

SERMON APPLICATION GUIDE

THE ELDERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD | 1 Timothy 3:1-7

「WORSHIP」

How can your discipleship group start with **worship** today?

「WALK」

Spend time **understanding** and **applying** God's Word.

1. REVIEW + UNDERSTAND

What thoughts and emotions do you carry into a conversation about church leadership?

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Paul lays out a blueprint for church leadership which includes the role of overseer. Go through the list and define/describe each qualification.

What is the purpose and responsibility of the plurality of elders? How do you see this practically at work?

2. ASSESS + APPLY

Why, do you think, is spiritual leadership important in the household of God?

What is your disposition toward leadership in the Church?

As you looked through the list of qualifications for overseers, consider your own character. Which of these would you celebrate victory (as God's work) in your life? Which would you want to see forward momentum in?

Please pray for our local plurality of overseers. It is a noble and honorable role and these men love our church family. Pray that they would hold fast to the Gospel and would shepherd well to the glory of God.

PRAYERS & APPLICATIONS

Blank space for prayers and applications.

5 DAY READING PLAN

Each day answer the questions: What does it **say**? What does it **mean**? How should I **respond**?

DAY 1
1 Tim. 3:1-7

DAY 2
1 Pet. 5

DAY 3
Acts 20:17-38

DAY 4
Heb. 13:1-8

DAY 5
Heb. 13:8-19

WORK

How should this message affect how you **serve one another**?

Blank space for work-related reflections.

WITNESS

How should this message affect how you **share the Gospel**?

Blank space for witness-related reflections.



I. Purpose

Acknowledging first and foremost that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23), we believe that the Bible affirms two offices for the local church: elder and deacon. Redeemer Bible Church is governed by a plurality of elders which is responsible for all aspects of the Direction, Doctrine, and Discipline of the church. In addition, the plurality of elders of Redeemer also commissions deacons to service-focused roles within the church. The purpose of this position paper is to document the Biblical principles for this oversight structure as well as document the practical application of those Biblical principles at Redeemer Bible Church.

II. Scripture as Our Source of Truth

We must first recognize, affirm, and abide under the authority of Scripture as our ultimate source of truth. We do not turn to culture for our views on the roles of Elders and Deacons but instead turn to the inspired Word of God. We believe that Scripture is God's all-sufficient Word to mankind of Who He is and What He has done (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Even as His Word was written down by man, He is the Author as the Holy Spirit carried along the writers (2 Peter 1:20-21). Therefore, we look to His inerrant Word as our source of truth and understanding (Psalm 119:105), humbly seeking to rightly handle the word of truth (Romans 12:3; 2 Timothy 2:15).

III. Elders

a. Biblical Foundations

i. Oversight for the church.

1. The Scriptures teach that a plurality of elders governed individual New Testament churches. We see this in Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; and 1 Peter 5:1.
2. The Scripture does not mention any congregations featuring a stand-alone pastor and/or leader.
3. A plurality of Christ-like elders, exercising their individual giftedness, is consistent with the Scripture's teaching that

wisdom is found in a multitude of Godly counselors (Proverbs 11:4; Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 19:20; Proverbs 24:6).

ii. Role of the Elder:

1. Both Paul and Peter highlight two closely related roles of the elders of the church: to **shepherd** and to provide **oversight** for the flock that God has entrusted to them.
2. In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter exhorts the elders to:
 - a. Shepherd the flock, and
 - b. Exercise oversight.
3. In Acts 20:28-35, Paul is addressing the elders of the Ephesian church and tells them to:
 - a. Pay careful attention to themselves.
 - b. Pay careful attention to the flock.
 - c. Serve as overseers to care for the church of God.
 - d. Be alert to protect the flock from "fierce wolves" (false teachers).

iii. Qualifications:

1. Character Qualities and Maturity in Christ
 - a. There are two primary texts where we see the qualifications for elders defined.
 - b. Paul wrote to Titus, whom he left in Crete, with the instruction to "put what remained in order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you." (Titus 1:5). He then outlines the qualifications for an elder in **Titus 1:6-9**.
 - c. Gene Getz, in his book Elders and Leaders, states, "More than 15 years after Paul and Barnabas first appointed elders on the first missionary journey - in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia - Paul wrote a letter to Timothy outlining criteria for determining whether a man was qualified to be a spiritual leader in the church." These qualifications are found in **1 Timothy 3:1-7**.
2. Men
 - a. In keeping with the biblical teachings regarding authority structures within the church, only men will

be considered for the office of elder at Redeemer Bible Church.

- b. In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul states that he does not “permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.”
 - i. Teaching and exercising authority are two of the qualifications required for elders.
 - ii. Paul supports his statement by linking back to the order of creation and the fall of Adam and Eve that is found in Genesis (1 Timothy 2:13-14).
 - iii. Due to Paul’s intentional link back to Genesis, this is a supracultural principle (a Biblical truth that is both normative and transferrable across cultures and time) that should therefore be normative in today’s church as much as it was for the early church in Ephesus.
 - iv. For a more thorough discussion of the roles of women in the church, reference the position paper “Women in the Church - Redeemer Bible Church.”

b. Practical Application

- i. In keeping with the Scriptural teaching that a plurality of elders provided oversight for individual New Testament churches, Redeemer will be led by a plurality of elders consisting of both Pastors (Staff Elders) as well as Lay Members of Redeemer Bible Church (Lay Elders).
- ii. In terms of composition of our plurality, we seek to target a majority of Lay Elders as compared to Staff Elders by at least one. Not all Pastors of Redeemer Bible Church will necessarily serve as elders.
- iii. A robust process has been developed for the identification and selection of elders at Redeemer which includes prayer, application, interviews, meetings, and detailed qualifications assessment relative to 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

- iv. Specific administrative details for the operation of the Redeemer elders (decision-making process, meeting agendas, tenure, etc.) are outlined in the Bylaws of Redeemer Bible Church.

IV. Deacons

- a. Biblical Foundations
 - i. The first reference we find in the New Testament to the role of deacon in the church is in Paul's greeting to the church in Philippi (Phil 1:1).
 - ii. We also see a reference to the role of deacon in Paul's first letter to Timothy where he outlines the specific qualifications for someone to serve in this role (1 Timothy 3:8-13).
 - iii. A Biblical example of the role of deacons is found in Acts 6:1-7. Even though the men selected for the specific service ("diakonia") in this story are never called deacons, this example serves as a model for the church as there was a specific need identified by the leaders of the church and the chosen men were able to assist the leaders by taking on this service role so that the leaders could focus on their primary roles.
- iv. Qualifications:
 - 1. Character Qualities and Maturity in Christ - After outlining criteria for determining whether a man was qualified to be an elder, Paul continues in his letter to Timothy to identify the criteria required of a deacon. These are found in **1 Timothy 3:8-13**.
 - 2. Men and women
 - a. We believe that both men and women can serve in the role of deacon.
 - b. In listing the qualifications for Deacons, Paul writes the following in 1 Timothy 3:11 - "Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things." (ESV)
 - c. The Greek word translated "wives" in the ESV is *gunaika* which literally means "women" or "wives." Therefore, it is possible that this refers to women who serve as deacons as opposed to requirements for the wives of men who serve as deacons.
 - d. The translation of the word as "women" is supported by the fact that nowhere in the list of qualifications

for elders does Paul mention requirements for the wives of elders.

- e. In addition, we see several examples in the New Testament of women serving in deacon-like roles. Some of these examples include:
 - i. "Phoebe, a servant (diakonos or deaconess) of the church at Cenchreae." - Romans 16:1-2
 - ii. Priscilla, who along with her husband Aquila, serve alongside Paul. (Romans 16:3; Acts 18:1-3; 18; 26)
 - iii. Euodia and Syntyche, "who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers," - Philippians 4:2-3.

b. Practical Application

- i. In keeping with the Biblical teaching, deacons at Redeemer will be commissioned to serve in specific service roles for the church as a help to the elders in order that the elders can focus on their shepherding responsibilities within the church.
- ii. There will not be a formal deacon committee as their role is primarily service-focused.
- iii. A robust process has been developed for the identification and selection of deacons at Redeemer which includes prayer, application, interviews, meetings, and detailed qualifications assessment relative to 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Deacons are commissioned by the Redeemer Elders.