

LESSON 70

Character Counts

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7



BIBLE TRUTH

LEADERS LEAD BY EXAMPLE

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read 1 Timothy 3 from the Scriptures or read story 148, “Character Counts,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Follow Instructions

- ✓ paper and pencils

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 10 MIN

Memorize Qualifications

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for the class
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- ✓ prizes

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN

Thanking the Pastor

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pencil and paper
- ✓ blank note cards—one for each student
- ✓ markers, crayons, or colored pencils

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

What Does It Take to Lead?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils
- ✓ Bibles for the class

TOTAL 75 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Those appointed to pastoral ministry must demonstrate a life of godliness—Timothy helped Paul care for the local churches that started from Paul’s gospel preaching. One of Timothy’s responsibilities was to establish leaders in those local churches. Paul knew that leaders had to lead by example. That is the way Jesus led. Jesus told his disciples to “follow me” (Mark 2:14). Paul told the Corinthians, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul knew it was important to set a good example for the church. Paul wanted Timothy to be certain that anyone desiring to lead the church be qualified to do so. Nearly all of the qualifications Paul mentioned relate to a one’s character. The whole list can be summed up in this one: “an overseer must be above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2). Paul knew that if a leader led a life of sin, the people following would lead lives of sin. The only qualification, listed here, that has to do with personal gifts is the ability to teach. To lead a church a pastor must have a godly character.

Leaders must be worthy of respect—Not only must the pastors in the church live godly lives, but the other leaders and their spouses must lead godly lives as well. Just as the pastors are examples to the leaders they train, the other leaders are an example to the congregation. Paul understood that we grow, in part, by imitating other godly people. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, told the Philippians, “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us” (Philippians 3:17). All leaders must live lives worthy of emulating, and if they sin and do not repent, they should be willing to step aside from their position.

The congregation must follow the example of its leaders—The qualifications for leadership in 1 Timothy 3, should be used not only to judge our leaders, but also to judge ourselves. When Paul summarizes these instructions, he tells Timothy that he is giving them to him so that people “in the household of God” will know how to behave (1 Timothy 3:15). Paul’s goal is for everyone in the church to live godly lives. God is calling us all to live according to these standards because we all have someone looking up to us. Younger siblings look up to older brothers and sisters. Children look up to their parents. Younger men look up to older men and younger women look up to older women. New believers look up to those who are more mature in their faith. It is much easier to lead a godly life if everyone around you is leading a godly life.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

What Does It Take to Lead?

Review the qualifications for leadership in 1 Timothy 3 and try to identify where the children have questions. The pastor should:

- Be above reproach—not be able to be reasonably accused of unrepentant sin
- Be the husband of one wife—not be married to two people at once
- Be temperate—not be rash or quick to judge
- Be self-controlled—control appetites and desires
- Be respectable—be orderly and worthy of respect
- Be hospitable—enjoy reaching out to guests in the home
- Be able to teach—be able to communicate and teach God’s Word
- Not be given to drunkenness—not get drunk with alcohol
- Not be violent but gentle—not be given to anger or fits of rage
- Not be quarrelsome—be a peacemaker
- Not be a lover of money—not love riches or money
- Manage his family well—effectively lead his family in the things of God
- Have obedient children—have children who are respectful and receive correction
- Not be a recent convert—have experience as a Christian
- Have a good reputation with outsiders—be honorable toward all people
- Not pursue dishonest gain—work faithfully for the money he receives
- Hold to the truths of the faith—believe sound doctrine

The pastor’s wife should:

- Be worthy of respect—be honorable
- Not be a malicious talker, but temperate—be slow and humble in speech
- Be trustworthy—able to be trusted in everything

Where Is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

At the conclusion of Paul's exhortation to leaders and the church, Paul lists a confession of the mystery, or revealed secret, of godliness. Living godly lives can be a challenge, so Paul gives us the one key piece of information we need: Jesus. "He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). Though the presentation is poetic, it is the gospel nonetheless.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Jesus loves the church and gave his life to save the lost and bring them into his family. He is the chief shepherd, and all the leaders under him must be able to lead by example so that those for whom he died will be well cared for. If it were not for Christ's death on the cross, which brings us redemption, there would be no church and no need for godly leaders.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read 1 Timothy 3 from the Scriptures or read story 148, "Character Counts," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Follow Instructions

- ✓ paper and pencils

Use this exercise to demonstrate that it is easier to follow someone's example than to follow written or oral instructions.

Distribute paper and pencils and read the following instructions to your class:

1. Draw an eight-inch horizontal line one-third of the way up from the bottom of your paper.
2. Starting at the left end of the horizontal line, draw an arc which drops below the line and connects with the other end of the horizontal line.
3. Find the center of your horizontal line and draw a vertical line to the top of the page.
4. Draw a large triangle down from where you ended that line to just above your original horizontal line.
5. The bottom of the triangle should be parallel with your original horizontal line.

The class is likely to think this is difficult. When they are done, they should have a basic drawing of a sailboat with a mast and a triangular sail. Have the students compare their drawings. They will be surprised at how different they look.

Have them turn their papers over. Then draw a picture of another sailboat on the whiteboard. Let them copy the second boat on their papers and compare. This will help them see the value of leading by example. What they thought was so difficult turned out to be easy!

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Memorize Qualifications

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ Bibles for the class
- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- ✓ prizes

Have the class turn to 1 Timothy 3. Give the class a few minutes to read through and try to memorize the various qualifications for leaders. Then have them close their Bibles.

Divide the class in half and ask them for the qualifications. List them on the board—answers from the team on the right side of the room go on the right side of the board; answers from the left team go on the left side of the board. Take turns accepting answers from children on

both teams, alternating between right and left. The team that ends with the most qualifications wins the prize.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Thanking the Pastor

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pencil and paper
- ✓ blank note cards—one for each student
- ✓ markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Have the class make thank-you cards for the pastor or for another leader in your church, thanking them for being a good example of godliness to your church. Encourage the children to decorate their cards.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

What Does It Take to Lead?

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper and pencils
- ✓ Bibles for the class

Review the qualifications for pastors in 1 Timothy 3 and compare them as a class to the list Paul gives Titus in Titus 1:6–9. Have the children start by writing down the qualifications in a column on the left of their paper from 1 Timothy 3 and then match the qualifications repeated in Titus 1 next to them. Discuss as a class the similarities between the lists. Explain to the children the fact that having two very similar lists in the Bible emphasizes their importance and helps us know we cannot ignore them.