

The Most Excellent Way

Discipleship/Leadership Bible Study Homework

“Overseers and Deacons”

HEART ATTITUDE: Count the Cost of Leadership

It is good to want to be a spiritual leader, but the standards are high. Paul enumerates some of the qualifications here. Do you hold a position of spiritual leadership, or would you like to be a leader some day? Check yourself against Paul's standard of excellence. Those with great responsibility must meet high expectations.

The lists of qualifications for leadership indicate a blameless and pure life requiring effort and self-discipline. All believers, even if we never plan to be leaders, should strive to follow these guidelines because they are consistent with what God says is true and right. The strength to do them comes from Jesus.

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-16 (NIV)

Here is a trustworthy saying:

If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

²*Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,*

³*Not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*

⁴*He 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?)*

⁶*He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.*

⁷*He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.*

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

⁹*They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.*

¹⁰*They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.*

¹¹*In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

¹²*A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.*

¹³*Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.*

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.*

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.*

The Holy Bible, New International Version.

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- **FOCUSING**

1. What are some of the qualifications you had to meet for your job?

2. What important qualities should managers possess?

- **STUDYING GOD'S WORD**

3. What did Paul say about the person who wants to be an overseer? (3:1)

“Overseer” can be translated bishop, church leader, or presiding elder. The leader of a ministry should meet the same standards of service.

4. What qualities must an overseer possess? (3:2-7)

(1) _____
(2) _____
(3) _____
(4) _____
(5) _____
(6) _____
(7) _____
(8) _____
(9) _____
(10) _____
(11) _____
(12) _____
(13) _____
(14) _____
(15) _____

In verse 2, Paul is prohibiting both polygamy and promiscuity. This does not prohibit an unmarried man or women from becoming a ministry leader, or a widowed leader from remarrying. Many come to Christ and Christian service having been divorced (chemical dependency breeds divorce), and if God accepts them into His Kingdom, The Most Excellent Way should also. However, a divorce of a Christian couple should eliminate the possibility of leadership in The Most Excellent Way where “forgiveness” is stressed unequivocally for all relationship problems. Jesus’ one exception in Matthew 5:32. However, even the justification of adultery is not beyond reconciliation between two people committed to the Lordship of Jesus.

If anyone desiring to serve is disqualified by Paul’s list, he or she must examine their heart motives for desiring to be in leadership. God doesn’t call everyone to leadership, but He does call everyone to love (*agapeo*) and to serve.

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5. Why is good family management a qualification for being an overseer? (3:4-5)

Spiritual leadership must begin at home. Leaders of The Most Excellent Way sometimes have more empathy and understanding for addicts and alcoholics, and mistakenly think their ministry work justifies neglecting family restoration and growth. If a man (or woman) is not willing to care for, discipline, and teach his/her children, he/she is not qualified to lead any ministry within the Church.

6. Why shouldn't the overseer be a new convert? (3:6)

The first priority for new believers is to develop their relationship with God, the Father, through faith in Jesus Christ. Growing in our personal spiritual walk is the most important part of our new life, and it must be guided by the Holy Spirit. Too often ministries are desperate for workers and place unqualified new believers in positions of leadership. New faith needs to pass the test of time in order to mature. New believers, however, should be allowed to serve (minister) in a supervised ministry, especially one the Lord has used to bless them (see I Corinthians 1:3-4).

Also, new converts typically spend much time on their "recovery" and new life, while ignoring the needs of their spouse and children. The most significant evidence of a person's readiness for leadership is the successful, rewarding discipleship experience and leadership within the family.

7. Why must an overseer have a good reputation? (3:7)

8. What qualities must a deacon possess? (3:8-10, 12)

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____
- (6) _____
- (7) _____
- (8) _____

9. What is required before someone can serve as a deacon? (3:10)

"Deacon" means "one who serves," a position the apostles began in Jerusalem's early church (see Acts 6:1-6) to care for the physical needs of believers. In some churches today, new and young Christians are often asked to serve as deacons. Paul said men are to be tested with lesser responsibilities before being made deacons.

10. What sort of person must the wife of a deacon be? (3:11)

Some translate "wives" as "women helpers" or "deaconesses," and it is unclear whether this verse refers to wives of deacons or female church leaders (i.e., the deaconess, Phoebe, Romans 16:1). In either case, Paul says the behavior of prominent women in the Church should be just as responsible and blameless as that of prominent men.

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11. What do those who serve well gain? (3:13)

12. What benefit is there in serving well? (3:13)

13. Why did Paul write these instructions? (3:14-15)

To be a leader is a heavy responsibility because the Church belongs to the living God. Paul's lists of qualifications for leadership show that living a blameless and pure life requires effort and self-discipline. All Christians, even if they do not plan to be leaders, should strive to follow these guidelines because they are consistent with what God says is true and right. Take heart. The strength to do so comes from Christ.

14. What is said about Jesus in the hymn Paul quoted? (3:16)

• **UNDERSTANDING**

15. What position do you desire/hold in your church or The Most Excellent Way?

16. To what noble tasks have you aspired?

17. Which of the character qualities needed by both overseers and deacons do you think is the most important for a ministry or church leader to possess?

18. If you applied the lists of qualifications for these positions to yourself, how would you measure up?

19. What is the common ingredient in the lists of qualifications for leaders in the church?

• **DOING THE WORD**

20. What qualities from the above lists do you want to improve in your life? How could you start?
