations (but not all) have formalized the roles of deacons.
 - i. They elect deacons to be in charge of certain tasks of the church.
 - e. Other denominations have informal tasks of deacons.
 - i. For example a church secretary could be thought of as a deacon.
 - ii. A choir director could be thought of a deacon.
2. Neither elders nor deacons are considered superior to the other.
 - a. We are all called to serve in some capacity before God.
 - b. Like the roles for elders, I do believe these qualifications are goals.

Requirement #1 (Verse 8) to be a Deacon – He must be “worthy of respect”

1. The primary factor to look for is their reputation.
2. Does the deacon respect God? How about fellow Christians?
What does the outside community think of him?

Requirement #2 (Verse 8) to be a Deacon – He must be “sincere”

1. A similar word is “truthful”. Does the person have a reputation for being “a man of his word”? Does the deacon's actions match up with his words?
2. Jesus said, “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:37, NIV)

Requirement #3 (Verse 8) to be a Deacon – He must be “not indulging in much wine”

1. Back in Verse 3, the elder must “not (be) addicted to wine.
2. Here we have the phrase “not indulging in much wine”.
3. The primary aspect is the reputation of the person. Is he known as a “drinker”?

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 3 (Page 5 of 6)

Requirement #4 (Verse 8) to be a Deacon – He must be “not pursue “dishonest gain”

1. I prefer the New King James where it says, “not greedy for money”.
2. Is the person more concerned about making money than helping the church?
3. It is not about condemning working for a living.
4. It is condemning an obsession with making money over being a servant for Christ.

Requirement #5 (Verse 9) to be a Deacon – He must “keep hold of the deep truths of the faith”

1. The idea is to be a devout follower of Christ.
2. One could watch their lives and see they are truly depending upon Jesus, moment by moment to guide their actions.
3. The idea of a “clear conscience” is they are not bound by guilt.

Requirement #6 (Verse 10) to be a Deacon – “They must first be tested”

1. It is the idea that one be given a lower aspect of responsibility before appointing them to a leadership role as a deacon.
2. A similar idea to simply to watch their conduct in the church before making them a deacon.
3. If a new person volunteers for projects, that makes them a good candidate for a deacon.

Requirement #7 (Verse 11) to be a Deacon – “their wives are to be women worthy of respect,”

1. A classical debate in Christianity is whether or not women should be deacons.
2. Let’s look at different translations. The words in italics are not in the original Greek:
 - a. Women *must likewise be* dignified, not malicious gossips... (NASB)
 - b. Likewise, *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers...(NKJV)
 - c. Women in like manner *must be* grave, not slanderers...(ASV)
 - d. The point is this verse can be translated to allow women deacons.
 - e. Paul said, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cencrea.” (Romans 16:1, NIV).
 - i. The same Greek word for “servant” in Romans 16 is the same word as “deacon” used also by Paul here in 1st Timothy.
3. So this verse either means women-deacons are to be worthy of respect or that the wives of deacons are to be worthy of respect.

Requirement #8 (Verse 11) to be a Deacon – “not malicious talkers”

1. Ever met somebody who spends a lot of time putting down other people? Not a good deacon!
2. This would include spreading false rumors.

Requirement #9 (Verse 11) to be a Deacon – “temperate and trustworthy in everything”

1. The key to being a good deacon is not how well you perform at your specific job, but it is your reputation.
2. God does not expect “perfect” deacons. When it says “trustworthy in everything” this is a goal to be achieved. The key is the attitude and the reputation.

Requirement #10 (Vs. 12) to be a Deacon – “husband of one wife; manages his children/household well”

1. This verse can be translated to imply either male or female deacon.
2. I like the part about “his” children. This goes back to the pecking order that God intended for the family. It implies that men are held more accountable as the leaders of the family as to how the children are raised.

Notes for 1st Timothy - Chapter 3 (Page 6 of 6)

Verse 13: The reward for being a deacon:

1. 1) "An excellent standing" and 2) great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus
 - a. "Excellent standing" is not just your reputation in the local church; it is your reputation as God's witness to the world.
 - b. That is the reward for being a faithful servant.
2. Remember how Jesus used a parable to describe our rewards in heaven:
 - a. "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. (Matthew 25:21, NKJV)"
3. The other reward is "great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus"
 - a. What does Jesus call us to do as Christians? The answer is in the Gospel of John:
 - b. "Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent (referring to Jesus himself)." (John 6:28-29, NIV).
 - c. That's it. Our job as Christians is to believe in Jesus. By believing in him, God can work through us to draw us closer to him and make us better witnesses to the world.

Verses 14-15: Paul wrote this so "people ought to conduct themselves in God's household".

1. This letter is about so we know how to conduct ourselves when we get together.
2. Of course that does not mean one can let go of our Christian values at home. This letter is about church structure and organization. It is about qualifications to look for in choosing our leaders.

Verses 16: Paul focuses on who is Jesus. He starts with, "The mystery of godliness is great"

1. I think Paul stopped to take it all in. I think he realized he was called to do something beyond comprehension. Paul was laying the groundwork for how to structure worship services for God!
2. Jesus is the head of the church, not the pastors, elders, etc. I believe every church that is set up ought to have Jesus Christ listed as the president or the chairman of the board of directors.
3. In the Greek the word "mystery" has a different meaning than in the English.
 - a. When we think of a mystery, we think of something that is still a mystery.
 - b. The Greek concept of mystery is something unrevealed until now.
 - c. The "mystery of godliness" is no longer a mystery.
 - i. The word "godliness" simply means to "be-like-God".
 - ii. The Gospel message, as preached in Verse 16 is God-in-flesh-being raised again. This is the (no-longer-a) mystery of godliness.
4. "Appeared in the body": This is the idea of God becoming "human-flesh".
5. "Vindicated by the Spirit": is when the Holy Spirit fell upon him after his baptism via John the Baptist. The purpose of that baptism was not to cleanse Jesus of his sins (he was sinless). It was to renounce the sins of the world (spiritually) through that baptism. (Mark 1:9-11, et.al.)
6. "Was seen by angels". Angels were at Jesus' birth and his gravesite.
7. "Was preached among the nations" – The word nations can also be translated "Gentiles".
 - a. It is a reference to the growth of the Gentile Church.
8. "Was believed on in the world" – This is another reference to growing number of believers.
9. "Was taken up in glory" – this refers to the resurrection.
10. There is a theory that this verse this may have been an early church hymn. It is speculation.