



# First Timothy

# Church Leaders II

## Qualifications

I Timothy 3:2-10

Lesson Eleven



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## A Study of the First Letter of the Apostle Paul to His Son in the Faith

### Church Leaders II

Very likely if you asked Paul to list all the qualifications for church leaders he would add to the list which makes up our Scripture lesson for today. However, we can consider these most important things which came to his mind. Read I Timothy 3:2-13.

We see in these verses Paul's description of what kind of reputation elders and deacons should have. Most of the qualifications for each office are alike.

First, elders should be "above reproach," deacons "worthy of respect." Someone who is going to be a leader in the church should not have a reputation that would make the church look bad, or who would be a bad example for church members.

Second, these persons should be husband of one wife, and know how to manage the home well. There has been much argument about what the phrase "husband of one wife" means. We can be sure of one thing, it definitely means that the person should not have more than one spouse at a time. Some say that this means that an elder and deacon must be a man because of the reference to having a wife. That may not be the case, because Paul mentions women who were deacons. Romans 16:1. Many feel that verse eleven in our Scripture for today, gives qualifications for women who would be deacons, maybe even elders. Some say that I Timothy 2:11 means that women cannot serve as elders. (Read 2:11) All of this should be read considering the way people lived in Paul's day. Women had very few rights, and if married, only those allowed by their husbands. It should be said here that for people to refuse to have Christian fellowship over any of this teaching is dangerous.

Third, Paul goes on in his description of the character of elders to say that if a person does not know how to manage his family, that person is not likely to know how to "take care of God's church." Notice that he uses the words "take care" of the church, rather than manage. It is the role of a shepherd.

Fourth, he lists a number of character traits expected in elders: temperate means mild-mannered, cautious and moderate; self-controlled means doesn't fly off the handle; respectable means looked up to by others; hospitable means neighborly; able to teach; not given to drunkenness; not violent but gentle; not quarrelsome means doesn't pick fights; not a lover of money means making money is not the goal in life. We have mentioned managing one's family which Paul describes as having the respect of one's children.

Fifth, Paul says that the elder should not be a new convert. In other words, a church leader should have some experience as a Christian, and be able to apply that to leading other Christians. That also goes for having a good reputation with people outside the church. Church leaders should be involved with people outside the church, and those people should look up to him or her. Good leaders will not subject the church to scandal because of their behavior.

In verse eight, he moves on to qualifications of deacons as church leaders. He lists several things, as we have said, that apply to both elders and deacons. As previously mentioned,



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deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere *means a truth-teller, a "straight-shooter"*; not indulging in much wine *means never gets drunk*; keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with clear conscience *means that they know and believe doctrines of the church and live by them*.

Deacons are to prove themselves. This is equal to Paul's word that elders should not be new converts. They must have been around long enough that the people of the church believe that they are worthy to be a church leader. A deacon is to be the husband of one wife (see previous discussion) and manage his children and household well...just like the elder.

We have mentioned verse eleven, which speaks about wives. This applies to the wives of those who would serve as deacons. Many believe that the language here, in Greek, says that these are women deacons, or deaconesses. It could be referring to wives of deacons who wish to serve as deacons themselves. Such women should be respectable; should not gossip or hurt anyone with their words; should be temperate or mild-mannered; and trustworthy in everything, women who can be trusted with your money, your life, or your deepest secrets.

Much is made, by some of those who study Scripture, about what is left out in one list or another. For instance the ability to teach is not mentioned in the qualifications for deacons or deaconesses. That, in the opinion of some, means that deacons or deaconesses should not teach. There is a problem with that kind of reasoning. Deacons and deaconesses are instructed to "hold the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience." That is not mentioned in the characteristics of elders. Does that mean that elders are not responsible for holding (studying and honoring) the doctrines (teachings) of the church? If we consider these lists to be complete and exclusive, there are other things not necessary for one or another of the church leaders. It is always best to let the Bible speak for itself, and not try to second guess God's purpose.

We will discuss, in a future lesson, some practical advice about elders, but for now, we should recognize two tasks of elders in addition to the definition of overseer as one who supervises and guides. Those tasks are preaching and teaching, according to I Timothy 5:17. There are no specific instructions for the work of deacons. We assume from their title that they are helpers. The first deacons, selected in Acts chapter six, were to provide food for the neglected widows.

It seems probable that a deacon who did a good job might be elevated to elder. Our memory verse for today tells us that both humans and God will recognize good work by church leaders and that good work strengthens the confidence in our "faith in Christ Jesus."

\*Underlined words and phrases are to be used in completing the Student Worksheet.

**Lesson Goal:** To explain to students the qualifications for church leaders.

**Scripture Memory:** "Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus." I Timothy 3:13

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## Student Worksheet—Following Through

### Church Leaders II

>List some of the qualifications of elders.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

>List some of the qualifications of deacons.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

>Wives should be \_\_\_\_\_; should not \_\_\_\_\_ or hurt anyone with their words; should be \_\_\_\_\_ or mild-mannered; and \_\_\_\_\_ in everything, women who can be trusted with your \_\_\_\_\_, your \_\_\_\_\_, or your deepest \_\_\_\_\_.

**For Memory: “Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.” I Timothy 3:13**

#### **How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:**

First, believe that the God of the Bible is the true God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.