

Leaders for God's Household'

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[0 : 00] Paul's letter to Timothy, his first letter. So we continue today in chapter 3.! Well, I think most of you would agree that a well-run organization requires good leaders.

! Whether it's a hospital, school, company, university, university, your family, even when you see a place where people are happy, everyone's achieving their goals and getting along, then it's unlikely you'd see poor leaders at the helm.

It's not to say that the leaders have to be perfect, but generally they have to be competent and have integrity. And also that they would be leading well across a number of areas, right?

Not just in one aspect of leadership, but through the range of responsibilities that they have.

Otherwise, you may be a visionary, but things fall apart without good implementation.

Or you may get the details right, but if you don't communicate well, nobody knows what to do or what is happening. You may have mastery over the facts and the figures, but if you can't deal with conflict, then things will come apart.

[1 : 24] And that's the same with the church, which is why Paul turns mixed to this topic in his letter to Timothy. As the title suggests, Leaders for God's Household or Leadership in God's Household.

And the phrase God's Household is actually what Paul uses in that verse right at the end of our passage today, 1 Timothy 3, verse 15.

He uses that to describe the church. And so you get a sense, don't you, that when he's talking about God's household, the church, he's not quite having in mind the universal body of Christ of all believers across time, which is true, that's what the church is.

But his focus really is on the local church, that part of Christ's body that is governed by common leadership. In our case, that's Andrew with the pastoral team across both Holy Trinity and St. John's.

Now, at the same time, we can also probably think of each congregation, like the 5 p.m. here, as a mini version of God's household. Because we have some autonomy, don't we, to conduct ourselves.

[2 : 34] The type of music, the style of worship, how we do group groups and all that. But it's different, isn't it, slightly, to the other congregations. We may have a different pastor to the other congregations, all of whom are still accountable to Andrew.

But we're a little household or church or congregation. Now, of course, all of us share in the common priorities of the gospel, which is what you looked at in chapter 1, the importance of teaching God's Word and of evangelism, which was chapter 2.

But regardless of which level you look at, and there's actually one more level, which is the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, Paul's concern is for churches to be led well.

God's households to be led well. And one ingredient of that healthy church, you saw in chapter 1, which was that the truth matters.

The gospel matters. And if the church does not hold to the truth of the gospel, then you're unlikely to have a healthy church. But today, the other aspect that Paul goes into is of good leadership, which is another important ingredient to safeguard the well-being of the church.

[3 : 56] And so, let's begin then with the first point, where Paul says to aspire to leadership is to desire a noble task. It says right there in verse 1, here is a trustworthy saying, whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.

Now, I think today, there's no shortage, isn't it, of people wanting to be leaders. Because, if you are a leader, well, it's a good thing to put on your CV, isn't it?

And many people think that when you lead, well, you get to call the shots. So, why not? Better to call the shots than to get other people telling you what to do. But here, Paul appears to command

the role of overseer as to almost persuade them that it's a good thing to do it. He's assuring those who are hesitant that this is a task worth taking on. Not because leading itself, the job of leading itself, is noble, but because of who or what they're leading. God's household. It is God's very own household that they are overseeing. And therefore, it's not a frivolous, but worthwhile pursuit.

[5 : 10] something that is worth doing because of the lasting good that will come from it. Now, leading well, as some of you will know and begin to realize, is not just prestige and glamour, is it?

Because, when you're overall responsible for something, that's what leadership entails, the buck stops with you, doesn't it? If there's something no one wants to do, and that's a job that needs doing, then the leader has to do it.

Where there's a conflict that no one wants to touch, they just turn their eye away from it, then you need to resolve it as a good leader. Now, I don't know whether you were too young to remember this, but a few years ago, remember Scott Morrison during the bushfires?

He was on holiday, wasn't he? In Hawaii. And what did he famously say when some reporters said, oh, what are you doing here instead of back in Australia? Remember anyone, what he said?

He said that, I don't hold the fire hose. You know, that is, why are you bothering me? I'm not the actual people, firefighters on the ground. Needless to say, it didn't go down very well at all, did it?

[6 : 27] Why? Because as a prime minister, he's ultimately responsible. Whether he's physically holding on to the hose or not, it is his job, isn't it, to make sure that the fires are being managed and put out.

Now, more recently, we've seen the same thing with our new prime minister, Albanese, isn't it? He's not the CEO of BP, isn't he? But, what's he been doing?

He's been flying around Asia trying to secure fuel in our fuel shortage crisis. Again, he doesn't, you know, pump oil from the sort of oil fields, but no, it's his job, isn't it, to make sure that all of us have fuel in our cars to drive.

So, really, leadership is not enviable, is it? But Paul understood that it is important that the church has good leaders. So, if someone aspires to leadership, that is good.

But the corresponding responsibility is what we now look at in verses 2 to 13, is that the church then needs to assess carefully so that the people that are appointed are good leaders and not bad ones.

[7 : 41] Personal aspiration, which is verse 1, must go hand in hand with the discernment by the church. Point 2, verses 2 to 13. And so, Paul gives a list of qualifications for two roles, that of an overseer and deacon, and we'll deal with the overseer first, which is in verses 2 to 7.

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.

Now you see from my outline that I've defined the role of overseer as someone with general responsibilities over God's household. And this is distinct from the deacon who has specific responsibilities, which we'll get to in a while.

[8 : 52] And because of time, we're not going to go through it one by one in detail, but I encourage you to go consider that more in your time so that you can picture in your mind what these attributes look like in practice.

But I have to say that when we look at the list in general, apart from one or two exceptions, they really focus in on character, don't they?

On personal attributes of a person. It begins with the overseer being beyond reproach, which is a general way of saying that he's got to be reputable. There's not going to be anything in his character or in his past hidden away that would cause disgrace to him.

And so that can only happen when he's been living consistently in accordance with this upright character of his over time. But the point I'm trying to make is that the list really is not about talents, it's not about charisma, it's not about skills either, but it actually is about moral standing.

And so you go down the list, it starts with being faithful to his wife, which I'll get to a bit later. But then the list all relates, doesn't it, to living godly lives consistently.

[10:06] And again, it's not to say they need to be sinless, but they need to not be easily seduced by the sinful desires of the flesh. Temperate just means that he's measured in his reactions, self-controlled is with our words, our actions, and our appetites, respectable, hospitable, not, you know, welcoming, not given to drunkenness, violence, greed, or being quarrelsome.

All those are behaviors that relate to a person being able to say no to ungodliness. And I don't think here that the list is exhaustive, but it's intended to show that what we're looking for is a mature Christian who is living consistently the Christian faith and being Christ-like in his life.

And then Paul now goes on to say, okay, where do we assess? How do we assess these qualities in a person? And in some way, Paul is saying, well, when you look at their family or the household which they are managing, how are they going with that over time?

Because that gives us a proven track record of their character. So, does not mean that he has to be married, but if he is, how is he with his wife?

Faithful only to her? That is, not just married on paper, but, you know, loving to her and not womanizing and cheating on her. Because faithfulness in marriage translates to faithfulness generally, doesn't it?

[11:38] Able to stick to their commitments and promises, dependable and self-controlled. That's sort of similar thing when it comes to children. But notice here that Paul says that they're not just to be people where the children are obedient, but actually he has to do it in a manner that is worthy of full respect.

That is, the children are not just obeying him, but respecting him and respecting the authority because he's not abusing his position when it comes to caring for them.

And here as well it's worth saying that we read in the NIV the word that's translated family is actually the word the same it's actually in the Greek the word that's translated as household.

And so the very same word that is used in verse 15. And Paul is trying to draw the comparison isn't it? God's household the person's household or family.

And that's on the next slide I think that's the same word that we get the word economy from. Oikos because in those days the household the Oikos was more than just the family that is more than just mom, dad and the children.

[12:59] It was actually an economic unit as such where there were slaves and workers you know all tending the fields with the crops the cattle to herd and so on and then they sort of produce goods to sell they have to sell the milk or the cheese or the croissants or whatever or in the case of Jesus Jesus' father was a carpenter wasn't it?

There was a business happening within the household and of course if you think about it when you have workers and slaves that are living with you that is a big task isn't it? to coordinate their lodging to feed them to give them a bed to sleep you know do all the laundry and stuff that goes with it so what I'm saying is then that when it says that they are able to manage their family or household what they're managing is a rather complex sort of enterprise isn't it?

A business which is not just about dealing with the business but actually dealing with the people as well because if two of the servants are having a quarrel you need to go and sort it out isn't it?

Do it in a fair but gracious manner you need to make sure that everyone's treated equally and fairly and if there's a lazy worker down there not doing their job well you have to go and manage them don't you?

All of this on top of looking after your children and your wife so really it is a good test isn't it? Of whether someone can then manage God's household hence Paul says if someone can't manage his own household how can he take care of God's church?

[14:38] The proven track record in the household is a demonstration of the character required for looking after God's church but you see in the list there that there is one attribute that is specific to overseeing God's household and it's there in the middle and it says the ability to teach and that's because unlike overseeing a household of the family to oversee God's household requires that the overseer safeguards the truth of the gospel what we saw in chapter 1 they need to be able to teach the church to do the same and to prevent the flock from being deceived and so this is a job they need to do which is very much unlike God's condemnation of those false shepherds that he spoke of he condemned in Ezekiel chapter 34 which was read today so this ability to teach is not just a matter of just going getting a teaching degree right

Melbourne Uni or whatever and then you're qualified this is a requirement also to be able to hold firmly to the truth of God's word to be convicted of it and it's not just head knowledge it's also conviction that then shows up in our lives and our character therefore the overseer has to be able to live out what he teaches and all of that takes time to emerge isn't it both for a person to develop that character but also to have the track record so that when they are appointed they will command the respect of the people they need and so it makes sense that this person is not a recent convert because otherwise there would not be enough time to test this properly and for Paul and for us it is actually better to err on the side of caution than to make the wrong appointment too soon and then have the church suffer as a result but here Paul as well makes or gives another reason isn't it for not appointing a recent convert and the reason is not so much for the good of the church but actually for the good of the convert or the believer himself because Paul says that if someone is given too much weighty authority too early it exposes them to conceit and therefore risks them falling into judgment like the devil and sadly if you've been you know around churches long enough we've seen that happen at churches don't we and you know we've seen it happen to church leaders who are not even recent converts so how much more when someone is a young convert and the reason why that is the case is because when people are given power and authority it's actually very seductive isn't it it's tempting to think that when you're a leader you've been anointed by God you're the chosen one you've got special gifts you can hear God's voice that no one else can and so with that comes pride and therefore the abuse of authority and hence then falling into judgment and so that's why even though we encourage many of you young people to step into leadership we also need to be careful as pastors not to give you too much too soon and for those of you who are young and particularly young converts don't feel resentful when you think I'm being held back I want to do all these things about being held back I want to say that actually in God's kindness sometimes it is the way of protecting you from being given too much too soon and putting you at risk from falling into temptation now the same of course goes with having a good reputation verse 7 because when someone has had a tarnished past with outsiders it can very easily be used and dug up to be used against them in the church and then when they are sort of embarrassed and have to step back the discouragement that comes from that can also cause them to renounce their faith and therefore fall into the devil's trap now let's move on quickly now to deacons in verses 8 to 13 that's the second group that Paul talks about and he says in verse 8 in the same way deacons are to be worthy of respect sincere not indulging in much wine and not pursuing dishonest gain they must keep hold of the deep truths of the 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 here again let me explain that the word deacon simply means servant and it comes from the Greek word on the next slide diakonos which actually has its roots in the act of waiting on tables so if you look at Acts chapter 6 for example we saw that in the early church the apostles were able to be relieved from distributing food to widows because the church appointed others to deacon on tables that is to wait on tables and that's where the word comes from and so you could say oh look then therefore deacons are not really leaders they're just serving aren't they but my sense is that because Paul has put them in as a separate category people appointed I think it conveys some sort of leadership where there's testing before they're given these responsibilities but the difference is that whereas the overseer has general responsibilities oversight the deacon leads with specific responsibilities in a particular area or over a subset of God's household small group or something like that but apart from that if you look at the list between the two they are actually remarkably similar isn't it the focus is on character as well and in fact they're probably the same just using different words in many cases maybe not as extensive but really the standards are just as high as well so I really just want to focus then on the two differences the one is the requirement to teach and you can see that deacons don't have this requirement instead they need to hold to the deep truth of the faith that is they need to be convinced of the gospel of God's word and to do it with a clear conscience meaning that they are living it out so that they can hand on heart say when asked that they believe in them because look at my life it's consistent so in a sense they too need to share the same convictions as overseers and some deacons might well become overseers in time and even though they don't need to teach formally they need to conduct themselves and lead in a way so as to convey the truth of God's word to those they lead and serve the other difference here is the

reference to women and if you look at your footnotes it could mean either wives of deacons or female deacons and again

I think we can go either way we don't need to get too bogged down because Paul begins verse 11 talking about them by saying that it is in the same way and that entire verse is caught right in the middle on the section on deacon sandwich so the way you can read it therefore is that these women are expected to have the same qualifications as their male counterparts and also to be recognized to have the same standing so whether they're the wives of deacons or female deacons they're serving almost on par with the deacons and the other thing to say of course is that it does make sense doesn't it in light of what you hopefully heard last week 1 Timothy chapter 2 why therefore in the section on overseers there is no reference to women because overseers in Paul's day had the job of having to teach which Paul restricts in last chapter in the last chapter but here when it comes to deacons there is no such restriction because there is no requirement to teach in an authoritative position now I want to say a bit more about how that might look for us today in a contemporary application but let me finish off with verse 13 first because whether you're men or women when we serve

[23 : 40] Paul gives us the encouragement that when we serve well and I think when he says you serve well here he's referring to both deacons and overseers the reward is both an excellent standing and an assurance of faith in Christ Jesus so an external validation that excellent standing among God's people but also an internal validation that is in your own heart your faith is being strengthened and you're given assurance of your faith as you serve and that's worth noting because I do get some people ask me sometimes you know how can I have assurance of my salvation how do I know I know I'm safe and of course I do say look at the cross look at God's word and his promises objectively given and put your faith in that and not your own feelings and how close you feel you are to God but here Paul actually gives us another good way doesn't he he's saying serve well because when you serve well and faithfully you have an assurance of your faith and personally

I can vouch for that because as I've been serving over many years and teaching God's word and spending time talking to you guys you know when you respond to God's work in your lives you know by exercising faith and obedience it actually strengthens my own faith because I see that God is at work in you through my ministry and so I think I want to encourage all of us to do the same because sometimes when we feel our faith is wobbly you know we tend to want to retreat don't we within ourselves you know and think things true and all that but actually Paul gives us a way where we can no actually continue to serve and then let God show himself to you in your service to others okay as I said I want to digress a bit hopefully that's okay with you all because I want to talk about what these two offices of deacon and overseers mean for us today does it mean that all our churches need to be structured like that overseers and deacons because we don't talk a lot about deacons here in the Anglican church or in

Holy Trinity and also specifically then what does it mean for women in leadership and if you look around you can see different churches doing it differently isn't it our Presbyterian brothers and sisters they have elders right they combine overseer and elders and then they say they are teaching and non-teaching elders us Anglicans we have this threefold Episcopal structure now the word Episcopal Episcopos actually means bishop right it comes from this very word overseer used in our passage today but then after that we have priests which is elders or presbyters and deacons so every church sort of does it slightly differently which is why I don't think that whole structure is actually prescriptive and the other thing to say is that in our modern world governance is now a bit more complex because of the laws we have in this land so many churches today actually need to be incorporated via legal entity which means they need to have a board of directors and that board is actually separate to the pastoral team but the board actually oversees has a role of oversight don't they on things like finances child safety you know

OH&S; and all that kind of stuff and so in my mind the role of oversight today now is shared between some of these other roles and what Paul describes as the overseer or pastor in his day and I want to say that therefore those who are appointed to these roles well they don't really have the formal requirement to teach do they and so I want to say that actually as we think through this because of 1 Timothy chapter 2 the role of overseer has been restricted in Paul's day to male but that for us today where it is not related to teaching in a Sunday congregation or a church then we ought to allow women to lead as well for example chairing boards or something like that but regardless of it I think we need to think about not so much the legal title of overseer or deacon but

actually look at the various leadership positions that we have in our church and think through whether is this a role that relates to oversight or is this a role that relates to deacon like specific responsibilities and in either case anyway the important thing really is character isn't it character trumps the list in both offices and so we need to look carefully at the proven track record of people when we appoint them so let me digress and for example say that we may have women ministers and they have an oversight role but that's okay for them to be women because they are actually teaching if they do teach to women they're not standing up and preaching as Andrew was saying last Sunday on a week to week basis expounding scripture in the same way some of you who are you know small group leaders or growth leaders well you're actually sort of deacons aren't you because you have specific responsibilities even though we don't ordain you or appoint you as deacons you have that role don't you of serving in some sort of leadership capacity and so you need to look at that list as well and look at your own character and want to live up to it as you are serving as well so hopefully

I'm just trying to give you a flavor for how we ought to be thinking about these things as they apply to our church and our congregation today and not strictly say well you know the Anglican church only has priests and deacons and none of us are so we don't have to worry about it no when we are leading and have oversight or have specific leadership responsibilities we need to look to this list to check ourselves and to assess when we appoint people to leadership okay let me finish now by going to verses 14 to 16 because whether we are male or female overseer or deacon whatever the role is Paul ends here by giving us the motivation to serve well and it is the same and it stems from the unchanging reality the never changing reality of what God's household is so verse 14 we read although I hope to come to you soon I'm writing you these instructions so that if I'm delayed you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household and as I think Andrew has already explained this verse here gives us

[30 : 54] Paul's purpose statement for the letter isn't it he's instructing Timothy and us as to how to conduct ourselves in God's household that's the gist of the whole letter but then he elaborates on what God's household is and this never changing reality that first of all God's household is the church of the living God that is when we're leading and serving in church it's not just an earthly or temporal endeavor that we're engaged in you know something like we've just started a charity and we're trying to help the poor or fund research for cancer no when we serve in church we are serving the body that belongs to the ever living God which means that this body has an eternal destiny long when all the charities of this earth has folded the church will continue because it belongs to the ever living

God saved by the blood of his son and that's why it's worth investing in isn't it it's motivation for us to serve well in it because what we do now has eternal consequences but further now on earth God's church is being established as Paul now goes on to say to be the pillar and foundation of his truth in Ephesians Paul calls the church the manifold wisdom of God but here he's saying it's not just the foundation that is the bedrock it's not just the pillars which is holding up the building no it's both the foundation and the pillar of the truth we as God's church we are the visible display of his plan of salvation for us and when we live out God's truth as a church which hopefully we are we become a witness to what Paul calls in verse 16 the mystery from which true godliness springs and here this mystery is not a puzzle or something that we need to solve but this mystery is the revelation of the gospel itself which then

Paul summarizes in what Jesus has done by saying he that is God in the person of his son Jesus appeared in the flesh incarnation died on the cross crucifixion was vindicated by the spirit resurrection was seen by the angels which preach among the nation was believed on in the world and was taken up in glory this is God's plan of salvation and one day we too will join God will join the Lord Jesus in that glory and so the church is the place where we as the pillar and foundation of the truth proclaim this good news of Jesus to people who come amongst us or as we reach out to them and as we live it out we show what true godliness means that it springs from the gospel that is we are striving for godliness not to be saved but we are already saved and therefore we want to be godly it is an expression of thanks to

God's grace serving not because we have to but because we want to because we know how much God has already done for us in Christ Jesus so let me close then by praying that God will help us to do that to raise us all up whether we're deacons overseers whatever role we are leading or serving in that we'll be supporting one another we'll be conducting ourselves rightly in God's household so

that we together might be the pillar and foundation of the truth from which true godliness comes
that's funny father thank you for your son who came and was vindicated by the spirit so that we may
belong to the church of the living God raise us up as godly women and men who will serve well who
will lead well and establish all of us as the pillar and foundation of your truth grow us in godliness
and guard us from falling into the devil's trap in jesus name we pray amen