

PREPARING TO LEAD



By Grant Neuper
Christian Centre Abbotsford

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Key verses: 1 Timothy 3:1-13

Introduction:

Have you ever wondered what would qualify you to lead or disqualify you from leading? Would you need: Big personality? Unique skill? Ability to speak convincingly? Awesome vision? Appointed to special position? Lots of money?

The church in Ephesus was facing huge challenges and needed leaders.

Background to 1 Timothy:

False teachers are the main cause for the letter. Their teaching apparently involved incorrect assumptions about the law (1:7–11) and not allowing marriage and certain foods (4:1–5). Arguments, philosophies, gossip, complicated theories, genealogies and old wives tales abounded – and seemingly this had impacted more heavily on the women than the men.

Paul focuses on the fact that true Christianity is shown in lifestyles shaped by the gospel. We see this point again evident in chapter 3.

A lifestyle shaped by the Gospel is what to look for as the starting point when wanting to appoint leaders.

Chapter 3 is in focus today: Many Bibles insert a paragraph heading that reads “Qualifications of elders and deacons”. Let’s broaden our application today.

Prepare to lead – wherever you are!

Let’s look at how we qualify or disqualify...in God’s eyes and in our own eyes... to lead in any role - in the family, in the church, in the community or in the marketplace.

Where do you currently lead?

Who do you currently lead?

The qualifications listed in **this passage** are relevant...

I don’t think Paul wrote these lists as being exclusive or exhaustive, but they do give us a very clear picture of the type of people Timothy should be looking for to lead.

Paul’s writing to Timothy is very practical advice regarding what to look out for as he looks for leaders in the church at Ephesus. I don’t think he wrote it as laws – we also know that God can (and does) use anybody! But make it your goal to model a lifestyle for others to follow; your example is important.

Meeting these requirements should never be an outward show, but a pure expression of what is in your heart.

Do you desire a position or a role?

Is that a healthy or an unhealthy desire? (It all depends on the condition of the heart / the motive.) (**Personal ambition/'position'** – not great)

Role of service to God and taking up responsibility for His body? [Terminology shared / confusing: Elder/pastor/bishop/overseer]

NLT: If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honourable position.

NKJ: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

NIV: Whoever aspires to be an overseer, desires a noble task.

Deacons qualify [in the same way] [likewise] as elders qualify.

1 Timothy 3:1-13 NIV

¹Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ²Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He 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. ⁵(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

⁸In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

¹²A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

1. **As you prepare to lead, let's consider some of these qualities** needed for leading

What strikes you as you read through these qualities that Timothy is supposed to be looking for as he considers people to appoint as elders and as deacons?

Two things strike me:

- What we are looking for is a lifestyle impacted by the Gospel (character!) not eloquence or charisma...
- The lists for elders/deacons have a lot of common ground

As you Prepare to Lead, what are you supposed to do with these lists?

- Don't trip up over the detail of your marital status (walking in sexual purity is the key focus)
- Don't trip up over the aspect of your gender (different church networks have different approaches)

- Ask yourself if your lifestyle has been impacted by the Gospel in these areas? (Not just belief [head]; but change of heart and practice)
 - Blameless (integrity/no one can point fingers at you)
 - Reverence/Fear of God (relationship with God)
 - Teaching ability
 - Sexual purity
 - Addictions
 - Anger (harsh, argumentative)
 - Money issues
 - Home situation
 - Not a novice
 - Passed some tests
- Are there areas that have not yet been impacted?
Allow Holy Spirit to bring transformation there! Part of the preparation process.
- **Don't** set perfection as the standard; and then measure yourself by that; and then **disqualify yourself from being useful in God's kingdom.**
- Heart-breaking situations – **first response is 'I am ineligible'.** Let the team around you make that decision.

So we have considered **some personal application of this passage, but let's step back now** and take a closer look at leadership in the context of a local church.

2. How does local church leadership work?

Some observations from personal experiences over my journey as a Christian and a lover of His bride:

Diverse ways that eldership functions in churches:

- Governance Board / Advisory Council / Directors
- Elders as a Ministry Team (a team of pastors)
- Elders supporting a senior pastor
- Independent charismatic churches – senior pastor role with other elders around him
- (my church; my team; Founder / CEO; unique privileges; weak teams with very little influence; complicated by employment arrangement)
 - o Elders as church staff
 - o Elders as volunteers

Many models available, but how does it work at CCA?

3. How does church leadership at CCA work?

- The role of an elder is a voluntary role.
- Elders are appointed in 2 year cycles which can be continuous.
- **The normal time of renewal is at the church's AGM.**

- Team members would have alternating renewal cycles.
- The name of someone nominated to serve as an elder would be circulated to church members for comment and feedback before they are appointed.
- An annual assessment based on 1 Tim 3 would be done within the eldership team. (For **this CCA elders' annual** assessment - we find this list of qualities as listed here by Paul very helpful.)

An observation: How has leadership changed at CCA over the past 3 years? Including the changing role of elders at CCA.

What about deacons?

We don't use the term much, but in practice our Management Team could be seen in this role. They are responsible for the operational oversight of our church – human resources, finances and facilities etc.

Biblically, deacons carry responsibility and authority. They are not just casual helpers who take care of a few practical church needs with no spiritual functionality.

- Our MT members are also volunteers who serve in two year cycles and do not all have the same renewal time.

When we look at our CCA leadership structures, we see teams of people serving in these various roles, so why is that?

4. Why is CCA led by a team of elders?

(What is the value of a team? Why do we have a team of elders? Why don't we have a senior pastor?)

Biblically, a local church was always led by elders (not one elder).

The team may have a team leader, but he would be viewed as the first among equals, the facilitator rather than the decision-maker.

Let's consider some of the advantages of team leadership:

- Space is created for all to be involved
- It models the values of respect, submission, humility, teamwork
- Recognition of complementary giftings
- Recognition of the value of diversity
- Local church not shaped around a personal style
- Church is protected in the event of a senior leader crisis
- Preaching input can be varied and healthier

Does team leadership have some challenges – yes it does.

Challenges faced by the team leadership model:

- The church does not have an easily identifiable leader
- It can be counter-cultural and raise questions
- Decision-making processes can be slower
- **Vision development is a process (not one man's role)**
- **Church members don't have a go-to person for all needs**
- **You don't get to hear your favourite preacher every week**

In fairness, we have to also ask if there are some disadvantages of the more familiar model of one senior leader. And yes there are.

Disadvantages of a single senior leader:

- **Rise & fall of the organisation rests on one man's shoulders**
- Wrong & unrealistic expectations flourish-one miracle man
- The modelling of team dynamics is limited
- The need for complementary gifts is not obvious
- There is a potential abuse of power and finances
- Character flaws are not dealt with (leader is untouchable)

Having considered some of the matters relating to team leadership and the model here at CCA, **let's shift the focus back to you as a leader** for a few moments before we close.

5. What about your role as a leader?

- Why would Timothy choose you?
- **Are you qualified in God's eyes?**
- Do you disqualify yourself? (We must get His perspective!)
- **Don't get stuck where you are – if you qualify, grow! If you don't qualify, resolve the matters that sideline you!**
- Where do you lead?
- Who do you lead?

Remember - character wins! That is what qualifies you.

Paul speaks to us in the last few verses of this chapter and puts the spotlight back on Jesus:

Listen to this: Jesus as our example: v.16

1 Timothy 3:16 NIV

*Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great:
He appeared in the flesh,
was vindicated by the Spirit,
was seen by angels,
was preached among the nations,
was believed on in the world,
was taken up in glory.*