

Setting the Example, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:2–3

Code: B130815

Imagine taking your family to a new church. The teaching is decent, so you keep attending. You get to know some of the elders, hoping to learn from their examples and grow spiritually. Meanwhile, your kids get involved in the youth ministry, and your family becomes immersed in the church.

But as the weeks pass, you realize that big problems lie beneath the surface. Several elders tolerate major sin in their lives, and they disagree on virtually every issue. The congregation is confused on important doctrines. Factions form, and everyone picks sides. To make matters worse, your family members are becoming disjointed and quarrelsome, likely affected by the poor church leadership.

Would you stay? Probably not. It would be difficult for you and your family to grow spiritually in that environment. Churches need leaders who live according to biblical principles and who are unified in sound doctrine. Otherwise, believers have no one to guide them in following God's design for the church.

In 1 Timothy 3, Paul gives Timothy God's standard for church leadership. Picking up where we left off on Monday, an overseer is "not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money" (1 Timothy 3:3).

Not a Drinker

The Greek word translated "addicted to wine" (*paroinos*) means "one who drinks." It doesn't refer to a drunkard—that's an obvious disqualification. The issue here is the man's reputation: Is he known as a drinker?

The Greek word translated "temperate" (1 Timothy 3:2) refers in its literal sense to one who is not intoxicated. *Paroinos*, on the other hand, refers to one's associations: Such a person doesn't frequent bars, taverns, and inns. He is not at home in the noisy scenes associated with drinking. A man who is a drinker has no place in the ministry because he sets a poor example for others by choosing to fellowship with immoral men instead of God's people.

Not a Fighter

A leader of God's people cannot settle disputes with his fists or in other violent ways. The Greek word translated "pugnacious" means "a striker." An elder isn't quick tempered and doesn't resort to physical violence. This qualification is closely related to "not addicted to wine" because such violence is usually connected with people who drink excessively.

A spiritual leader must be able to handle things with a cool mind and a gentle spirit. As Paul said, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome" (2 Timothy 2:24).

Easily Pardons Human Failure

Instead of being pugnacious, a leader must be “gentle.” The Greek word translated “gentle” describes the person who is considerate, genial, forbearing, gracious, and easily pardons human failure.

In a practical sense, a gentle leader has the ability to remember good and forget evil. He doesn’t keep a record of wrongs people have committed against him (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:5). I know people who have left the ministry because they couldn’t get over someone’s criticizing or upsetting them. They carry a list of grievances that eventually robs them of the joy of serving others.

Discipline yourself not to talk or even think about wrongs done against you because it serves no productive purpose. It simply rehearses the hurts and clouds your mind with anger.

Not Quarrelsome

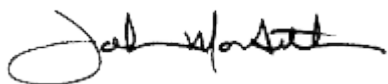
The Greek word translated “peaceable” means “reluctant to fight.” It refers not so much to physical violence as to a quarrelsome person. To have a contentious person in leadership will result in disunity and disharmony.

Free from the Love of Money

Love of money can corrupt a man’s ministry because it tempts him to view people as a means through whom he can acquire more riches.

Here’s a simple principle I’ve used to keep from loving money: Don’t place a price on your ministry. If someone gives you a financial gift you didn’t seek, you can accept it from the Lord and be thankful for it. But if you pursue money, you’ll never know if it came from Him or from your own efforts, and that will rob you of the joy of seeing God provide for your needs.

All these traits are essential for Christian leadership, since every leader sets an example that others imitate. If the example is one of godly character, then the leader’s ministry will edify the body of Christ. As he strives to be hospitable, honorable, peaceable, forgiving, and unselfish, other Christians will do the same. The result is an environment of purity, humility, and genuine love among brothers—fertile ground for the growth of the church.



(Adapted from [Divine Design](#). All Scripture quotations are from the [New American Standard Bible](#).)

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