

1 Timothy 3

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7: The church overseer will affect how the church runs. The church is a collection of *wounded healers* and flawed people. Without on-going course-correction and guidance; the church will be full of discord and division; and end up looking just like our society. The church is a reflection of God and a reflection of society. We are frequently referred to as hypocrites. We all aspire to be better than we are. We are also associated with being the herald of a more-perfect way.

We all have unmet wants. The pastor is not here to solve all of our problems. That is a recipe for failure. He brings us the word of God. We are here to serve; not to be served. The church provides *an opportunity to serve*. We should not come to church as critics, expecting to be catered to. We should not sit in the back row with our toothpick and a sermon evaluation form. If we are not hearing God's voice; then perhaps we are just showing up expecting someone else to feed us spiritually. We need to engage the Holy Spirit in conversation and research on our own. We should come willing to help the common cause.

The church is to have order and organization. It is also supposed to be gentle; with boundaries. The public life and private life of the church overseer must be the same. Many Christians have secret sins; but they cannot lead. You can have numerous flaws; and still be in God's family. You just can't lead. Any foothold that the enemy has on us will bring harm to the church body.

Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13: Church ministries need to have a screening process. Your life steps must reflect your declarations of faith. Your competency and stability must be demonstrated. They need to be able to observe the performance and interaction and servitude of each helper. Some people who visit our church never talk to anyone other than the greeter. If a greeter or usher has an attitude; it will surely reflect poorly on the church. Many people would love to come in and begin preaching. It is best to start those who would serve God to start at the bottom. There are needs to fold chairs and clean toilets. If that is not good enough for them, then they are not there to meet other's needs. They are there to meet their own needs. Many people become critics of the church, because they have come to have their needs met. They second-guess the look that the usher gave them, or the

degree of enthusiasm the pastor has for them. It is not the pastor or usher's job to compliment and entertain every attendee. The church provides an opportunity to serve.

If a scoundrel or person of low moral values is serving the people in church will be confused as to why such a person is allowed to represent them. The visitors may decide to leave the church. In other words; people in church ministry are on display. You are *a walking billboard* for the church while you serve. If a young man makes inappropriate advances to a young woman, he has just made that woman uncomfortable to attend your church. God forbid that we cheat somebody; and then see them at church! It is not just an issue on the church grounds. If you are a lazy worker at your job, your co-workers will assume that the church is a place for half-hearted and insincere activity.

In other words, the church is a welcoming place, which is also full of sinners. Even so, you need to pass muster to serve. You cannot be a person of questionable character. You do not have to be an impressive person. A church grounds keeper or ministry promoter and leader can be crippled, aged, unattractive, or poor. They should not be criminals, substance abusers, adulterers, or con artists. They do not have to be the most-efficient; but they do need to get the job done according to reasonable expectations.

I have observed that church office secretaries or financial deacons can be very poor at returning phone calls. Deacons need to demonstrate that they will shepherd their area of responsibility.

Serving as a volunteer can be thankless work. You will be criticized by those who do not lift a finger. Others will step in and try to change everything that you are doing because it does not suit them. You will quickly discover if you are serving man or God. **We ask to be used as God's servants; but then we complain when we are treated like one.** Many ill-suited deacons murmur and complain about their pastor or congregation. If you are serving man, you will keep a score on being thanked and appreciated. If you are serving God, that does not matter. Some church volunteers are bitter people. There will be a ton of imperfections and issues, that can take the fun out of our church ministry. So few people participate that the sole participants can get burned out. Some churches are in financial straits

continuously. People get tired of using work-arounds and half-measures to do things in inefficient ways. Many church deacons are just angry and bitter people; who resent any input.

The pastor cannot go to every hospital visit and meeting. Counseling takes a lot of time too. The pastor with the vision needs to surround himself with capable leaders. You need to serve in your best ability, according to the latitude you have. Then you need to let it go. It is equally-important to limit your role as a deacon to the limits of your natural abilities. Otherwise you can frustrate your co-workers. The Holy Spirit orchestrates all activities. We cannot force outcomes or be too pushy as servants. We need to be honest about people's abilities; and not get angry when they do not fulfill the role of something they are not.

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your⁶ faith; ⁷if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,¹² do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:3b-8)

Read 1 Timothy 3:14-16: The church stands out as unique in the world. We are not to just live according to what suits us. We have to live like God tells us to. To carry out this impossible transformation requires the power of the Holy Spirit.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. ¹⁵I do not understand what I do. (Romans 7:14)

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²²For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? (Romans 7:21-24)

Believers have an added *spiritual software that downloads a new program into your heart and mind*. Our walk can be beyond our natural inclinations and patterns.

if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of¹¹ his Spirit who lives in you. ¹²Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. (Romans 8:11-14)

We (collectively in Christ) are the foundation of truth. The godliness that follows our conversion comes from the Holy Spirit; and is supernatural. It is easy to see the difference between the church and the world right now. We are peacefully going about our business. God has given us logical minds; not devoid of the truth. As the world falls apart; our faith should unveil in contrast more and more.