

## I Timothy 3 – Sermon #18

Take your Bibles and turn to the book of I Timothy – This will be our new study on Sunday mornings.

I Timothy is one of three Pastoral Epistles – letters Paul writes this letter to Timothy who is pastor of the church in Ephesus.

Nehemiah → Malachi (a contemporary prophet) – on Wednesday nights  
Move Wednesday night series to Sunday morning – I Timothy

Let me give you the theme verse of I Timothy – 3:15

Chapter 1 – warning about false teaching – 3a & 6

Chapter 2 – begins the sound teaching for church – Prayer & Women – “Reclaiming the Biblical Woman”

So, we are ready to begin a new chapter in I Timothy – 3 – sound teaching for church conduct/behavior

Today, we begin our summer series on how we ought to behave in the church.

The local church is **The Most Important Organization on Earth.**

- It is the only organization established by God for this age.
- It has officers and responsibilities.

Every believer will be held accountable for his function in, his service with, and ministry through God’s only organization that He calls “**the pillar and ground of the truth.**”

I have entitled today’s sermon “The Leaders of the Church, Part 1”

I Timothy 3:1

Let us stand for the reading of God’s Holy Word

I Timothy 3:1-7

Let us pray

You may be seated

## The Leaders of the Church

Chapter 3 begins a study primarily discussing the two offices of church officials.

What a mess we have on our hands today in the leadership of the church – unbiblical in leadership – There is a good chance the rest will be unbiblical as well.

To build a church – at the heart of that task is the crucial need to establish Godly leadership.

The local church will go no further than its leadership.

There is an inseparable link between the character of a church and the quality of its leadership.

Leaders must set a Godly example for the church to follow.

People do not normally rise above the level of their leaders.

Do you know who the officers of the church are and what they are to do?

I find those in these positions themselves do not oftentimes know their responsibilities.

The positions are—

- The Bishop – verse 1
- The Deacon – verse 8

They are the ones who officiate in the services and have official capacity.

So important is it that those who lead the church be highly qualified spiritually that the detailed list of their specific qualifications is given twice in Paul's letters, here in I Timothy 3 and in Titus 1.

There are many kinds of systems of church government – a pastor runs it, deacons, trustees, pope, archbishops, denominations, church people – so I will let the Bible clear this up for us.

In the modern-day church – we have all kinds of names and systems.

But the Bible is very simple – in church government there are only two officials that are mentioned – the bishop and the deacon.

In verse 1, we meet the spiritual leader and he is called a bishop – and then in verse 2, it says a bishop must be.

God lists 16 qualifications

What is a bishop? And do we have such people here at Medora?

Why don't we call our pastors – Bishop Ron, Bishop Wayne

Do we still have that office?

This word “bishop” is the Greek word – Episkapos – our English word “Episcopalian”

That word means – overseer – over see it – superintendent

There are two passages that explain what a bishop is – Acts 20 – Acts is the history book of the New Testament – Acts 20.

Acts 20:17 – elders – pres/boo/teros – from which we get our English word

“Presbyterian.”

Now notice what Paul tells the elders in verses 18-35 – especially in verse 28a

Overseers – bishop

That tells us that the elder is the same person as the overseer.

Verse 28b

To feed – to shepherd – or to pastor

An elder, a bishop, and a pastor are all the same

They are synonymous terms

These terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament for the same office.

Three Greek terms

Pres/boo/teros – elder

Episkopus – overseer or bishop

Poi/may/ee/no – shepherd or pastor

Three Greek terms speaking of the same person/individual

Now, turn to I Peter 5 – let us see the second passage that explains what a bishop is – we will see all three terms.

I Peter 5:1 – the elders – pres/boo/teros

Verse 2 – poimano (poy may ee no)– shepherd/pastor the flock

Verse 2b – the oversight – episkopeo

Elders are supposed to shepherd and to oversee.

So when I Timothy 3 talks about the bishop, he is referring to our pastors, our elders, our overseers.

I Timothy 3:1

**Bishop** – Overseer – that speaks of his function

This word relates to the management responsibility of the office.

Now, **Elder** – speaks of the character of the man.

This word spoke of the personal maturity of those in this position – respect your elders

The word **Pastor** – speaks of the shepherd role/ministry given to him.

He is to “shepherd the sheep.”

At MCBC – who are the episkopas – bishop – overseer?

Any of our pastors – and who else? The elders

There is a difference between our pastors and our elders and we can see that  
(I Timothy 5:17).

In church leadership, as demonstrated in the New Testament, there was every time, in every case, a plurality of elders overseeing the work of each church.

Archbishops, popes, denominations – loss of local control and ownership  
Now, there are believers all over the world make up the body of Christ – the Church.  
But the Church meets in local assemblies – the local church.

A bishop in the early church never had authority over other bishops or elders in another church. He did not have authority over churches.

We believe in the local, autonomous, independent church.

In the church – an elder, bishop, pastor, shepherd, and overseer are all the same.

By the way, the pastor was never called “reverend,” and I don’t think any preacher should be so called.

It is a name which is only used once in the Bible and it applies only to God  
(Psa. 111:9—holy and reverend is His name)

Look at Verse 1

**This is a true saying/statement**

In the Pastoral Epistles, that phrase appears five times .  
It introduces a basic truth, an obvious truth.

**It is a limited calling** – verse 1

- **If a man**, this is in the masculine.

- By the way, from what we learned in Chapter 2, can a woman hold this office? NO -The answer is absolutely no way! If she can't be head of her own home, how can she be head of the church?
- Women are not to be pastors in the church

**It is an undeniable calling** – verse 1

- A Spirit-given, compelling desire for the office.

He feels inclined to serve God in this office and no one has forced him into it. There is a zealous inclination, a driving compulsion on the inside.

We need to select elders who feel inclined to do this service for the Lord.  
We don't compel or coerce people into it.

Sometimes churches look around and say—

He's a good speaker

He has been successful in the business world

He dresses for it

He's been to Bible college

Let's make him an elder

That man may have no inclination at all for that role!

Is it the church's task to push that man to serve in that capacity? No.

When that is done, error has come in.

When we recognize men among us who meet the qualifications of an elder, we need to be sure they are desiring this.

God has already put that inclination in their hearts.

The church is not to come and say – we don't have anyone – can you do it?

Oftentimes, leadership in the church is filled with warm bodies.

Some men seek spiritual oversight in the church because people they respect have encouraged them to do so.

Others pursue it because they have decided the ministry is their best option.

They love the Lord and His church, so they attend Bible college or seminary to prepare for service.

But if they are not driven by an internal passion for the ministry, they should never accept this position in the church.

**The office of a bishop** (vs. 1) – There are some responsibilities:

What are the responsibilities of the overseer?

- They are to rule (**I Tim. 5:17**). Sometimes everybody is running the church except for the ones God intended. The church is not a democracy.
- To preach and teach (**I Tim. 5:17**)
- To pray for the sick (James 5:14). Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders.
- To care for the church (I Peter 5:1-2)
- To be examples for others to follow (I Peter 5:1-2)
- To set church policy (Acts 15:22ff.)
- And to ordain other leaders (**I Tim. 4:14**)

Notice in Verse 1 – **a good work**

The ministry is a noble, honorable, valuable, high-quality **work**.

Lastly, Verse 1 – **it is work** – it is demanding work - Those looking for an easy time will not find it in the ministry. The ministry is **work**.

I Thessalonians 5:12, *“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor (“to work to the point of exhaustion”) among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.”*

Vs. 13 – *“And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.”*

The ministry is no nine-to-five occupation that one can walk away from and forget each evening.

Its work is never-ending and dependent on maximum effort and the power of Christ at work in the man.

The work of the ministry is such a serious undertaking that no man should enter it lightly

Anyone who would lead the church must be set apart to that responsibility by the church!

The church recognizes his giftedness, virtue, and service, by the standards given in verses 2-7.

I Timothy 3

Verse 2a – must be 16 things – qualifications.

Let me make a couple of comments about these qualifications—

①First, does this list mean that if a man meets these, he is automatically an elder? NO.

②Are qualifications given here so that the man and the church can recognize the spiritual leaders in the assembly? YES.

Is it that if a person meets these requirements at one time, he is an elder for life? NO.  
He has to continue to meet these requirements.

Occasionally, a church has to dismiss someone from the elder’s office.

Someone ceases to meet the qualifications and the church must practice discipline and dismiss that person.

This is a serious business – This is a high and holy calling of God and we need to see it as such.

This list is given so that our spiritual leaders are credible for the assembly and the outsiders, the unbelievers.

II Corinthians 6:3-4a, *“Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God . . . “*

When we look at the office, there should be nothing in this man that would bring blame to the ministry.

And if your life is such that the ministry could be blamed or blasphemed, you should not be in the office.

No one deserves the office; it is only by God’s grace and the work of Christ in a person’s life that makes it possible, but this office is a matter of being credible.

Resume – on that resume is a person’s credentials – it recommends him for that position.

A man stands in the elder’s office and in his character are all his credentials that recommend him to the people of God for that office.

Now if his credentials are not in keeping with what Scripture lays down in I Timothy 3, then he leaves the church open to blame.

The bottom line—is there anything about his life that will bring charge against the church?

Godly leaders are the backbone of the church, it is essential that they be qualified.

In an unsuccessful church, the issue is all too often not poor programs or uncommitted people, but substandard leadership.

Godly leaders are not produced by Bible colleges or seminaries; they merely give them the tools with which to work.

Nor do pulpit committees or ordination councils make men fit for the ministry; they merely have the responsibility to recognize those who already are.

Only the Holy Spirit can produce a true spiritual leader.

I Timothy 3:2

These men had to be qualified.

**I. The first qualification** given is – blameless – that is a foundational qualification

This one is the broad qualification on which everything else is built

The issue is not just leadership, but moral and spiritual example.

The word “blameless” means not able to be taken hold of –

This word literally means “nothing to take hold upon”; that is, there must be nothing in his life that Satan or the unsaved can take hold of to criticize or attack the church.

No man living is sinless, but we must strive to be blameless.

A man should not have any handles in his life – he should be above reproach – at home, work, sports life

The church is responsible to measure men by the standard of **above reproach**.

This all encompassing word is used again in 5:7 and 6:14.

3:2 - (**Be**) indicates he is in a present state of being above reproach.

He must be a model for the congregation to follow.

- Philippians 3:17 says that – elders are to be an example to the church.
- 2 Thessalonians 3:9 says that.

Turn to Hebrews 13:7, 17

1 Peter 5:3, *“Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.”*

Boeing in Wichita develops airplanes that are streamlined, so there is as little wind resistance as possible – that is the picture of this word – blameless.

A streamlined spiritual life

No man is perfect, but this is the standard that God has set for spiritual leadership in the church.

Should this be true of all Christians? By the power of God's Spirit, could we all be blameless—yes or no?

Can we do this in our own power, disciplining ourselves? No.

But by dependence on God and by knowledge of the Word, we can grow to maturity in Christ.

Does God want maturity in His people?

★This is one of the greatest problems of Christianity today – in spiritual leadership and in the pew – immaturity in the faith★

So, the bishop must be blameless

Bishops/elders/pastors must take great care to remain above reproach for several reasons:

- First, they are the special targets of Satan, and he will assault them with more temptation than others. Those on the front lines of the spiritual battle will bear the brunt of satanic opposition. This position must not be entered into lightly.

- Second, their fall has a greater potential for harm.  
Satan knows that when a shepherd falls, the effect on the sheep is devastating.
- Third, the leaders' greater knowledge of the truth, and accountability to live it, brings greater chastening when they sin.
- Fourth, elders' sins are more hypocritical than others' because they preach against the very sins they commit.

Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine.

Take heed to yourselves, lest you live in those sins which you preach against in others.

Some have a great passion/desire for the ministry, but they lack self-control. They are disqualified.

The man truly called to the ministry is marked by both an inward consuming passion and an outward disciplined life – above reproach

For him the ministry is not the best option, it is the only option.

There is nothing else he could do with his life that would fulfill him.

God give us leaders like this!

Let us stand for closing invitation

Christians, are we blameless? Tongue, work, home, at play?

Be blameless

Today you are in a church with real officials who are elders –

But just because you are in the building does not make you a part of the church.

There is only one way you can join God's church and that is by accepting God's Son, Jesus Christ.