

1 Timothy 3

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[0:00] Good afternoon. Happy Mother's Day to our mothers. I'm glad that each of you could be with us on this afternoon as we break God's Word, as we have sought to rightly divide it, and now is the time to proclaim it.

Join me in prayer, please. Heavenly Father, we rejoice in your kindness to us through Jesus. We pray, Lord, that as we look into your Word this afternoon, that in all things you might be glorified through him.

Give ourselves to that end, both in speaking, hearing, and doing, for the glory and honor of your name. Amen. Chapter 3, that's where our study brings us this afternoon in the book of 1 Timothy. What is before us, at least among the things that are before us, is you have the qualifications for spiritual leadership in the church.

Those who bypass or ignore this chapter in the process of either hiring or appointing leadership in the church, they do so to great harm, both of the individuals who may occupy those positions, as well as to the church itself.

[1:36] I think the main thing that we find, particularly in verses 1 through 13, is that spiritual leaders must be people of integrity.

That is, they must give themselves to the highest moral and spiritual standards. Those things must not be taken lightly.

A person can be ever so gifted, ever so sharp, ever so capable, but the lack of integrity will undermine absolutely everything else.

Warren Buffett, of course, you know, one of the wealthiest men in the world, this is what he had to say about integrity. In looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities.

Integrity, intelligence, and energy. Integrity. And if they don't have the first, the other two will kill you. It's integrity.

[2:51] Right at the top of the list. And if, in fact, that is a standard in the world, in the realm of business, how much more so for those who are appointed as leaders in the house of God?

The text before us really helps us to see what leadership integrity looks like. But, in addition to leadership integrity, there is also, at the end of the chapter, missional integrity.

That is, our being true to our call as God's agents in this world. Now, that also comes into view.

The false teachers at the time of writing Ephesus in 1 Timothy were lacking both in leadership integrity as well as what I'm calling missional integrity.

Our chapter helps to provide a corrective, both then and now, of both of those deficiencies. So, let's take a look at our text on this afternoon.

[4:12] And let me say this, that while these things are essential for those who occupy positions of church leadership, these things are good for all of God's people.

Regardless of where you are, your position in the church, if you are a man or woman of God, if you are a saint, if you are a Christian, these things are good for you.

Look at verse 1. What a marvelous verse this is because it really helps you to see the honorable position that an overseer, also synonymous with elder or a pastor, what an honorable position that role is.

The saying is trustworthy. If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. In the New Testament, the leadership of the local church, the spiritual leadership, was entrusted to men, and they were known by several titles I've already alluded to and began to mention those.

And these titles were used interchangeably in Scripture. In our text here, the reference is to an overseer, an episkopos, one who literally watches over, known as bishops today.

[5:43] But the title overseer spoke of the nature of their work. That is, they provide spiritual oversight for God's people.

Again, elsewhere, they're referred to as elders. And this speaks to the idea of their age, their dignity, and particularly their maturity. So they need to be spiritually mature people who oversee or watch out for those who are in God's household.

And then there's the pastor. Shepherd is the third term. And this speaks about the role of leading and feeding and caring for God's people.

At Holy Trinity Church, there are 13 men who occupy the role of elder, is what we call them here.

Six of whom are on staff, and then there are seven lay elders. It is a deep honor and privilege to be a part of that team that looks out for the spiritual well-being of God's people to serve along with other men of honor who are seeking to love God and to love and serve His people.

[7:10] The trustworthy saying, we've seen one back in chapter 1. Again, it speaks about the reliability of what is said.

And this really draws our attention to the noble task of shepherding God's people. and those who do that must do so for the right reasons.

I was at a conference in New York this week and I can't remember exactly who said it, but someone mentioned about their being drawn even as a from a child around about three years old, the only thing that they had in view was being a pastor.

Think about it. God putting that kind of desire in someone's heart early, early on. And certainly God can do wonderful and marvelous things like that.

And preparing a person from early age, and there may be some among us whom God has given a similar desire, either a professional desire or may just be in a lay kind of capacity of serving God's people.

[8:22] But it is certainly a honor. Those drawn to spiritual leadership for power or prestige or money, they're attracted to a good position, but for the wrong reasons.

The position of overseer, of elder, is an honorable one that should be occupied by honorable men. It's a sacred stewardship. It's a sacred service.

And those to aspire to care for the people that Christ has shed his blood for. Reminds me of the passage in Ephesians where Paul was speaking to the Ephesian elders, and this is what he says. He says to them, and down through the ages he says to those who aspire to shepherd God's people, pay attention or careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for, and that's the word, to shepherd the flock of God which he has obtained with his own blood.

Here's the idea. Christ has purchased a group of people with his blood and then the Holy Spirit appoints spiritual leaders to care for those for whom Christ has died.

[9:53] That, friends, is an awesome responsibility and one that should not be taken lightly. Notice, we don't have time to exhaustively go over here.

I'm going to do some bullet points kind of things as we go along, but in verses 2 through 7, you see the qualifications for overseers and basically men of unquestioned integrity.

It's what's in view. Fifteen requirements are before us in this passage and these are requirements for those who shepherd, oversee, God's people in the local church.

Several big headers. Again, spiritual fitness is the big idea and the majority of the characteristics that we see here that concern Christian character.

The first one is a very overarching one. You see it there in verse 2, he must be above reproach. Notice, the standard is not perfection.

[11:02] If it were, let's lock the doors on the church. No, flawed men occupy the position, but men who are above reproach.

Another way of saying that, he's a man of honor, a person with a blameless reputation is another way of stating it. As it concerns, his observable reputation, he is a man of honor, a man of integrity.

Again, spiritual fitness. But notice, the next thing it mentions, and Jim, thank you for your call to worship that mentioned mothers, but he is, it speaks of his family fitness, both as it relates to his

wife, as well as to his children.

Wife, verse 2, children, verses 4 and 5. It concerns his home life. So while he is to be a one-woman man, the husband of one wife, that's another way of saying it, could either refer, there are several ways of looking at, could refer to, but I don't believe it necessarily does, have one living wife.

He is not to be one, and this is certainly implied in there, one who plays with the emotions of the opposite sex.

[12:32] The ministry certainly has gotten a bad reputation even by those who occupy sacred positions but have not behaved themselves in a way that speaks of their sexual integrity and purity and they have violated that of others.

God forbid. A married overseer is to be faithful to his wife in every way. And if there is that person who is unmarried, he should be honoring the standards that are within these parameters also.

Notice in verses 4 and 5 it concerns his children. The management of the home comes into view.

He must manage his own household well with all dignity, keeping his children submissive.

So not only is he to be a lover of his wife, but a lover of the mother of his children, but also he is to conduct himself in a responsible way within the home and the home is the testing ground for how he behaves himself in the church.

I was thrilled on yesterday to be at Joanna's wedding. Just a great day. And I thought about the, and I spoke with Josh a little bit about the 14-year trajectory.

[13:57] Kids were here, some of them toddlers and a little beyond. And as we've looked at all the way to kids going off to college and married, the people in our church, as you observe our spiritual leaders, particularly those in child-rearing and child-bearing, we are privileged to be able to do life together in community and beholding and watching and learning from one another in the process of rearing children in this church.

I'm glad that we have men in this church who honor their wives, who are seeking to raise their families in God-honoring way and to manage their households well.

I notice that some of our elders are not even here today because they have prioritized child and family in our church.

I applaud that and encourage that in our midst. Those who are considered for positions of spiritual leadership must pass the family fitness test.

But notice also there is the whole idea and this concerns most of this in the verses that follow, personal fitness. So there's family fitness, fitness, but also personal fitness.

[15:24] It concerns the integrity of personal integrity of those who occupy the position. What things should or should not be a part of the spiritual leader's life?

Let's go through the list. I'm going to just go through the list very rapidly. Sober-minded, moderate, that's what it means. Morally earnest is the idea. Self-controlled, of sound mind, discipline, and again, a lot of these things concern one's self-mastery, being a master of self.

Respectable, that's particularly what that means, possessing moral strength. Hospitable, again, the idea behind that is self-giving, willingness to share, being generous.

Look at able to teach. One who is not only able to teach in a public arena, but the whole idea of being capable to counsel, again, that's what our elders and overseers should be, what they should possess, that capacity.

Not a drunkard, and again, the idea is not giving oneself over to anything where anything else has control of you, where control is surrender. Not violent, huh?

[16:41] Not given to blows. I love the King James language, no striker. Well, not only with physically, but verbally also, huh?

Not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. Again, these are quite self-explanatory, huh? Speak of the integrity, the personal integrity, of those who occupy places of spiritual leadership.

Look at verse seven. the reputation amongst outsiders comes into view, huh? Before a watching world, the overseer must be respectable and respected by those on the outside, lest he be snared by the devil who longingly desires to discredit the gospel.

Huh? A bad advertisement for the gospel. God forbid, huh? But we're looking for those whose lives are in alignment with it.

So the spiritual fitness of the overseer comes into view in verses one through seven, but as we look on down, the spiritual fitness of those who are known as deacons.

[17:59] Leaders in the Lord's house not only include those who provide spiritual oversight and shepherding care, huh? But it includes those who are in a hands-on way serving God's people in the local context.

Look at the verses that follow. Note particularly that the role is different. It helps us to see that the role of deacon is distinguished from the role of an overseer.

Not the same. Deacons likewise must be dignified. Two roles are separate. There are spiritual qualifications. The role should be seen then as a spiritual one.

So this is not let one off the hook just because they are not exercising spiritual oversight and care. Huh? No, but those who are even functioning in more service kinds of roles, there are spiritual qualifications for those also.

Based on the word diakonos, deacon, one who serves, serves in the household. Again, HCC, under the direction of elders and deacons, the deacons under the elders, the deacons serve in ways that secure the stability and well-being of those of the family of God.

[19:21] Several things relate to them. Their character, also people of integrity. And you can see the various lists that are there. We won't go through all of them. Look at their conviction.

in verses 9 and 10. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience and let them also be tested first and then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.

They must hold to the gospel truth in a clear conscience. What do you mean? Again, they're to hold the mystery of the faith. The mystery refers to an aspect of Christian truth that in time past was hidden, but now it has come into clear view.

It's coming to light. It's the revealed truths of the Christian faith is what's being referred to. And unlike the false teachers, chapter 1, verse 6, who swerved from good conscience, the deacons are to hold fast to the convictions in an unclouded kind of conscience is what's there.

This demands prayerful study and understanding in order to love and embrace and to cling to God's word with a clear conscience, not just buying in because it's the thing to do, but because you process and study and have come to such conclusions.

[20:43] The convictions, but notice, you see in verse 11, they're companions. Speaks about, now notice there's a footnote in the ESV, I believe, and it's here, the translation says they're wives, but also that can mean women.

Again, here we have information that we don't have as it relates to the elders. The text says they're wives, it can be translated women, but the alternatives give rise to some holding the positions that women deacons or deaconesses are in view.

Again, one of the things that you can do this week, we will post a 1999 position paper that our leaders did back then that relate to this particular role, and you can see some expanded teaching as it relates to women deacons, but in our church, both the married couples serve together, husband and wives as deacons, and also we have single female deacons in our congregation also. Their companions are sing, but then notice their credibility in verse 12, let me read it. Let the deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their household well. Again, similar kind of requirement as for the elders. the deacons who function well in their household role gain respect for themselves as well as for the gospel.

[22:19] And what a great advertisement they can be for the gospel. Let me give you a summary statement about the leaders and their integrity, and then we'll move on. Paul helped Timothy and those in Ephesus see that not just anyone qualified for leadership in the household of God, that is, the church.

Leaders of God's people are to be people of honor, people with integrity, people who are morally and spiritually fit, and such people dwell among us here at our church.

What does integrity look like in the life of a leader? You and I shouldn't have to look to big name kind of people and examples. We should find them right here in our church and we do.

Local churches need leaders with integrity, but local churches also must be true to their mission. Missional integrity is a must.

Look at the verses that are ahead of us. Notice how Paul, he, based on the situation in Ephesus, he writes that, I hope to come to you soon, but I'm writing these things to you so that, again, the reason, purpose for his writing, if I delay, you may know how you ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.

[23:46] Here's the deal. Situation in Ephesus demanded apostolic attention. Paul wanted to get there personally. That was his intention that we see in 14a, but in the meantime, he wrote to address the situation at hand, and his writing includes what we have in the previous verses as well as the previous chapters, and the rest of the book.

He wrote to instruct them regarding their behavior in the household of God, in the local church, and in the process of writing, several truths about the church comes into view.

According to verses 4, 5, 12, and 15, the church is the household of God. As the household of God, we are, you and I, are God's family.

We are related to one another. We are brothers and sisters. We are one. And we are to behave as God's family, as the household of God.

But in that process, the church is the dwelling place of God. He inhabits the church through His Spirit. It's important to know that the living God dwells in the midst of His people.

[25:06] I'm reminded, if you will look in the Old Testament, particularly in Leviticus, because God dwelt in the midst of His people, the Shekinah glory was there.

Pillar of cloud by day, pillar of fire by night. And because of the presence of God in the midst of His people, there were certain kinds of things, there were hygienic kinds of things, so that God would be honored in the midst of His people.

There were certain laws that govern the life in the midst of God's people. How much more so as God dwells, number one, within the believer, 1 Corinthians chapter 6, and in the midst of the church, 1 Corinthians chapter 3, that should govern our behavior and our conduct, the living God dwells in our midst.

In Ephesians chapter 2, so much says that, in whom the whole structure being joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together into a dwelling place for God by His Spirit.

God dwells wonderfully, spiritually, marvelously, in the midst of His people. Again, the reality of that has implications for us as the local church, certainly has implications for you and me as believers, as God dwells within us.

[26:34] That's not, the believer is not what he's talking about here, he's talking about the church. God is in our midst. God Himself is with us. Thirdly, the church opposes and supports the truth.

Listen to this, this is quite important. Josh certainly appreciates this as a structural engineer. But as compared to both, two things are in view.

It is a pillar, but also it is a foundation. The pillar supports the roof, the foundation supports the entire building, and the church of God is, these truths apply, in both ways, to the church.

The church, led by elders and deacons, supports the truth of the gospel, and as a pillar, the church lifts high, God's truth in this world.

That's our role as the local church. And friends, if you and I do not do it, who will?

[27:46] the foundation holds the truth firm. The pillar holds the truth high. What is the content of the truth that the church holds up and must guard and affirm?

It's the truth about Jesus that follows in the verses that come. Here is the core of gospel truth that the church must lift high and affirm in this world.

that's our missional role in the world. The heart of the church's confession is the person and the work of Jesus Christ himself.

And what we have that follows is a nicely crafted kind of hymn. It's not unlike the song that we're going to sing at the end of the service.

He came from heaven and earth, heaven to earth, to show the way from the earth to the cross, my debt to pay, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky. That's the gospel. Lord, we lift your name on high.

[28:50] And similarly here, you've got gospel truth encapsulated. This is the truth that the church upholds in this world. You and I, led by men and women of integrity, are to position ourselves in this world in these kinds of ways.

What about this hymn? it covers, it goes all the way from the incarnation, God becoming flesh and through his son, all the way to the coronation and the consummation when he will return. Core truth of the Christian faith, we're not to divert from this. We're not to divert from this causes us not to be true to our mission.

We lose sight of it. This is what the church must uphold in this world. And this above everything else is what this world needs. No other entity can do what the church has been assigned to do.

Look at the psalm. Great indeed, we confess. In Ephesus, when a commentator speaks about, we see it in Acts chapter 19, how they were confessing, great is Diana of the Ephesians.

[30:09] No, great indeed. It's the mystery of godliness. He, Christ, God manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit.

Again, the first part, incarnation. Second, vindication by the Spirit. How and where? Baptism, transfiguration, through his works. And resurrection.

Seen by angels at resurrection, but also possibly at his ascension. Acts chapter 1, verse 9. Why stand you here looking up? This was the voice of the angels.

The same Jesus that you see going into heaven. He's going to return. In the like manner of just voice of the angels there at his ascension. Heralded among the nations. This is the church on mission for him.

And he is on mission in and through his church. the gospel success he's believed on in the world. He's ascended, taken up into glory, but also a possible reference for his return from whence he has ascended.

[31:16] it's there. This is the truth, the foundational truth that the church led by godly men and women, people of spiritual integrity, lead that on mission in this world.

And friends, we must never lose sight of these things. The teaching of the false teachers in that day lacked integrity. Christ was not at the center. chapter 1, verse 7, chapter 4, verse 1 and following. But here, our marching order, so to speak, the content of what must be at the center of Christian teaching, and the false teachers of that day diverted from that.

Not only that, as you look at it, as we'll see further in the book, their character didn't line up what we see in this particular chapter. It was an indictment against their character, as well as in their teaching.

God forbid that we vary, both or stray or swerve, from both the doctrinal part, as well as the character piece of this, as we uphold the gospel and God's work in this world.

[32:35] Him, we proclaim, warning every man, and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

And Paul says this, and this is an example for spiritual leaders of all eras, for this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he works powerfully within me.

How can it be done? Not in our own strength, not in our own ingenuity, not in our own intelligence, not simply by our integrity.

We need him, our strength, and the church will rise indeed, because we are strengthened by him. And it