



Character Counts

By Jeff Bedwell on August 17, 2022

TODAY'S READING: 1 Timothy 3

This week as we continue to focus on Paul's letter to Timothy, we come to the third chapter, which states the central purpose of the letter: that, "*you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:15, ESV). In this third chapter Paul guides us with a description of the leadership of a local church and who we are as the church of the living God.

The Bible identifies two primary leadership roles in the church: *elders*, who are servant leaders, and *deacons*, who are leading servants. The New Testament uses two other words to describe the role of elders: *pastors* (Ephesians 4:11) and *overseers* (Titus 1:7). These words are used interchangeably as we see in passages such as Titus 1:5–9, where Paul used the term "elders" in verse 5 and "overseer" in verse 7 to refer to the same position of leadership. We see something similar with the elders in Acts 20:28. Paul said God has made these men "overseers" who are to "shepherd," even though they were previously referred to as "elders" in verse 17 of the same chapter. This has led most Bible students to conclude that we are talking about the same role within the church regardless of whether the word used is *pastor*, *elder* or *overseer*.

As you read this passage, note that the qualifications for both offices focus primarily on character issues rather than giftedness, skill set, or charisma as we define charisma today. **A good exercise is to prayerfully read through the qualities listed in this passage and ask ourselves how are these being evidenced in my life? Where do I need to cooperate more fully with God to display these character qualities in my life?** We realize that no one will fulfill these qualifications perfectly. Day by day, each of us has sins to confess and areas of continual growth and development. However, all of us are called and by God's grace enabled to live lives worth imitating, lives that reflect the character of Christ.

Paul concludes this chapter by reminding us of who we are as the church of the living God. We are the:

- Expression of God's family – "the household of God"
- Dwelling place of God's presence – "the church of the living God"
- Guardians of God's truth – "a pillar and buttress of the truth"

Paul ends this chapter with a declaration of the greatness of Jesus Christ. The main truth that a church bears witness to is the person and work of Jesus Christ (verse 16 is thought to be quoted from an early Christian hymn).

Today, let us recommit ourselves to living out our new identity as a part of the church of the living God. Let us ask God to continue to shape our lives with the character qualities that most glorify Him, are best for us and bless others.

PRAYER: Father, thank You for making me a part of Your family through the saving work of Jesus Christ. Help my life reflect the character of Christ Jesus more and more as I live out of my new identity as a member of Your family in accordance with Your truth revealed in Your Word.

TOMORROW'S READING: 1 Timothy 4

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