

1 Timothy Chapter 3

Serving the Lord in the Church

What is the most important work of the Church? Who is responsible for the carrying out of the Church's program? Some people want to enjoy the privileges and benefits of church membership, but they show no willingness to have a share in the work of the Church. God wants everything in the Church to be well regulated and conducted in an orderly and efficient manner. Therefore, Paul gave Timothy definite instructions on how every congregation should fulfill its obligations and manage its affairs.

Qualifications of a Pastor

Read 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and see also **Titus 1:6–9**. The Office of the Ministry is the highest office in the Church. In fact, it is the only office that God has established for every congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17). Those who serve in the ministry have a difficult task to perform, and they bear a heavy responsibility (Hebrews 13:17). Because no other work is more important for the people's welfare, St. Paul wants the congregations to call as their pastors only men (adult males) who have the proper qualifications. A pastor should, first of all, be a devout Christian and have a good character and reputation. The virtues that are required of all Christians should be especially noticeable in pastors, because they are to serve as good examples to their flocks. If their conduct is bad, people will not be inclined to listen to their message. A pastor should, therefore, keep himself under control and not allow himself to be ruled by sinful desires and habits, such as intemperance, bad temper, greed, or pride. If he is married and has children, he should conduct his home in an exemplary Christian manner and lead his family to live a pure and godly life. In general, a pastor should have the welfare of his flock and of all people at heart and should be able to serve them by word and deed. For that reason a newly converted person (recent convert), who has not yet been able to prove that he is a strong Christian, should not be called into the ministry. Moreover, a person must also have certain ministerial gifts, without which he cannot serve as a pastor. He must have the ability to teach and preach the Word of God and to apply it to the needs of his flock. For this reason he also needs to be well trained for his work and to acquire a sound and thorough knowledge of the Holy Scriptures (Titus 1:9).

1. Discuss the lists of qualifications for pastors in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6–9.

2. What specific duties of pastors are indicated in 1 Timothy 4:6, 12–16; 2 Timothy 2:15, 24–26; 4:2; Titus 1:11; 2:1, 7?

3. Why should pastors be good examples to their flocks?

4. What do church members owe to their pastors (1 Timothy 5:17)?

Lay Workers Needed to Assist the Pastor

Read 1 Timothy 3:8–13. In order to give the apostles and elders (pastors) more time for preaching and teaching, the early Christian Church assigned certain duties, such as visiting the sick and caring for the poor, to qualified and consecrated lay workers, known as deacons (Acts 6:1–6). Regardless of whether these men gave all or only part of their time to the Church, they had to be sound in faith and Christian knowledge and able to perform their assigned tasks. It was also very important that they should live exemplary lives at home as well as in public. If they were careless in their conduct or showed that they were out for personal gain and glory, some of those whom they served might take offense and leave the Church. In verse 11, the apostle gives similar directions to female workers (deaconesses). They had to look after the needs of the female members. These had to be particularly on their guard not to carry gossip from house to house or say things that might cause trouble in the congregations. Therefore, they needed a good measure of sincerity, faithfulness, and sound judgment. Such service would help them to grow in Christian knowledge and experience, and God promised graciously to reward them for their good works (v. 13).

5. What offices have our congregations established to assist the pastors in their work? What kind of persons should be chosen for these duties?

6. Why should every church member pay close attention to his conduct at home and in public?

Willing and Joyful Service

Read verses 14–16. Paul considered the work of the Church so important that he did not wait until he could talk these matters over personally with Timothy. He put his instructions down in writing so that they would also be available to the believers of all times. The work that is done in and through the Church is far different from all other kinds of activity among people, because the Church is the house of God in which the living God rules and dwells. The Church is a pillar and buttress of truth, because it has the Word of God, the only truth that makes us wise unto salvation. God has committed to the Church the blessed Gospel, which is to be preached to all people. The Gospel is given in the form of a hymn (v. 16) and is called a divine mystery, something that human beings could not know if God had not revealed it. By means of the Gospel, God tells us what He has done for our salvation. He had His Son become man in order to redeem us from sin. All who believe in Jesus have forgiveness of sins. The exalted Jesus has His Gospel preached through His Church to all the world, so that people may be brought to faith and share in His heavenly glory. We have and enjoy this precious Gospel, and we should be eager to share it with others.

7. Why should our house of worship be especially dear to our hearts?

8. Why should we be very grateful for having the pure Gospel?