

THE LAWS OF LEADERSHIP

1 Timothy 3:1-7

LAW #6 Character Is a Vital Ingredient of Leadership

Stephen Covey, the author of Principle-Centered Leadership, says: “*Without character and competence, we won’t be considered trustworthy, nor will we show much wisdom in our choices and decisions. Without meaningful ongoing professional development, there is little trustworthiness or trust.*”

What part does character play in leadership?

What we’re going to discover today is that biblically, there are certain principles and certain qualifications that must be existent before a person can be truly recognized as a leader from God’s perspective.

I want to take a statement that came from Warren Bennis and he was quoted by Gary Collins in his wonderful book *You Can Make a Difference*.

He says this:

Law #4: A Commitment to leadership is a commitment to prayer.

And last week we talked about a very volatile subject.

Law #5: Leadership is primarily a man's role.

Law #6: Character Is a Vital Ingredient of Leadership.

Now, this is a neat study. It's one of those kind of studies where we're studying a list. And there are 15 qualifications for leadership in this passage. And we're going to take those and just look at them one after another. The key to it is that almost all of the qualifications have to do with what a man is more than what a man does.

Let's look at verse 1.

V.1 "Trustworthy is the saying: "Whoever is aspiring to the office of an overseer [or a leader] is desiring a good work."

When you see the term "*aspiring*" you think of somebody who wants to run for a political office and so he begins

politicking, going around getting special interest groups to join him in his pursuit of an office.

And that's not the picture that Paul describes here.

The picture of a person who is *aspiring* for leadership is a person who is stretching himself after that.

Another picture would be a person who knew that in order to be trusted with leadership he would have to be a certain kind of person so he is pursuing those qualities in his life to be that kind of a person. Do you see what I'm saying?

In other words, if you really want to be a man or a woman of God, there are patterns and procedures biblically that you can follow and the result of following those is that, God's going to bless you. And so, stretching yourself after those things will put you in a position of leadership as far as God is concerned.

And these are the things we're going to look at in today's study. So Paul says, "*pursue the spiritual disciplines that produce leadership material.*"

You are doing a good thing if you do that.

Now just having the desire is not enough. You must have a character that matches the desire to qualify for leadership. And that's the whole issue in today's study.

V.2 "It is necessary, therefore, that the overseer (or the leader) be above reproach (give no grounds for accusation), one wife's husband, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching."

We are now in the list. And the rest of the passage is going to deal with these 15 things we're studying.

Let's take the first one now.

V.1a "It is necessary, therefore, that the overseer be above reproach (or give no grounds for accusation)."

What does Paul mean when he says that a leader must be "*above reproach*"?

There are quite a number of commentators who believe that this one word "*above reproach*" is an overriding word.

It's like that's the big umbrella. "*Above reproach*" summarizes any person who's going to assume a place of leadership.

And the other 14 words just fall under that. They give flesh and definition to what it means to be “*above reproach*”.

Now it’s interesting that the word “*without reproach*” means to have “nothing to take hold of.”

When somebody is nominated for a political office, what is the first thing the press does? They look for something to take hold of, don’t they? And we saw that in the nomination for the Attorney General Ashcroft.

They didn’t find anything to take hold of, meaning that he had a "clean record."

What Paul is saying is that to be a biblical leader there can’t be anything in your life that they can take hold of.

I know what you may be thinking. You’re thinking, “*You just disqualified me from leadership.*”

Let me remind you of something.

In God’s sight the moment you come to know Christ, your sins are forgiven. Isaiah 1: 18 says, “*Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be as wool.*”

Philippians 3:12

“Forgetting those things which are behind, we press toward those things which are in front.”

Now the big question I’m asking you: is there anything in your life right now that the Lord can take hold of and say, *“You’re disqualified from leadership because you’re doing this?”*

You’ve been convicted about it but you haven’t let it go.

You have a relationship that’s not right.

If there are some things that you know in your heart that disqualify you from it right now, then that’s legitimate from the Holy Spirit.

Don’t ever let your past be a means of disqualifying you if you have a personal relationship with the Lord. All of us have a past. All of us have things we wish we could do better. There are things we wish we could live over and make things right. But we can’t.

Satan will always point you to your past so it fills up your insecurities.

So it will make you feel ineffective, make you feel unworthy, and make you have an excuse for not ever really cutting the mustard and being the kind of person that God wants you to be.

You'll find the difference between Satan and the Holy Spirit. Satan will always point you to the past, whereas the Holy Spirit will always point you to the present and to the future. So Paul says, "*Forgetting those things which are behind, we press toward those things which are in front.*"

Can you say today that you're without reproach and that there is nothing that anyone can take hold of?

Here's a neat story.

As professional golfer Ray Floyd was getting ready to tap in a routine 9-inch putt, he saw the ball move ever so slightly. According to the rulebook, if the ball moves in this way the golfer must take a penalty stroke. But consider the situation. Floyd was among the leaders in the tournament offering a top prize of well over \$100,000. To acknowledge that the ball had moved could mean that he could lose his chance for the big money.

What does Ray Floyd do?

Writer David Holahan describes what others might have done. “*The athlete ducks his head and flails wildly with his hands, as if being attacked by a killer bee; next, he steps back from the ball, rubbing his eye for a phantom speck of dust, all the while scanning his playing partners and the gallery for any sign that the ball’s movement had been detected by others. If the coast is clear, he taps the ball in for a par.*” Ray Floyd, however, didn’t do that. He gave himself a penalty stroke and wound up with a bogey on that hole.

You see, those are the kind of things that really make an impact on people.

So the first thing that comes in the study today is that the person is a person without reproach.

Second qualification: *One wife’s husband.* This is the battleground of many denominational groups. Can a person who has been divorced serve in a position of leadership?

I really don't think that marital history is the issue here. I think character is the issue. And if you are of Christ-like character you are a one woman man. That means you're not promiscuous by being flirtatious. And you're not carrying on relationships with other women besides your wife.

#3: You're *temperate*.

And the word could be translated "well-balanced." This kind of a person is calm, cool, and collected. He's got it together. He's got his spiritual orientation, his psychological orientation. He's stable and steadfast. He's one of those good guys that have a balanced perspective of life.

Qualification #4: He is *self-controlled*.

This word can also be translated "prudent," which describes a person who is disciplined. He is a person who can live delayed gratification. In other words, he doesn't act impulsively. He is proactive rather than reactive.

You know how people sometimes react when there's a crisis. This kind of person has it under control and he is proactive. He controls his response to things.

He has exercised mastery over himself. You could say he is a man of good judgment.

The next word, #5 is: *Respectable*.

This word means “orderly, honest, well-behaved.” It’s Ray Floyd over a 9-inch putt. Doing the right thing in the situation that is honorable.

His character and his life and his priorities make a greater and a greater impact. He lives a well-ordered life.

Quality #6: Hospitable.

And I know you’re wondering why in the world this got in the lesson.

Interesting word. You know what that word means?

That is the Greek word “philozenia.” When you use the word “philo” you think of love, don’t you? Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. “Philo.” “Philozenia”—to love the stranger. Why would that be a qualification for leadership? The reason is because that’s the whole basis for your evangelism.

We can say all we want about sharing the gospel with someone and we want to do that every opportunity we have. But Biblically, the key to evangelism is hospitality. It's building bridges by breaking bread. Being with a person. Relationships.

You see our lives and we see yours. And together we instruct one another.

Listen to some of these other verses.

Romans 12:13

“Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.”

Hebrews 13:1-2

“Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without even knowing it.”

1 Peter 4:9

“Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”

Qualification #7: *Skillful in teaching.*

Skillful in teaching doesn't mean that you have to be sitting here, having studied the text and worked it all out, and be formal in your teaching.

V. 3 “*not addicted to wine (a drunkard), not a bully (or a fist fighter), but gentle (kind), peaceable, not loving money (or greedy).*”

Qualification #8: *Not addicted to wine (or a drunkard).*

What he's saying here is that he does not linger long over his wine. Remember, to them wine was a beverage that was part of the culture. It was not an issue like it's become so much today. And it was not the same kind of beverage really. And so he saying, not using it to the point of losing ones senses.

Qualification #9: *Not a bully (or a fist fighter).*

When you look at that one you might say,

“That just doesn't fit the church culture.”

Paul is talking about how to control your temper and not lose it. We're living in a dangerous generation. We have people all around us that are right on the edge.

Qualification #10 is: *Gentle.*

It's a word that is translated "*kind*" in a lot of places.

You know, that's the word that Jesus uses in the sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:5

"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."

Qualification #11: *Peaceable.*

In other words, he's not out to have a quarrel.

And that's 2 Timothy 2:24

"And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when he is wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth."

Qualification #12: *Not loving money* to the point that he is greedy in trying to keep it for himself.

It's amazing how many times Jesus addresses this wrong attitude toward money and what money can do.

Luke 16:14

“The Pharisees were lovers of money.”

1 Timothy 6:10

“The love money is the root of all sorts of evil, for some people longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.”

Hebrews 13:5

“Let your character be free from the love of money.”

Now verses 4 and 5 go together for qualification #13.

V. 4 “Presiding over his own house in a beautiful manner, keeping his children under control with true dignity.”

Why would you investigate a person’s family before they qualify for leadership? You see, the family is a minute little capsule of what you can predict on the greater scale of leadership.

If you want to see how a person is going to lead, take a look at his family.

And a man, according to Howard Hendricks, “*who is great in public will also be great in private.*”

We see the reason in verse 5:

V. 5 “*For if a man does not know how to preside over his own house, how shall he take care of God’s assembly?*”

The family relationship is important to God in using a person for leadership.

Do you have good relationships in your family?

Do you feel comfortable about that today? Or do you need maybe to take the prayer of Sandra Simpson LeSourd who in her book *The Not-So-Compulsive Woman* says:

I learned these few words, and they brought my family back to me:

I’m sorry.

I was wrong.

Please forgive me.

I love you.

Qualification #14: Leadership is not a place for a new convert.

V. 6 “*Not a new convert, lest (here comes the warning) having his mind blinded by pride, he fall under similar judgment as that of the devil.*”

A new convert, a person who has just been planted. You don't take a sapling and try to bear fruit through him. Growth into leadership takes time.

Proverbs 16:18

“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

The word “*blinded by pride*” is to blow smoke to the point that you can't see clearly. It's blinded by the *pride* of arrogance so that you live in a world of illusion of your own importance. It emits the smoke that keeps you from seeing things clearly.

What was it that caused Satan to fall? It was his pride.

In his book *Temptations that Men Face*, Tom Eisenman gave the neatest illustration. He says:

“A good chef knows what a long soak in a fine marinade will do for a tough piece of meat. There is no way to slap on a glaze at the last second and get the same fine result.”

And he puts it:

“This is God’s way with us. We soak in the marinade of his grace for a lifetime (don’t you love that?). And there is simply no way to rush the process without ruining the meat. A lifetime of soaking in the marinade of God’s grace can transform even the toughest sinner into a heavenly delicacy.”

That’s why he says, “*not a new convert.*”

Let him marinate in the grace of God for a while.

Let him get softened.

Let him get made tender and then be useful.

Now our key verse 7 is the last one.

“Moreover it is a necessity for him also to be having a good testimony from those on the outside, in order that he might not fall into disgrace and into the trap of the devil.”

#15: *To have a good testimony on the outside.*

Character is a vital ingredient in leadership. It is important that a person in leadership would have a good reputation with people on the outside, people who are not Christians.

That's 1 Peter 3:15

“Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts and be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks you of a reason of the hope that is in you.”

Paul over and over again focuses on conduct when it comes to witnessing.

Colossians 4:5

“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders.”

1 Peter 2:12

“Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles.”

1 Corinthians 10:31

“Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

Francis Assisi said: “*Preach the gospel all the time; if necessary use words.*”

You know, that’s what Paul’s saying. That’s the key of the whole thing. “*In order that he might not fall into disgrace and into the trap of the devil,*” what’s that? The devil has a trap to get believers and disqualify them from leadership. And we’ve seen a lot of folks fall into the traps and not recover from the snare of the devil.

Blasting character and influence are his key things. And what comes from that? Depression, sickness, despair, shame, and sorrow. And as a result of that he has a person in his trap.

This is a neat story.

Some years ago, a father received a letter from his college-aged son which read in part, “Hey, Pop! This letter is free. They didn’t cancel the stamp on the last letter to me, so I used it again.”

A few days later, the son received a letter from his father. When he unfolded the letter, he found a stamp pasted at the top with a great big X drawn through it.

Beneath the stamp the father had written, “Dear Son, your debt to the United States Government has been paid.”

Here was a father mentoring his son in the meaning of integrity.

There are 11 lessons that come out of this study.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: It is good to aspire to a place of leadership in the body of Christ.

LESSON #2: "Character is a Vital Ingredient of Leadership" (Law #6).

LESSON #3: It is a real requirement of leadership for us to daily keep everything on track.

LESSON #4: It is essential that we protect our marriages.

LESSON #5: Hospitality is a requirement if we are going to build bridges to those who are lost.

LESSON #6: To be skillful in the teaching of the Scriptures it is necessary to stay faithful in the study of the Word.

LESSON #7: Drunkenness and violence have no place in Christian leadership.

LESSON #8: Christian leadership involves a right attitude toward money.

LESSON #9: You can predict the success of one's leadership in the church by looking at his family.

LESSON #10: Leadership is not a place for a new convert.

LESSON #11: It is a requirement that the would-be leader have a good testimony in the outside world.

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

PART I — 1 TIMOTHY 1-3

"The Laws of Leadership"

LAW NUMBER SIX - Character Is a Vital Ingredient of Leadership

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Key verse 3:7

Notes

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v. 2 It is necessary, therefore, that the overseer be above reproach (give no grounds for accusation), one wife's husband, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching,

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v. 4 presiding over his own house in a beautiful manner, keeping his children under control with true dignity.

v. 5 For if a man does not know how to preside over his own house, how shall he take care of God's assembly?

v. 6 Not a new convert, lest having his mind blinded by

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.**
- 2. What trustworthy saying does Paul give us in verse 1?**
- 3. What do you think Paul means in verse 2 when he says, "It is necessary for the overseer to be above reproach"?**
- 4. List the seven character traits that are given in verse 2.**
- 5. List the five character traits that are stated in verse 3.**
- 6. Describe the leader's home life, according to verse 4.**
- 7. Why is leadership in the home such an important prerequisite, according to verse 5?**
- 8. Why should a new convert not be chosen for leadership in the church, according to verse 6?**
- 9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?**
- 10. What lesson have you learned from this study?**