

The Gift of Godly Leaders

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[0 : 00] 1 Timothy 3, beginning at verse 1.

Here is a trustworthy saying. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect.

If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.

He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.

[1 : 38] They must keep hold of the deep truths of faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested, and then, if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

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

A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. We are thinking under the heading, The Gift of Godly Leaders, so it's going to be really helpful for you if you could keep 1 Timothy chapter 3 open.

My name is Callum, and I've been here with my family since, worshipping with you since about October. We came from the East, and we came from the East, and we're going back with Tim to the East again.

[2 : 58] You can decide whether or not I brought you any wisdom from the East, or gold, frankincense, or myrrh. Let's look then at godly leadership.

The big thing that God is doing in his world is building his church. And it's through his church that Jesus announces words of salvation to those who are lost.

And therefore it's vital that the people of God's church know how to conduct themselves. I told you to keep the passage open, because immediately after our passage, Paul says, I am writing you these instructions, Timothy, church at Ephesus, so 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.

So Paul is writing this letter to Timothy and to the church in Ephesus, where there are issues of leadership. So they know how to conduct themselves.

That they will be a pillar holding up the truth, which is Christ's gospel. This letter, therefore, helps us now as we consider what type of leaders are needed for a church to be the pillar holding up the gospel.

- [4 : 30] Now, you know the big central pillar in George Square, in Glasgow? Apparently this is called contextualisation, Martin.
- The 80 foot, 24 metre pillar, right in the centre of Glasgow, George Square, is holding up. Who? Who is it that's up in the sky? It was supposed to be King George, but he upset the rich merchants by losing the American colonies.
- So, in Scotland's biggest city, instead of an English king, in Glasgow Civic Square, we have, whisper it, Edinburgh's famous author, Sir Walter Scott.
- What an own goal. Paul writes to Timothy, The church, which is the household of the living God, is to be a pillar holding out the truth.
- [5 : 34] No one else. The one figure held up, irreplaceable, is Christ and his one true gospel. No one else.
- Anything weakening the pillar, like the chapter 4, verse 7, irreverent, irreverent, irreverent, silly myths. It needs to be stopped.
- Any leaders, like the chapter 1, chapter 6, swearers, Hymenaeus, Alexander, who hold up warped doctrines, they need to be stopped.
- Timothy needs guts. It takes guts for an overseeing leader to tell others no.
- But it needs done. And it takes character to do it in love. Paul tells Timothy, I need you to be a leader who, chapter 1, verse 19, fights the battle well.
- [6 : 35] And note this, holds faith and a good conscience. Holds faith and a good conscience.
- Hmm, that was another passage that Tamara read to us. We'll get to that. First, I want to point out a danger to you. I imagine, after reading chapter 3, that Tim, or Martin, or Jonathan, who all in this church have the task of oversight, the task of ruling as elders so to care well for the household of God, will not have this danger.
- Neither, I imagine, will other key leaders. The danger for many of us who are not pastoring is we think this passage is about something we're not.
- And so, you know what, I'm just going to listen. In a kind of detached way, I might even fall asleep. So let me grab and keep your attention by telling you that this could save people from great harm.
- Paying attention today could help people from falling away because of leaders who should never have been made so. Indeed, it could even save your church in the future.
- [7 : 57] Whether that be St Silas, East Glasgow, or another church. Why? Because appointing wrong church leaders, or church leaders who go wrong, can and do cause mass casualties.
- Now, in this passage that we've got, there are three groups of people. Elders, deacons, and women. And how do you think of these first two, the elders and the deacons, in part, will likely have been formed by the types of church governance you've grown up in and experienced.
- Now, discussion about church governance, elders and deacons, can get a bit friction-like. Talking about leaders and bad leaders can be a bit triggering for people.
- So let's, as the Scots say, call canny. Be careful of each other and this. This next wee bit that you're listening to about the three groups will require a little bit of concentration.
- So switch the brains to really on. Firstly, overseers. In the New Testament, as said before, overseers and elders, they're interchangeable terms.
- [9 : 26] What are they though? Well, from verse 4 and 5, we can see these men have to manage and care for the household of God. They have to, chapter 4, verse 17, rule well.

And ruling well is always ruling for the benefit of others. And from chapter 4, we also read that elders are to be men who labour in preaching and teaching and to be paid for it.

Why men? You remember last week, Martin explained, Paul puts in a restriction where authoritative teaching is a task assigned to men.

Listen back online if you need to go through that again or ask about it later if needed. But in short, elders oversee.

They are the authority in the church doing the authoritative, I always find that word hard to say, teaching. Lovingly protecting the church from falsehood.

[10 : 32] And where need be, disciplining, we ward sheep like you and me. Meh. Secondly, we have deacons being mentioned.

Now, we can spend the remainder of our time discussing what on earth a deacon is. But whatever exactly a deacon was in the early church, it is a role or task being performed in some way that's not the same as an elder.

That's obvious from our passage and from Philippians 1, verse 1. The Greek word diakonos is sometimes translated servant.

And so some people believe that deacons would only have a serving mercy mission type role. However, it may well be that deacons would have responsibility involving some world ministry, some teaching.

I think it's very interesting that Paul uses the phrase at verse 9 when speaking of deacons, have a look at it. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.

[11 : 48] It is interesting that this is the phrase Paul has just said to Timothy in chapter 1. He said it to his apostolic mouthpiece, who's a teacher in Ephesus.

Chapter 1, verse 18 and 19. Timothy, hold faith and a good conscience. The false teachers, the swearers handed over to Satan in verses 19 and 20 of chapter 1 are described as having rejected this.

Not holding faith and a good conscience. Conscience. And from this, I suspect that whatever the deacon task is exactly, whilst not being the overseer of the church, it was of such importance that they must keep hold of the deep truths of faith.

It sounds to me like a bit more than setting out the chairs. Are even expressions of mercy to the world important than though they are?

Okay, so that's all there. That's the first two done. Are you still with me? Give your neighbour a nudge if you're not. If they're not. The third group mentioned are women in verse 11. Surely we know what women are, but ooh.

[13 : 04] Some translations have this translated as the wives of the deacons. And whilst I think we can all agree it's important that wives of elders or wives of deacons are godly, this list at verse 11 could be suggestive of women as deacons.

It at least suggests they have responsibility that requires they be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers.

They're careful with their mouths. They're temperate. And they need to be trustworthy in everything. They have godly responsibility.

It's also helpful to know that it would appear from Romans 16 verse 1 that the restriction on women being elders is not there for deacons, as Paul describes Phoebe as a deacon.

Okay, technical stuff over. Are you still with me? What we're going to do is now apply these verses to leadership across the whole church, but with some major focus on those leaders who have most responsibility.

[14 : 20] Because trust me, the more responsibility in church, the more intense it is. And the more important, these leaders don't shipwreck their faith.

And so here is a thought exercise. You are being asked to be part of a search team for your next church pastor. Don't worry, I don't have any knowledge of Martin retiring or any of that sort of thing.

Just a thought exercise, okay? You're being asked to be part of the search team. You're asked to write up what you're looking for in your pastor or overseer.

Remembering, oversee is what an elder does. So what sort of things are you looking for? What sort of questions would you have on the application form?

An interview? Who do you want? Someone who is visionary? A good communicator? Someone who can infuse me?

[15 : 26] Church, what sort of leaders are you drawn to? The counselling type? The organised type? Someone assured or someone with charisma?

Someone gifted? If it was the choice of two, would you plump for a godly man or a gifted man? Well, given the first heading in your sermon sheet, look for godly leaders, it won't be a surprise that I think the Bible is saying godly man.

But it might be a surprise that it even has to be said at all. But just think how prone the human heart is to following the wrong leader.

So godly man or gifted man. Think how many pastors have been appointed because of their apparent gifting, subsequently removed because what's become apparent later are character flaws.

Appointed because of perceived gifting, removed because of ignored poor character. Let me put this as bluntly as I can.

[16 : 41] If your 22-year-old daughter was staffing an apprenticeship at a church, what type of men would you want overseeing her?

Gifted men or godly men? Verse 1. If anyone aspires to oversee, he desires a noble task.

Task. Note, this is a doing thing. Not really an office thing. A noble task. And a noble task requires a noble person.

So let's read verses 2 and 3. Ask yourself, is Callum right? Is it about gifting or godliness? Is it about charisma or character?

Now the overseer is to be above reproach. Faithful to his wife. Temperate. Self-controlled. Respectable.

[17 : 45] Hospitable. Able to teach. Not given to drunkenness. Not violent. But gentle. Not quarrelsome.

Not a lover of money. Apart from the able to teach, it's certainly describing character, isn't it? And given the context, I think you should think of the able to teach thing as a character thing.

Because who is going to listen to a Christian teacher who is an intemperate, violent adulterer. That is not the overseeing elders we are looking for.

As I said, in this church, Martin and Jonathan have this spiritual oversight. As does Tim for the church plan. And my friends, verse 2 and 3 is what we have to expect them to be.

And verse 2 and 3 is what we have to help them to be. You can see that a leader failing in any of the verse 2 and 3 list would cause great damage.

[18 : 58] The pillar would be weakened if there was a scandal, for example, in the arena of relationships. or violence. Or money.

Great damage. Folks, allow me this illustration. My car is old.

And I like it like this. It does not beep at me when it thinks I am too near something like modern cars. It does not warn me of danger.

Now, I could drive all the way to London in a kind of verse 2 and verse 3 way above reproach. Keeping my temper.

Don't laugh, Claire. I know not. Driving in such a way other road users respect me. In fact, modelling good driving to those in the car.

[19 : 56] With Claire, my one wife, beside me. In fact, I'm so hospitable I picked up a couple of hitchhikers. Not loving money, I don't take petrol money from them, or quarrel with their warped political views.

I'm doing great with the verse 2, verse 3 thing to about Hamilton. Ministry is law. 400 miles later, though, my temper might mount at the tailgate and torment two feet from my back seat.

Or maybe my eyes might linger over long on the sexy roadside adverb. And away from where my eyes should be, I've missed the danger.

One mistake, and I've crashed the car. And the lives of all on board and those in the car I've hit are endangered by succumbing to a, verse 7, weakness.

weakness. A snare placed by the devil. A carefully placed trap. Once in and gone.

[21 : 07] Leaders, what is the weakness that could lead to your disaster? Damaging the likes of others. it might only take one failing and you've crashed the car.

You've weakened the pillar. Church, what is your weakness? In what way might you cause a leader to fail?

Overseers and leaders, I've described an accident, but generally this sort of disaster comes from willful sin people think we can get away with.

So, in this illustration, speeding on the motorway whilst being on your phone, the rules aren't for me. Bang! Overseen is a noble task.

Leading others in church is a noble thing, but you're one big sin away from crashing. And if you're an important leader in this place, you're not driving a car load, look about, or even a bus load.

[22 : 21] This is more like a long train, even a ship. Timothy, hold faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith and have been handed over to Satan.

This is intense, because the danger is real. And so overseers and leaders, know and pray against your weaknesses.

Have people in your life who you are accountable to. The type of person that will ask you the character questions. And listen church, you may never have thought this before, but could you be the trap laid by the devil to cause the sin?

Have you ever put a pastor's character to the test by your behavior? Or misbehavior? We can put our leaders at risk just by overstretching them.

They are human. And so church, pray for your overseers and leaders. Pray you do not tempt them into sin. And remember that your faith is in Christ and not in the man up front.

[23 : 46] You see how intense this really is? So godliness or giftedness, what do you think a church elder or overseer needs?

We need to look for godly leaders. In fact, we need to look to god to gift our leaders godliness.

Because although I have chosen to phrase this in a negative warning sense, notice that Paul's list suggests that there are godly people like this to be found.

There are noble people for the noble tasks because god is at work. Not too surprisingly, godliness comes from god.

And so look to him for godly leaders. Pray for them. Pray for people he has transformed. Chapter 1 verse 15, worth looking at.

[24 : 53] Here is a trustworthy saying, says Paul, that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.

But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

Christ, our God, displays himself in Paul, the persecutor, to give eternal life. God made Paul godly. And therefore, in our leaders, especially our overseers, we have to look for the godliness that Christ gives.

It is a gift, it's so therefore it can be had, and it's a gift that we can look out for. Look, therefore, point to, for a godly home.

Don't worry, point one's a huge one, the rest go much quicker. He must, verse 4, manage his own family well, and see that his children obey him.

[26 : 03] He must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? But how can we tell if someone is fit for this task?

Is there a litmus test for it? How can we tell if someone's godly? Well, Paul says, look at how they manage their house, their home. How are they with their kids?

What's it like there with his wife? Notice, having well-behaved children doesn't mean having a wife and children so scared of you that they're cowed into obedience.

It's to be done in a manner worthy of full respect. Should a man who be an elder if he bullies his family or neglects them?

No, he's called to love his wife like Christ loves the church. The father is called continually throughout the Bible to teach his children about God. Now, if your child misbehaves every now and then, like one of mine did any time crazy golf was played, you're not automatically ruled out.

[27 : 19] If your child maybe has special needs and this manifests as difficult behaviour, you're not ruled out. However, continual misbehaviour or a child with difficult issues might be a sign that you as parent are first called to be pouring love primarily into that situation and into the home.

Clearly, you're not ruled out by not having children. But there are ways to see, other than that, how godly a man is. For example, let's look at chapter 5, verse 8, which is talking about helping poor widows.

Anyone who doesn't provide for their relatives, especially their own household, has denied the faith. It's worse than an unbeliever. we can see from the home there too, the extended family.

We may also ask when looking at a man, or for a position of eldership, does he only treat people who can help him progress well?

How does he treat those who are vulnerable in church? Those that don't open the doors for him? The child, the frail. Is he as loving to the cleaner and the secretary or just to people he thinks can open doors for him?

[28 : 49] Looking for a godly elder or leader? Look for a godly home. Spot how he treats the vulnerable. Next point, look for length.

I don't mean can he preach a 50 minute sermon, nor Tim, who seems to be very long, doesn't he? He is a big guy, isn't he? No, I mean verse 6, he must not be a recent convert.

Why not? Spot the danger here. He may become conceited, big-headed, and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must have a good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace, into the devil's trap.

I wonder if you've met any pastors who are attention seekers? Seen egomaniac pastors? There's a few of them online, I don't know. Do you know any people who thrive off of praise?

I opened a notebook not so long ago in which I had left a note to myself saying, Callum, you like being liked too much.

[30 : 07] I would have been a disaster as an overseer in my early twenties. You see, for a sinful man to become godly takes time. An overseer must not be a new Christian, but not just for the benefit of the church, but for his own protection.

So he does not become conceited falling under the same judgment as the devil, an angel of light who fell. We need to not put young men, nor new converts in that danger.

From a position of grace to verse 8, a fall to disgrace. The danger is not theoretical as we illustrated. The devil is trying to trap overseers and leaders to cause maximum damage to the pillar.

It's not by coincidence the devil is described in Revelation 12 as a dragon and dragon will eat young men for breakfast.

Look for length. And finally, look to grow. Look to grow. churches are either growing or dying.

[31 : 25] In our walk with Christ we are either growing or receding. Look, to grow, I said at the start, the deacons and the women who are not the elders or the overseers, but women who are leaders, men who are leaders but not elders, they are all expected to be godly in very similar ways.

Which is why at verse 8 and at verse 11 it says, in the same way. They have to be godly in the same way, worthy of respect, in the same way, sincere, not indulging in much wine, not pursuing dishonest gain.

It all sounds familiar to what was asked of the elders. elders. And verse 10, like elders, you don't just chuck them in.

See how they'll get on. I wonder if they can swim. Oops, no. And they've taken a few down with them. Chapter 5, verse 22, do not be hasty in the laying on of hands.

That means don't be in a rush to appoint people in the laying on of hands. There needs to be plenty of road tests before confirmation.

[32 : 50] Lerner drivers really drive, don't they? But they're under proper supervision. And look, just like elders at verse 12, there should be a godly home shown before responsible leadership.

Do they hold deep truths of faith with a clear conscience in the house? Taking responsibility to teach children, love their wife as Christ loved the church seriously.

Whatever exactly the deacon role was in the early church, the principles are super helpful in appointing people to other roles that are not the elders today.

Time. Look at home line. A chance to grow before the more intense leadership. let me summarise what I've said before I then try and safely land the plane.

Hopefully better than Robbie's paper effort. There is great danger in appointing the wrong leaders. The devil is out to get leaders.

[34 : 01] And therefore we need to take care of our leader and leaders. also it is certainly possible to appoint godly leaders.

You see there is great possibility if God is growing people in godliness and these people become the leaders instead of us just going for the gifted.

So the seatbelt sign is on. We're coming into land. We've begun by saying the big thing God is doing in the world is building his church and part of that is his growing of godly leaders.

That could be you if you are growing. We're about to enter a time of change in St Silas where some leaders, deacon-like leaders, head east with Tim overseeing where people there will be asked to grow in leadership.

Now, whether you're staying or you're going if one of the leaders or the elders here has looked at your character and says, will you serve in this way?

[35 : 13] Will you help out with the youth work? Will you do this? If they've looked at you and they see a measure of godliness in you, then grow.

Let your answer be yes. You see, we're finishing with verse 13. Look at it with me. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

This is a motivation for serving well. Great standing. Do you notice how serving well, serving in a godly way means you have grown more in godliness and become an example?

that your brothers and your great standing and sisters desire to emulate because godliness is beautiful and attractive and we want it when we see it.

And notice too how, as you have become godly in your service, your assurance in your faith has grown. Your assurance in Jesus.

[36 : 25] Godliness grown steadily by God in you as a gift to the church that even one day you might be being grown for a more noble task so that together with your brothers and your sisters you are part of the pillar holding up the truth that is the gospel.

Lord Jesus we ask for your church here in St Silas that you would grow godly leaders. Lord Jesus we thank you that you have conquered us just as you conquered Paul, took us from darkness, brought us into light to serve, to hold up the truth that is the gospel with our brothers and sisters.

Lord we do not want to stay the same with you, we want to grow. Lord we need to grow and so Lord grow us in godliness for your service, for your kingdom and for the sake of your eternal son and we ask all this in his name.

Amen. Amen.