

Sermon Discussion

20 February 2022

Read Acts 20:28-32; 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Dig Deeper

1 Timothy provides a glimpse of life inside a fledgling, **first-century church**. Paul writes to address a young pastor, Timothy, who must handle a series of issues which threaten the health of this church.

Specifically, Timothy must guard against false teaching, maintain distinct roles for women and men within the worship service, appoint qualified elders and deacons, care for the vulnerable, and encourage simplicity and contentment. All in all, sound doctrine is so vital to the health of the church that it is something to be pursued, fought for, and even suffered for.

Overseer (*Greek "episkopes"*) is a term that emphasizes this leader's leadership and management responsibilities and is synonymous with **elder** (*"presbuteros"* found in 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1) and **pastor** or **shepherd** (*"poimen"* found in Ephesians 4:11).

Paul used the term "elder" more frequently. At the time Paul wrote the Pastorals the office of elder was common in the churches since he had appointed elders in churches that he had founded (*see Acts 14:23*).

"Elder" describes the maturity of those who normally hold this position, primarily **spiritual maturity**. "Overseer" describes the major responsibility inherent in the position, namely, **oversight of the church**. "Pastor" describes the gift and work necessary to fulfill this position, the gift and **work of a shepherd**.

1. Who is a pastor or elder who has helped you the most in your spiritual journey? When, if any, was a time you were part of a church and saw a healthy and biblical model of elders?
2. Paul commends those who have ambition to be an elder. What distinguishes good ambition from bad ambition (*see Romans 15:20; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Philippians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:17*)?
3. Why does God set such a high bar on the character qualities for those who would be elders?
4. Why is it important for an overseer to have a gentle and patient disposition? Does this mean he must never be firm?
5. Why do you think God provides a plurality of Godly men to shepherd His people rather

than just one person to do it alone?

6. What biblical counsel would you offer to someone struggling with the fact that only men can serve in the office of elder/pastor?

Application & Prayer

- What prevents you from leading or serving in church? Why or why not?
- Is there a particular character quality listed that you feel particularly challenged by or convicted by?
- Reflect on the implications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 for your own life today. Consider what you have learned that might lead you to praise God, repent of sin, and trust in His gracious promises.