

## 1 Timothy, Chapter Three, Lesson One

ABOVE REPROACH 1 Timothy 3:1-3

### STIMULATE

\*\* At the conclusion of chapter two the apostle Paul instructed his true child in the faith regarding the “**Authority Prescribed**” by God Himself which is to be followed within the framework of church worship. What lesson are the men of the church to learn from Adam’s bad example, which we saw together last week?

We must not violate our God-given role as leader, teacher, provider and protector of our wives. We must faithfully live the standard and lead our helpmates into a more Christlike lifestyle each day!

\*\* To what role has God graciously called the women of the church, within the corporate worship service?

The role of “learner” or “disciple” who quietly receives instruction from the Word of God.

\*\* With which attitude does the godly woman fulfill this role?

Contentedness, she does not seek to take a man’s position; but receives her instruction in the Word “**with entire submissiveness**”.

### MOTIVATE

\*\* Having established in Timothy’s mind the parameters of God’s prescribed authority within the corporate worship of the church, the apostle is now going to expand his inspired instruction into four specific areas which we will study together over the next month. Here in chapter three we have the privilege of looking over Paul’s shoulder as he explains to Timothy the meaning of:

*ABOVE REPROACH* - 1 Timothy 3:1-3

*ADMIRABLE REPUTATION* - 1 Timothy 3:4-7

*APPROVED RELATIONSHIP* - 1 Timothy 3:8-13

*APOSTOLIC REQUIREMENT* - 1 Timothy 3:14-16

How can Timothy know who is qualified to be in church leadership? The answer comes from the “**Above Reproach**” standard set by Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Let’s tune our hearts to His marvelous truth!

Read Passage (V.1-3)

Opening Prayer

### *Above Reproach*

### INVESTIGATE

**V. 1** \*\* How does Paul get Timothy’s attention as he begins to describe the position of spiritual leadership known as elder or overseer?

By beginning with the phrase “It is a trustworthy statement”. Paul uses this statement five times in his epistles, here referring to a call to the ministry and the remaining four times to doctrinal matters. Each time he is

expressing a basic truth of great importance and one that should be familiar among believers. cf. 1Timothy 1:15, 4:9, 2Timothy 2:11 and Titus 3:8

**\*\* How does Paul further establish the appropriate gender for church leadership?**

He says, "...if any man aspires to the office of overseer...". The use of the indefinite pronoun *tis* should be taken here as masculine. That puts it in concert with the statements of verse 2 and 4-5 which follow. A woman could never be "the husband of one wife" and the women of Paul's day were never the heads of their households.

**\*\* How does Paul describe this man's effort to become a Godly leader within the church?**

Paul says the this man "**aspires**" to the office. The word *orego* appears only here and in 1Timothy 6:10 and Hebrews 11:16. It literally means "to reach out after" or "to stretch out oneself to grasp something". While it does not refer to internal motives, Paul uses it here to describe a man with a compelling desire to serve the Lord prompted by the Holy Spirit.

**\*\* What does Paul add here in verse one that would indicate this man's compelling desire?**

"it is a fine work he **desires** to do". While the English word "desires" gives us a glimpse into this man's heart, the Greek word *epithumeo* translated here as "desires", goes much further in helping us to understand how God has changed this man's heart. It means "a passionate compulsion" and demonstrates the internal driving force within this Godly individual.

**\*\* Before we leave this verse, let's look a little closer at what it is that this Godly man desires. Does he simply want a place of importance or honor?**

God forbid! Just the opposite is true. He has a compelling interest in the "**work**". This type of man is nothing more than a humble servant whom God has called to lead His church. As soon as that humility fades, he is no longer qualified. His heart should be driven to humbly live out a Christ-like example for the sheep to follow. He has no hidden agenda and no desire for creating a pyramid scheme for power and authority, with himself at the top. cf. 1Peter 5:3

**V. 2 \*\* At the beginning of verse two Paul repeats the name of the office in which this "fine work" will be accomplished. What does Paul mean by "Overseer"?**

Paul uses the word *episkopos* which is rendered as "bishop" in the King James Version. Both English terms refer to the same role as pastor and elder.  
cf. Acts 20:28, Titus 1:5-9 and 1Peter 5:1-2

**\*\* What are the Biblical responsibilities for men in the role of pastor, elder, bishop or overseer?**

They rule over the flock - 1Timothy 5:17  
They are to preach and teach - 1Timothy 5:17  
They pray for the sick - James 5:14  
They shepherd the flock - 1Peter 5:1-2  
They must set a Godly example - 1Timothy 4:12  
They establish church policy - Acts 15:22ff  
They ordain other leaders - 1Timothy 4:14

**\*\* As the apostle now lays out the Biblical qualifications for leadership within the church, what is the first overarching requirement?**

He must be a man who is “**Above Reproach**”! The Greek word *anepileptos* means “not able to be held”. The above reproach church leader cannot be arrested and held as if he were a criminal; there is nothing for which to accuse him.

\*\* Does this refer to this man’s entire life? Does the church need to find a man who has never had a pattern of sin in his life before placing him into church leadership?

Absolutely not!! If that were true, the apostle Paul himself would not qualify to be an elder, let alone an apostle. He was a murderer and self-righteous persecutor of Christ. cf. Acts 9:4

\*\* Then how is this extremely high standard to be applied?

The parallel passage in Titus 1:6 uses the term *anengkletos* for above reproach. The present participle *einai* (be) indicates that the one being considered for leadership is in a present state of being above reproach. That is why we cannot select a new convert for church leadership. There must be a sufficient period of time pass to observe the man’s character as he walks with Christ today. No matter what is in his past, if a man of God has repented and walks faithfully with Christ for years, he can be used in the position of elder because Christ has made him a new creation! cf. 1Timothy 3:6 and 2Corinthians 5:17

\*\* Paul is now going to get extremely specific in his terms to describe the present character of a man who should be considered for church leadership. What is the first specific to which Paul refers?

1) **the husband of one wife** - as stated earlier, this obviously could not be a woman. The Greek text literally reads, “a one-woman man”. Many churches today sadly use this verse to set aside a man of God who has a divorce in his past. They would most likely have set aside Paul, not wanting a murderer on their board of elders. But this is referring to the man’s present character and the fact that he is solely committed to one woman in his life. A so-called “non-divorced” man who has been married for years to the same woman could be disqualified from leadership because he is attracted to many women even though he has not divorced his wife.

\*\* What is the next specific qualification?

2) He must (presently) be **temperate**. *Nephalios* means “wineless” or “unmixed with wine”. Metaphorically this means “alert”, “watchful” or “clear-headed”. Regarding this character quality William Hendriksen writes, “His pleasures are not primarily those of the senses...but those of the soul”. cf. Leviticus 10:9 and Ephesians 5:18

\*\* As we continue in Paul’s list of current character qualifications, which one is next?

3) This man of God is to be **prudent**. Actually, this qualification proves to be the by product of its predecessor. When one’s life is characterized by being temperate, it will produce the quality of being prudent. This man is well-disciplined and knows how to correctly order his priorities. This leader for God is serious about spiritual things. He will lead others into the application of God’s word to their daily lives.

\*\* What is fourth on our list?

4) **Respectable** - *Kosmios* carries the idea of being orderly in your lifestyle. The “respectable” elder leads a well disciplined life others can follow. As we will see next week, if he cannot order his own life, how will he be able to lead the church? cf. 1Timothy 3:5

\*\* The next qualification is frequently misunderstood. This man of God is to be what?

5) **Hospitable** - This does not simply mean he has parties in his home. *Philoxenos* is a compound word meaning “to love strangers”. This man is available to all, both friend and stranger, to receive the love of Christ as an overflow of his heart.

\*\* Qualification number six is a distinctive mark for an elder or pastor serving in Christ’s church. Do you see it?

6) The elder must be **able to teach**. The elder must be a highly skilled teacher, gifted by Christ to explain the Word of God to the flock. He works hard in his studies and proclamation of God’s truth and by his new nature is a “gifted teacher”. cf. 1Peter 4:10

**V. 3** \*\* The next qualification set down by the apostle is perhaps the most obvious. How is God’s man for leadership to be different from the world?

7) He must **not be addicted to wine**. This is the first qualification given in the negative form. This man does not have the reputation of being a drinker, but rather is known for his Godly character and love for the word of God. cf. Psalm 1:1-3

\*\* The next in Paul’s list is almost an addendum to “not being addicted to wine”, what is it?

8) **Not pugnacious** - God’s elder must react to situations calmly and gently. Not pugnacious translates *me plektes* which means “not a giver of blows” or “not a striker”. When a pastor or elder reacts with anger that could lead to striking someone, he must resign! There simply is no room for this emotional sin in the heart of a church leader.

\*\* Qualification number nine follows close behind our last one in that it provides a needed contrast. How is it different from number eight?

9) **Gentle** (*epieikes*) describes a person who is considerate and gracious while easily pardoning human failure. This person has no thought of retaliation when wronged, but seeks to bless all who come into his circle of influence. cf. 1Peter 3:8-9

\*\* As we near the end of our list for this evening we come to a very refreshing characteristic for any Christian to manifest. How is God’s man to be known by those around him?

10) He is to be **uncontentious**! What a wonderful concept. The Greek word *amachos* literally means “peaceful” or “reluctant to fight”. This is not referring to physical violence as much as it is speaking of a quarrelsome person in general. The man involved in leading the church of God is the “peaceful” servant who does not cause injury or disharmony to the body.

\*\* Finally, what is our last characteristic in the list before us this evening?

11) **Free from the love of money** - The apostle will be instructing Timothy later in this same epistle that “godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment”. cf. 1Timothy 6:6

Paul was completely free from the love of money and worked to pay his own way throughout his ministry. He was well content with living in humble means, or prosperity; with being filled or going hungry; with having abundance and suffering need. In everything, he held lightly to the things of this world that he might be spent for the glory of Christ. cf. Philippians 4:12

The man who becomes consumed with possessions and the “love of money” is sinfully distracted by a love for this world and does not qualify to serve the Lord in this important role. cf. 1Timothy 6:10 and 1John 2:15-17

### **EXTRICATE**

\*\* When God saves a vile, reprobate sinner and creates him new in Christ; how does the desire of his heart change when he becomes compelled to serve in the leadership of the church?

God gives him “a passionate compulsion” to serve in the capacity of spiritual leader. His new humble walk with God is manifest through the gift of his teaching and leadership skills.

### **DELINEATE**

\*\* What are the Biblical responsibilities for men in the role of pastor, elder, bishop or overseer?

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They are to preach and teach - 1Timothy 5:17

They pray for the sick - James 5:14

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They must set a Godly example - 1Timothy 4:12

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### **EVALUATE**

\*\* After looking at the first eleven qualifications for a pastor/elder in the church of God, how many of those qualifications ought to be made manifest in my own life?

All of them! I should be able to walk my way through all eleven character traits and adopt them into my own lifestyle by the grace of God so that I might live “**Above Reproach**”.

### **ACTIVATE**

\*\* If elders are to be examples to the flock (1Peter 5:3), what are we to do with that example?

We must follow the example of godliness set down by our leaders, so that we too might become an example for others to follow. cf. Philippians 2:14-15

Closing Prayer