

Setting the Example, Part 1

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:2–3

Code: B130812

People skills are invaluable in leadership. Imagine how difficult it would be for a man to lead if he was timid and indecisive. Or consider the wreckage produced by a leader who is arrogant and brash. In either case, his private life might be orderly and disciplined, but his lack of ability in the public realm would hinder his leadership. The way a man deals with others determines how, and *whether*, they follow him.

Last time, we examined the biblical qualifications of a Christian leader. He must be a man of private integrity, not given to impurity or excess, but instead moderate and disciplined.

Equally important are those *public* aspects of his character that affect how he ministers to other believers. First Timothy 3:2-3 says that an overseer must be “hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.”

Hospitable

The Greek word translated “hospitable” is composed of the words *xenos* (“stranger”) and *phileō* (“to love” or “show affection”). It means “to love strangers.” Thus biblical hospitality is showing kindness to strangers, not just friends. In Luke 14:12–14 our Lord said:

When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

I realize that showing love toward strangers requires vulnerability and can even be dangerous—some might take advantage of you. While God doesn’t ask us to discard wisdom and discernment in dealing with strangers (cf. Matthew 10:16), He does require us to love them by being hospitable (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9).

When I consider my responsibility to love strangers, I am reminded that God received into His family we who were “excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Since God has welcomed those of us who are Gentiles, how can we fail to welcome strangers into our homes? After all, everything we have belongs to God. We are simply His stewards.

A Skilled Teacher

An elder must be a skilled teacher. That’s the one qualification that sets him apart from deacons and

the rest of the congregation.

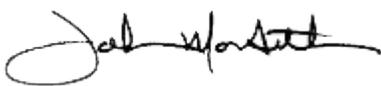
You might wonder why Paul includes this qualification in a list of moral qualities. He does so because effective teaching is predicated on the moral character of the teacher. What a man is cannot be divorced from what he says. “He that means as he speaks,” writes Richard Baxter, “will surely do as he speaks.” [1](*The Reformed Pastor* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979], 63)

Paul repeatedly reminded Timothy of the priority of teaching (1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:2, 15). While all believers are responsible to teach others the truths they have learned in God’s Word, not all have the gift of teaching (1 Corinthians 12:29). Those who aspire to church leadership, however, must be so gifted.

What criteria identify a man as a skilled teacher? There are several:

- He must be credible and live what he teaches (1 Timothy 4:12).
- He must have the gift of teaching (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).
- He must have a deep understanding of doctrine (1 Timothy 4:6).
- He must have an attitude of humility (2 Timothy 2:24–25).
- His life must be marked by holiness (1 Timothy 4:7; 6:11).
- He must be a diligent student of Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15).
- He must avoid error (1 Timothy 4:7; 6:20; 2 Timothy 2:16).
- He must have strong courage and consistent convictions (cf. 1 Timothy 1:18–19; 4:11, 13).

What kind of man should be in church leadership? A man of sincere devotion and genuine love for others. That mentality is, in itself, a high standard to live by, but it’s one that every church leader must be held to. Other Christians look to the leader for an example to follow, and God holds him accountable to provide one.



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

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