

July 30, 2017

“Being an Overseer is a Noble Task”

Focal Passage: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NASB)

Cross References: Matthew 19:3-12; Acts 14:23; 20:17-36; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 7:1-40; 1 Timothy 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:7, 17; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-5

Lesson Idea: All believers should strive to live up to the characteristics required of their overseers.

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

July 23 Proverbs 30-31	July 24 Eccles 1-4
July 25 Eccles 5-8	July 26 Eccles 9-12
July 27 Song of Sol 1-8	July 28 Isaiah 1-4
July 29 Isaiah 5-8	July 30 Isaiah 9-12

Background:

From Walter L. Liefeld, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, p 115:

The church at Ephesus was troubled by men who taught error and, in at least some cases, lived immorally. Christians, especially women, were harassed and in need of help. In chapter 1 Paul urged Timothy both to teach truth and to live a life appropriate to his teachings. In chapter 2 he stressed the importance of conduct that befits God’s truth on the part of both men and women. Now Paul takes another step to address the problem of false teachers by ensuring that the church has leaders who are morally qualified and “above reproach.”

From David Guzik, *1 Timothy 3*:

This is a faithful saying: Paul has just written that women are not to hold positions of authority in the church; (see *1 Timothy 2:11-15*) but he does not want to leave the impression that just any man is qualified. No man is qualified to be a spiritual leader in the church just because of his gender.

If a man desires the position of a bishop: The office Paul described is that of bishop (*overseer*). Our religious culture has given us a particular idea

of what a bishop is; but the word *bishop* in New Testament Greek [*episkopos*] literally means “over” (*epi*) “watcher” (*skopos*) - an overseer.

These were men with leadership and authority in the church... In Acts 20:17, we learn there were many bishops - that is, overseers - in one church in one city. Undoubtedly, these were men who had oversight over the many house-churches that met throughout the city. The idea of a “regional bishop” doesn’t come from the Bible.

Based on what bishop means, a bishop is someone with oversight in the church, a leader. Such a person may also sometimes be called an *elder* (*presbuteros*) or a *pastor* (*poimen*, which means “shepherd”), as in Acts 20:17; Acts 20:28...

God has specific qualifications for leaders in the church. Leaders are not to be chosen at random, nor just because they volunteer, nor because they aspire to the position, nor even because they are “natural leaders.” Instead they should be chosen primarily on how they match the qualifications listed here.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), 6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

DISCUSSION:

- v 1. What does it mean to “aspire” to something? What is the “office of overseer?” Why is it a “fine work?” (see Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Hebrews 13:7, 17)

NOTE: from Liefeld, p 116:

The word Paul uses here for church leadership is *episkope*. It is hard to translate; “overseership” might be the best literal rendering. It describes the work or position of an overseer... Paul defines being an overseer in terms of function (“a noble task”), not of status or office. He is not encouraging people to seek status but responsibility.

- v 2-3. Define the terms Paul uses to describe the character and lifestyle of an overseer:

- *above reproach*
- *the husband of one wife*

NOTE: the original Greek actually reads: “*a one woman man*” (μίας γυναικὸς ἄνδρες). Does this phrase mean “faithful in marriage,” or “never divorced,” or “never remarried?” Paul does not use the term for not “divorced” (ἀπολύσαι); but he does use a phrase that implies faithfulness as a husband. (see Matthew 19:3-12; 1 Corinthians 7)

- *temperate*
- *prudent*
- *respectable*
- *hospitable*
- *able to teach*

NOTE: from Liefeld, p. 120:

The phrase “able to teach” (representing one Greek word, *didaktikon*) refers to ability, not knowledge (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24, where, following a reference to heretics, Paul turns to the *manner* in which Timothy is to refute them and the *ability* he must have to do that).

- *not addicted to wine*
- *nor pugnacious*
- *gentle*

- *peaceable*
- *free from the love of money*
- Why should these characteristics be true of all believers? Why are they a must for church leaders?

NOTE: from Liefeld, p 129:

The standard that an elder should be “blameless” (“*above reproach*”) surely refers to one’s present life. Paul himself writes of his former sins as forgiven, so that he could be an apostle.

- v 4-5. Why must an overseer of the church manage his own household well? What does that mean?
- v 6. Why should new converts not be put in positions of leadership in the church? Why did the devil fall into condemnation?
- v 7. Why is a good reputation in the community important for church leaders? How do ministers fall into reproach? Why does the devil set “snares” for ministers?
- Read Acts 20:17-36; 1 Timothy 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-5. What are some of the roles and responsibilities of elders?

APPLICATION:

- ✓ Do you “aspire” to be a leader in the church? Why or why not?
- ✓ Which of the characteristics of overseers do you need to work on the most? Why?
- ✓ How does this passage move you to pray for your church leaders? Why?