

Introduction:

In chapter 3, Paul gives Timothy instruction on leadership in the church, specifically the qualification for the roles of elder and deacon. In many churches today, there is much confusion about the difference between these roles. Understanding both roles, and how they bless and serve the church, is important for the health of a local church. In this discussion guide, we'll focus on the qualifications for elders. Also, it is important to note that the New Testament uses the words 'elder,' 'overseer' and 'pastor' interchangeably. They all refer to the same role.

Questions:

1. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and the list of qualifications for elders. The list does not commend super-human gifts, but rather paints a picture of an ordinary man who is a good example of what it means to follow Christ. Really, we want all men in the church to pursue these traits, not just elders!

–Read 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9 and 1 Timothy 5:17. In addition to being a mature example, elders must be able to teach (which is something not necessarily every man pursuing godliness in the church will be able to do). Why is this qualification so important for elders?

Leader note: The ability to teach is critical for an elder because God intends for his church to be led by His Word, not the force of man's personality or charisma. So, elders lead by delivering God's word to God's people. Regarding this ability to teach, that does not necessarily mean a man needs to be gifted in pulpit type preaching. The ability to teach seems to be broader than that and includes an man's instruction in informal and smaller settings.

2. Virtually every time the office of elder is discussed in the New Testament, it is in the plural. Thus, clearly churches are to be led by a plurality of elders. This protects the church from any one man, and any one elder from the crushing burden of singular oversight.

–Discuss the benefits for the life of a church that is led by a group of men rather than by just a single elder/pastor.

3. Elders are exhorted to shepherd and exercise oversight over the flock (1 Peter 5:1-5, Hebrews 13:17). Likewise, Christians are exhorted to obey their leaders and submit to them. Implicit in these commands is some sort of clear recognition of who was part of a local church. In our context, we call this church membership.

–Discuss how some form or formal recognized church membership is implied in the New Testament.

–How does church membership help the leaders (elders) lead better?

–How does church membership help the individual Christian serve better?

Leader note: Encourage those in your group towards membership if they are not already members. While the Bible does not use the words, “you should join a local church if you’re a Christian,” the idea is clear. CrossPointe’s next membership class will be the first weekend of October.