

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for May 16: Qualifications for church leaders spelled out_50304

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Qualifications for church leaders spelled out

Titus 1

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Every church needs good leaders to accomplish God's purpose for it. Every church has a specific task. God calls people in each church to satisfy its unique leadership needs. Our previous studies in 1 and 2 Timothy have shown us through the Apostle Paul's instructions to Timothy how we can become worthy servants. Paul's directives to Titus will further guide us to become effective church leaders.

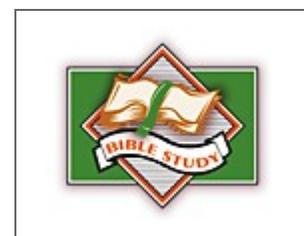
What makes a good leader? (1:5-9)

Paul had left his associate Titus on Crete to finish the work they had

started. Although Acts does not mention that Paul ever visited Crete, many scholars believe Paul visited there after he had been released from his Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30-31). He later was arrested again (2 Timothy 4).

Paul left the island with the work unfinished. Christians on Crete needed further instruction on how to live as a community of faith and resist false teachers. One specific task that awaited Titus was to designate leaders (“elders” and “overseers”) for the churches.

The list of qualifications for these elders parallels Paul's list in 1 Timothy 3. The traits focus on the areas of marriage and family, character and demeanor, and commitment to the integrity of the gospel.



For an elder to live a model life, he needed to be “the husband of but one wife” (literally, “a one-woman man”). Christians continue to debate how to interpret this phrase. Options include necessarily married, not remarried after divorce and married to only one woman at a time.

Paul declared the children of elders should believe and conduct themselves properly. Families may not reach this ideal where all their children are believers, but church leaders with committed families provide excellent models for others in the church. At any rate, children of elders should refrain from blatantly immoral living.

God has entrusted overseers to be stewards of God's word. A steward, usually a slave, managed another's estate and was accountable to the owner. God's stewards are accountable to the Lord as they guide people in

God's truth. Thus, it is necessary that they live blameless lives. Blameless living entails resisting arrogance (“not overbearing”), withstanding impulsive anger (“not quick-tempered”), refraining from drunkenness (“not given to much wine”), refusing to attack opponents (“not violent”) and keeping from using their position for undue financial gain (“not pursuing dishonest gain”).

Paul contrasted the negative behaviors with traits that promote faithful service. Church leaders who exhibit goodness, discipline, and righteous and holy living protect themselves and the church from ungrounded accusations. They express these qualities through loving and devoted service to other believers.

Overseers need to be firmly grounded in the truth of the gospel. They have a two-fold task: To encourage faithful believers in the truth and to resist those who contradict their teachings. Specific content of this truth may be found in Titus 2:11-15.

Why are good leaders needed? (1:10-12)

Churches need quality leaders to withstand the inevitable appearance of false teachers. False teachers refuse to acknowledge those in the church with legitimate authority. They speak fluently and eloquently but have no Christian substance in their words. Paul called them deceivers and mere talkers. Jews of that day used the word “talkers” to refer to heathen worshippers. The false teachers he targeted appear to have been legalists who insisted people had to obey the Jewish law to be Christian. These legalists required circumcision and adherence to other Jewish rituals for salvation.

Paul commanded that overseers muzzle the many false teachers because of the damage inflicted on the church. The teachings were exceedingly dangerous. The “households” they were ruining could mean either house

churches meeting in their homes or whole families. The desire for dishonest gain motivated these teachers. Paul cited a Cretan proverb to drive home his point concerning the depravity of these false teachers.

What about poor leaders? (1:13-16)

Paul expected Titus to take appropriate action. Titus needed to sharply rebuke false teachers. The purpose of the rebuke was redemptive, not punitive. If the false teachers accepted sound teaching, their faith might become healthy. One step to restoring their spiritual health was to reject the Jewish myths of which they were so fond. “Myths” appear to be some sort of spiritual speculation based on the Old Testament. The second aspect of the false teaching was the requirement that Christians obey Jewish legalistic requirements. The term “truth” suggests false teachers were rejecting the most basic teachings of the Christian faith.

The character and conduct of the false teachers revealed their true nature. Purity comes not from adhering to external rites such as special diets and rituals but to an internal transformation. An impure character defiles even those actions that appear to be righteous.

I've been told actions speak louder than words. Such was quite true for the false teachers. They claimed to know God, but their behavior indicated otherwise. Paul described their deeds as an abomination against God (“detestable”), disobedient and “unfit for doing anything good.”

Question for discussion

- ◆ What do you think is the most important quality in a leader?