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# **Follow the Leaders**

**Scripture text: 1 Timothy 3**

**Everything rises or falls with leadership**, whether it be a family or a local church. The Holy Spirit imparts gifts to believers for ministry in the local church, and among those gifts are “pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11) and “helps” and “governments” (“administration,” 1 Cor. 12:28). As we noted before, **even though the church is an organism, it must be organized or it will die.** Leadership is a part of spiritual organization.

In this section, Paul described the bishop, the deacon, and the church itself. **By understanding these three descriptions**, we shall be able to give better leadership to the ministry of the church.

**Ephesians 4:11-14** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

**1 Corinthians 12:27-31** Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And **God has appointed in the church** first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, **helping, administering,** and various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? **But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.**

## **The Pastor (1 Tim. 3:1–7)**

According to the New Testament, the terms **“bishop,” “pastor,” and “elder” are synonymous.** Bishop means **“overseer,”** and the elders **had the responsibility of overseeing the work of the church** (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1–3).

“Elder” is the translation of the Greek word presbutes, which means **“an old man.”** Paul used the word presbytery in 1 Timothy 4:14, referring not to a denomination, but to the **“eldership” of the assembly that ordained Timothy.**

**Act 20:16-17** For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he might not have to spend time in Asia, for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. Now from Miletus **he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.**

**Act 20:28-29** Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

**1 Peter 5:1-4** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow **elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ**, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.



**1 Timothy 4:12-16** Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

**Elders and bishops** (two names for the same office, Titus 1:5, 7) were **mature people with spiritual wisdom and experience**. Finally, “pastor” means “shepherd,” **one who leads and cares for the flock of God**.

When you compare the qualifications given here for bishops with those given for elders in Titus 1:5–9, you **quickly see that the same office is in view**. Church organization was quite simple in apostolic days: **There were pastors (elders, bishops) and deacons (Phil. 1:1)**.

**Titus 1:5-9** This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you--if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

It seems that there was a plurality of elders overseeing the work of each church, **some involved in “ruling” (organization and government), others in teaching (1 Tim. 5:17).**

**But these men had to be qualified.** It was good for a growing believer **to aspire to the office of bishop**, but the best way to achieve it was to develop Christian character and **meet the following requirements.** To become an elder/bishop was a serious decision, **one not treated lightly in the early church.** Paul gave **sixteen qualifications for a man to meet if he expected to serve as an elder/bishop/pastor.**

**1). Blameless (v. 2a).** 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, or “above reproach”.

**2). The husband of one wife (v. 2b).** , literally, a “one-woman man.” This ambiguous but important phrase is subject to several interpretations. The question is, how stringent a standard was Paul erecting for overseers?

Virtually all commentators agree that this phrase **prohibits both polygamy and promiscuity, which are unthinkable for spiritual leaders in the church.** Many Bible students say the words a “one-woman man” are saying that the affections of an elder **must be centered exclusively on his wife.** Many others hold, however, that the phrase further prohibits any who have been divorced and remarried from becoming overseers. The reasoning behind this view is usually that **divorce represents a failure in the home,** so that even though a man may be forgiven for any sin involved, **he remains permanently disqualified for leadership in the congregation.**

**1 Timothy 3:4-5** He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

**1 Corinthians 9:25-27** Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

**The most strict interpretation and the one common among the earliest commentators** (second and third centuries) includes each of the above but **extends the prohibition to any second marriage, even by widowers**. Their argument is that in the first century **second marriages were generally viewed as evidence of self-indulgence**. Though Paul honored marriage, he also **valued the spiritual benefits of celibacy** (1 Cor. 7:37–38) even for those who had lost a mate (1 Tim. 5:3–14). Thus he considered celibacy a worthy goal for those who possessed the self-control to remain unmarried.



**1 Corinthians 7:37-38** But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. So **then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.**

**1 Timothy 5:5-6** She who is truly a widow, left all alone, **has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers** night and day, **but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.**

**According to this strict view** Paul considered a widower's second marriage, **though by no means improper, to be evidence of a lack of the kind of self-control required of an overseer**, in much the same way that a similar lack disqualified a widow from eligibility for the list of widows.

**1 Timothy 5:9-10** Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, **having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works**: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.

**3). Vigilant (v. 2c).** This means “**temperate**” or “sober.” “**Temperate in all things**” (2 Tim. 4:5, literal translation). Or “**keep your head in all situations**”. A pastor needs to exercise sober, sensible judgment in all things.

**4). Sober (v. 2d).** He must have a serious attitude and be in earnest about his work. This does not mean he has no sense of humor, or that he is always solemn and somber. Rather **it suggests that he knows the value of things and does not cheapen the ministry or the Gospel message by foolish behavior.**

**2 Timothy 4:1-5** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, **always be sober-minded**, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

**5). Of good behavior (v. 2e).** “**Orderly**” would be a good translation. The **pastor should be organized in his thinking and his living, as well as in his teaching and preaching.** It is the same Greek word that is translated “**modest**” in 1 Timothy 2:9, referring to women’s clothing.

**6). Given to hospitality (v. 2f).** Literally, “**loving the stranger.**” This was an important ministry in the early church when traveling believers would need places to stay (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 3 John 5–8). But even today, **a pastor and wife who are hospitable** are a great help to the fellowship of a local church.

**Romans 12:12-13** Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be **constant in prayer**. Contribute to the needs of the saints and **seek to show hospitality**.

**Hebrews 13:1-3** Let brotherly love continue. **Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.** Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

**3 John 1:4-8** I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Beloved, **it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.** For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore **we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.**

**7). Apt to teach** (v. 2g). Teaching the Word of God is one of an elder's main ministries. In fact, many scholars believe that “**pastors and teachers**” in Ephesians 4:11 **refer to one person but to two functions**. A pastor is automatically a teacher (2 Tim. 2:2, 24). Phillips Brooks, famous American bishop of the 1800s, said, “Apt to teach—it is not something to which one comes by accident or by any sudden burst of fiery zeal.” A pastor must be a careful student of the Word of God, and of all that assists him in knowing and teaching that Word. The pastor who is lazy in his study is a disgrace in the pulpit.



**2 Timothy 2:1-2** You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses **entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**

**2 Timothy 2:23-25** Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, **able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,**

**8). Not given to wine** (v. 3a). The word describes a person who sits long with the cup and thus drinks to excess. The fact that Paul advised Timothy to use wine for medicinal purposes (1 Tim. 5:23) indicates that total abstinence was not demanded of believers. Sad to say, some of the members of the Corinthian church got drunk, even at the love feast that accompanied the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:21). The Jewish people diluted their wine with water to make sure it was not too strong. It was a well-known fact that water was not pure in those days, so that weak wine taken in moderation would have been healthier to drink.

**1 Timothy 5:20-25** As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. **(No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.)** The sins of some men are conspicuous, going before them to judgment, but the sins of others appear later. So also good works are conspicuous, and even those that are not cannot remain hidden.

However, there is a vast difference between the cultural use of wine in Bible days and supporting the alcohol industry of today. Paul's admonition and example in Romans 14 (especially Rom. 14:21) would apply today in a special way. **A godly pastor would certainly want to give the best example** and not be an excuse for sin in the life of some weaker brother.

**Romans 14:20-21** Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. **It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.**

**9). No striker (v. 3b).** “Not contentious, not looking for a fight.” Charles Spurgeon told his Pastor’s College students, **“Don’t go about the world with your fist doubled up for fighting, carrying a theological revolver in the leg of your trousers.”**

**10). Not greedy of filthy lucre (v. 3c).** Paul will have more to say about money in 1 Timothy 6:3ff. It is possible to use the ministry as an easy way to make money, **if a man has no conscience or integrity.**

(Not that pastors are paid that much in most churches!) Covetous pastors always have “deals” going on outside their churches, and **these activities erode their character and hinder their ministry.** Pastors should “not [work] for filthy lucre” (1 Peter 5:2).

**1 Peter 5:2-3** shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; **not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.**

**11). Patient (v. 3d). “Gentle” is a better translation. The pastor must listen to people and be able to take criticism without reacting. He should permit others to serve God in the church without dictating to them.**

**12). Not a brawler (v. 3e). Pastors must be peacemakers, not troublemakers. This does not mean they must compromise their convictions, but that they must “disagree” without being “disagreeable.” Short tempers do not make for long ministries.**

**13). Not covetous** (v. 3f). You can covet many things besides money: popularity, a large ministry that makes you famous, denominational advancement, etc. **This word centers mainly on money.**

**14). A godly family** (vv. 4–5). This does not mean that a pastor must be married, or, if married, must have children. However, **marriage and a family are probably in the will of God for most pastors.** If a man's own children cannot obey and respect him, then his church is not likely to respect and obey his leadership. **For Christians, the church and the home are one. We should oversee both of them with love, truth, and discipline.**



The pastor cannot be one thing at home and something else in church. If he is, his children will detect it, and there will be problems. The words “rule” and “ruleth” in 1 Timothy 3:4–5 mean **“to preside over, to govern,”** and suggest that a pastor is the one who directs the business of the church. (**Not as a dictator, of course, but as a loving shepherd—**1 Peter 5:3.) The word translated “take care of” in 1 Timothy 3:5 **suggests a personal ministry to the needs of the church.** It is used in the Parable of the **Good Samaritan to describe the care given to the injured man** (Luke 10:34–35).

**Luke 10:33-37** But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, **he had compassion.** He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, **'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'** Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, **"The one who showed him mercy."** And Jesus said to him, **"You go, and do likewise."**

## 15). Not a novice (v. 6).

**“Novice” literally means “one newly planted,” referring to a young Christian.** Age is no guarantee of maturity, but it is good for a man to give himself **time for study and growth before he accepts a church.** Some men mature faster than others, of course. Satan enjoys seeing a youthful pastor succeed and get proud; then Satan can tear down all that has been built up.

## **16). A good testimony outside the church (v. 7).**

Does he pay his bills? Does he have a good reputation among unsaved people with whom he does business?

**Colossians 4:5-6 Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.**

**1 Thessalonians 4:11-12** and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, **so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.**

No pastor ever feels that he is all he ought to be, and his people need to pray for him constantly. It is not easy to serve as a pastor/elder, but it is much easier if your character is all God wants it to be.