

# Leaders – A Biblical Requirement

How to Act in Church – Part III

I Timothy 3

## Introduction

When a flock of crows invades a field of corn, I have read that the birds customarily station two sentries in a nearby tree. The job or mission of these sentries is to warn the rest of the flock of any danger.

In a very insightful book by Bill Gothard, entitled *Character Sketches*, the story is related of two people who succeeded in sneaking up on one particular flock and scaring them nearly to death before the sentries had given warning. The birds burst into flight, but the interesting thing is that they flew immediately to the sentries and attacked and killed them before flying away.

When I read this story, it was startling, and yet I think the responsibility is no less impacting for those who serve as sentries in the church. These individuals are responsible to warn the flock, and so much more.

I believe the flock in many ways is at the mercy of its leaders for their nourishment, their direction, their warning, their exhortation, and much more.

Now I am not suggesting that you, the flock, attack me should I fail, or any other leader in this church!

The laws of nature reveal that there is an awesome responsibility given to those who lead; to those who are given the duty to protect, to nourish, and to care for others.

I think, if the truth were known, many sentries are failing at their posts. In fact, I think the posts in many churches are empty. The reason I believe this is because when compared to the revelation of Scripture, if one is not biblically qualified, then one is really not leading.

I have a book in my library that I have given copies away to a lot of people. It is a book by J. Oswald Sanders, entitled *Spiritual Leadership*. It is a must-have book for everyone in the church, not just for those who hold the offices of elder or deacon. Let me read a couple of paragraphs from this book.

“The supernatural nature of the church demands a leadership that rises above the human, and yet, has there ever been a greater dearth of God-anointed,

God-mastered men to meet the crucial need? In a sense, it has always been true that this type of dedicated leadership has been in short supply for the simple reason that its demands are too stringent.

“‘The church is painfully in need of leaders,’ lamented William Sangster, a great man of God from yesteryear. He said, ‘I wait to hear a voice and no voice comes. I love to sit in the back seat at senate or in conference. I would always rather listen than speak, but there is no clarion voice to listen to.’

“The overriding need of the church, if it is to discharge its obligation to the next generation, is for a leadership that is authoritative, spiritual and sacrificial.

“Authoritative because people love to be led by those who know where they are going and inspire confidence. They follow almost without question the man who shows himself wise; who adheres to what he believes.

“Spiritual because a leadership that is unspiritual; that is, one that can be fully explained in terms of the natural, although ever so attractive and competent will result only in sterility and moral, spiritual bankruptcy.

“Sacrificial because modeled on the life of the One who gave Himself a sacrifice for the whole world; who left an example that we should follow in His steps.

“The church has always prospered when it has been blessed with strong spiritual leaders who expected and experienced the touch of the supernatural in their service.

“The clarion voices that used to make the pulpit the paramount influence in the land are tragically few. In a world aflame, the voice of the church has sunk to a pathetic whisper. It is the binding duty of those in positions of leadership to face up to the situation and do all in their power to see that the torch of a truly spiritual leadership is passed on to the next generation.”

These are powerful words.

For the next few weeks, as we study this subject, we are going to approach it a little differently. I am

going to take the next few positive leadership qualifications from I Timothy and Titus, and give them a subtitle of, “How to Develop a Godly Reputation”. In other words, what does it take to be a good sentry?

We will then take the remaining qualifications – those that we could consider negative in nature – and give them a subtitle of, “How to Destroy a Godly Reputation”.

## Ingredients of a Godly Reputation

We will begin by looking at how to develop a godly reputation.

### 1. The first qualification for a godly reputation is prudence.

Look at I Timothy 3:1-2a. Paul writes,

*It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer [leader; elder], it is a fine work he desires to do.*

*An overseer, then, must be above reproach [blameless; without a handle], the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent . . .*

Your version may translate this word as “temperate or sober” or “sensible” or “self-controlled”.

The word “prudent” comes from the Greek word “sophronos,” which means, “to be discreet or sensible”. It is a word that deals with the cognitive aspect of a leader; that is, he is not mentally carried away by sudden impulse, but is a rational thinker. This word can be broken down into two parts – “so,” which means “sound,” and “phronos,” which means “mind”.

The interesting thing is that Paul, more than any other characteristic of maturity, relates this concept deliberately to the entire church body.

Look at Titus 2:2.

*Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance.*

Paul is speaking to the body and saying that the older men are to be temperate, sensible, or self-controlled.

It is interesting that if we look further in Titus chapter 2, we discover that the older women are to teach younger women how to be prudent or sensible. Look at Titus 2:3-5a.

*Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor*

*enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,*

*so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,*

*to be sensible . . .*

This is an interesting concept that I do not think I have ever seen developed in a church. Perhaps it will be developed in our church – a ministry designed by the older women to teach the younger women how to love their children and their husbands.

It is the older women that have gone through the experiences and can, in turn, use these to encourage and motivate the younger women. I can stand in front all day long and tell the younger women certain things, but it will not go very far. However, the older women can really impact them because they have “been there” and know exactly what is going on.

I remember one time, my wife and I were struggling to get our twin boys’ stroller through the double doors of a department store – which is an enlightening experience that takes great coordination. We had finally made it through and were flustered and frustrated. A lady, who had twins that were now grown, came up to us and said just a few words. She looked us square in the eye and said, “You will make it.”

Why did this lady say these words? Because she had experienced our situation and knew exactly what was going on.

Why does Paul tell the older women to teach the younger women how to love their husbands? Paul is assuming that younger women are going to have difficulty loving their husbands because they now realize what stubborn, insolent men they have been married to for the last few years.

This is not a personal illustration, by the way!

The younger woman may think that she married the only man that God made like this. Then an older woman comes along and says, “Sweetheart, they’re all made like that.”

The older woman has the experience.

It is interesting that Paul is not assuming that it will be easy to do what we might think would come naturally to a woman; that is, to love her husband and her children.

What a ministry this could be. Perhaps some women who are experienced are hearing this and are feeling the call to begin this kind of ministry. It does not have to be one-to-many, it can be one-to-one. Put

an arm around a younger lady and teach her what you have learned by way of experience. I guarantee there is not a lady in this congregation who would turn that away.

Paul also goes on in Titus 2:6 to say,

***Likewise urge the young men to be sensible:***

In other words, “to be sound minded”.

Notice the fighting spirit in Titus 2:7-8.

***In all things show yourself [Titus specifically] to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified,***

***sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.***

Notice that Paul is basically talking about us. He is saying, “You individual young men can bring about a bad reputation to us; that is, to the church.”

So, if you develop a godly reputation, guess what? Your church develops a godly reputation along with you.

We are to be prudent.

How do we recognize prudence? Let me give two ways from looking at this word in different passages of scripture.

- First, a prudent individual is one who has the urgency to pray.

I Peter 4:7b reads,

***. . . be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.***

“Sound judgment,” by the way, is “sophronos”.

“Are you committed to living a godly life?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Why?”

“So I can pray.”

The same theme is found in James 5:16b. Turn to that verse.

***. . . The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.***

The implication is that God grants His blessing to those who back up their prayer with a godly life.

This phrase could be translated, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful in its operation.”

The Amplified Bible, in fact, translates this, and I like this,

***The earnest prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available, dynamic in its working.***

“Do you want to be prudent?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“So I can pray in an effective way.”

This is true for women as well as men, obviously.

Note the illustration of Elijah in James 5:17, the very next verse,

***Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.***

The King James version of this verse says that Elijah,

***. . . was a man subject to like passions as we are . . .***

In other words, Elijah, the example, was not a perfect man, but he was an impassioned man to live the kind of life that resulted in effective praying.

- Secondly, a prudent individual is not only one who has the urgency to pray, but one who has the courage to say, “No.”

Look at Titus 2:11-12.

***For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,***

***instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly . . .***

This is telling those who will be sensible to say “No” to ungodliness and to live “sophronos” or sensibly.

A young man in his late twenties, recently told me of coming to a home for his first date with a girl who supposedly knew the Lord. He knocked on the door and heard his date call out, “Come on in.” He went in and took a seat in the living room. In a few moments, she appeared at the head of the stairs wearing next to nothing, and said, “No one else is home tonight – why don’t you come on up here.”

This young man said, “No,” and walked out.

I talked to a businessman recently in my office. He had been asked to take a promotion that would steal much of his time from his family and literally destroy the potential of ministry. He surprised his employers by saying, “No.”

Two days ago, a man was in my office telling me that he had been home one evening and had rented a

video that was rated “PG” to watch with his two teenage boys. Ten minutes into the video, the language was so bad that the man got up and turned it off.

What do all three of these men have in common?

Prudence. They have the courage to say, “No.”

Prudence may not win many popularity polls, but so what – there are greater things at stake, are there not?

A former President of the United States wrote these words, “I wonder how far Moses would have gone if he had taken a poll in Egypt? What would Jesus Christ have preached if He had taken a poll in Israel? Where would the reformation have gone if Martin Luther had taken a poll? It is not the polls or the public opinions of the moment of the culture that count, it is right and wrong. This is leadership – men with fortitude, honesty, and the belief in the right. This makes epics in the history of the world.”

We could add, “This makes effective ministry in the church of Jesus Christ.”

This is men who lead who are prudent.

## **2. The second ingredient of a godly reputation is respectability.**

This word is the next that appears in I Timothy 3:2.

*An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable . . .*

This is rather interesting because it takes as its illustration, a woman’s wardrobe. Look at I Timothy chapter 2, which is the only other time it appears. We read in I Timothy 2:9,

*Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly [sensibly], not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments*

Now I am going to tread on dangerous ground. Basically, I think Paul is saying that when a woman gets dressed, she is to use her head and not her heart. Let us face it – the temptation is there to emphasize that which is attractive and to de-emphasize that which is unattractive, is it not?

Paul says basically, two things in this verse. He says women should wear the things that are modest; that is, that do not draw attention to themselves. He also says women should wear things that are modestly priced. Did you note that he talked about “costly garments”? All the men are saying, “Preach it to them! Save the checkbook!”

Now notice the next verse, I Timothy 2:10. This is the comparison.

*but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness.*

What does Paul mean by “but rather by means of good works”?

In other words, if you are going to get attention, it will happen inadvertently, and it will occur, not because you are gorgeous, but because you are godly. Paul is saying, “Gather attention by way of your works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.”

Not every woman is a model, but every woman can be a model of godliness.

The problem is that Paul is talking about a quality of a man in I Timothy 3:2. If we try to apply these verses in I Timothy 2 in light of this context, I think Paul is saying that men also should not highlight the things about themselves that are good. They should not draw attention to the things that men may approve of; such as, the size of a bank account, the size of a home, the style of a car, the title that is on his desk. He draws attention to himself, not purposefully, but irresistibly because he is living a respectful life that in turn, demands respect.

Let us dig a little deeper. The original word translated “respectable” is the word “kosmios”. This comes from the root “kosmos”. I am certain you have heard this before. It comes from a word that means, “the orderly arrangement of things”.

In other words, a respectable person is the opposite of chaos. He is “kosmios” – things are arranged properly.

Spiritual leaders then, should not have lives marked by disorder and chaos; should not have lives filled with confusion and disorganization. Otherwise they become like the bumper sticker that reads, “Don’t follow me, I’m lost too.” This is the epitome of the opposite of “kosmios”.

What reveals respectability in light of these texts? Let me ask some questions of you.

- Is your personal appearance, men and women, considered modest and tasteful, or is it alluring and attention-getting? What are your motives for wearing what you wear?
- Is your life marked by some sense of direction or is there an ongoing sense of confusion? Be careful in your answer because in all of our lives there come the

periods when we wait on God and life seems confusing. This is talking about a person who is marked by this throughout their life.

- Does your language need cleaning up, straightening up, or orderliness? Is it betraying a cluttered heart?

One of the worst sins that we could commit in my home growing up was lying, or dishonesty. I am thankful for that instilling now because I have talked to wives and husbands who are experiencing the disaster of their mate's dishonesty. I have talked to parents who are experiencing the agony of their teenager's dishonesty.

In my home now, my wife and I have taken a very, very hard approach to dishonesty. So I walked into church today and my son's Sunday school teacher told me, "Do you know what your son said in Sunday school class this morning?"

I said, "What?" I am always afraid of this question.

She replied, "I was teaching a lesson on Zaccheus and the way he took money that did not belong to him. Your son piped up and said, 'My dad's got a lot of money and he stole it all.'"

I guess I am no longer blameless, am I?! Let us move on.

By the way, I use my children for illustrations. However, I want you to know that I am cautious and aware that once they get a little older, they will be in the church auditorium and these illustrations will cease. I have a few more years, though, so I am going to use them all I can!

A couple of nights ago, our family was going through the ritual bath time – combing the hair, getting on the pajamas, brushing the teeth. I was working with our daughter Candace, so I sent our boys to brush their teeth (it was a great day when they learned to do that by themselves). One of the boys came back awfully quick. I said, "Son, did you brush your teeth."

He said, "Yea."

I said, "Excuse me?"

He said, "Yes, sir."

I could tell by the way he said "Yes sir" that he was lying through his teeth. I thought, "It's late and I'm tired and I don't want to deal with this. Where's Mom?!" But I knew we had to plow through it because this one quality crops up throughout life. So, I said, "Let's go check."

This was the first time I had done that with him – I played detective. We went to the bathroom and I asked, "Which toothbrush did you use?"

He said, "The green one."

I picked up the green one and felt the bristles and they were absolutely dry. I said, "Son, there is no toothpaste on this brush."

"Well, I didn't use toothpaste."

"What did you use?"

"I used water."

"I don't feel any water."

"I did it quick."

We went on and on. My son was getting deeper, and I knew it. I boxed him in so tightly that eventually, I said, "Son, there is no water in the sink at all. Everything is dry."

Then, he knew. He looked up at me and asked, "How many whacks?"

He did not say, "You got me" – he knew. But I had to bring him to that point.

Hopefully, we have grown up. A lot of times God does the same thing to us and we tell Him another one, and then another one, until finally, He boxes us in. We can feel the woodshed coming.

We must develop, not only in our children, but in ourselves this clean speech; this orderly speech that is true; that is right.

Let me ask another question that reveals respectability. This is the last question.

- In what kind of condition is your house? Is it orderly? In what kind of shape is your yard?

It depends on what time you come to our home as to whether it is orderly or not!

This is a little too convicting – let us move on!

### **3. The third qualification for a godly reputation is hospitality.**

This word appears next in I Timothy 3:2.

*An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable . . .*

This could say, "given to hospitality".

The Amplified Bible reads, and I like this,

*. . . showing love . . . to the believers, especially strangers . . .*

In other words, show love especially to the believers that you really do not know very well. This is hospitality.

The original word for “hospitable” is a compound word – “phileo” meaning “to love” and “xenos” meaning “strangers”. So it means to be in love with the strangers.

This is a lot more for leaders than inviting good friends over for lunch or supper or having a party that includes those they know well. This is a reference to opening our homes to the believer that we really do not know very well.

In the context of a church, those who come in to the fellowship that we really do not know well – hospitality is given to them.

Romans 12:10 and 13 tell us,

***Be devoted to one another in brotherly love . . .***

***contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.***

I came across a rather interesting paragraph by William Barclay. He talked about the fact that in the ancient world, inns were notoriously evil places. In fact, Plato speaks of the innkeeper as a pirate who holds his guests to ransom. In the ancient world, inns tended to be dirty, expensive, and immoral places. As a result, a system was developed called “guest friendships”. These were developed over the decades and over the generations and between family’s homes, until finally someone may be part of a family, yet be unrecognizable to the host. However, this kept them out of the inns. So a host might have a knock on their door from someone that they have no idea who they are, but the guest says, “I’m so-and-so’s grandson,” and the host would open their home and show them hospitality.

This is the idea of the believer – we may not know each other very well, but does that mean our door is not to open?

Those given to hospitality open their doors to those that they do not know very well.

Paul, writing later in Romans chapter 12, with the divine stamp of approval on what he wrote, said to “practice hospitality”. Open your home if necessary to those who have need.

Peter also writes, and note these words,

***Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1 Peter 4:9 NIV)***

He hit the nail on the head when he said “without grumbling,” did he not? How many of us would like a knock on the door?

This happened frequently in the early church, but not so much today.

Obviously, do not throw caution to the wind. I remember when I was in Detroit, on staff at a church, an elderly deacon and his very dear, gracious wife, got to know a young man who came to our church service one evening. He had supposedly just made a commitment to Christ and was in need of a place to stay. They opened their home to him. The next morning, they had to leave to go to a doctor appointment. When they returned home, all of their valuables were gone. This scenario was the fellow’s scam.

Hospitality then, involves a little risk, does it not? Perhaps it involves being put out a little.

This is not only a command to the church, but is a requirement of a leader. They must have the willingness to open home and heart to those who have need within the community of the church. Perhaps our church will have opportunity to put this to work soon.

There is a two-prong principle to remember.

- First, hospitality is action that requires initiative on the part of the host.
- Secondly, hospitality is involvement – and this is the reason it is difficult – it requires transparency.

I can remember, as a seminary student in Dallas, my wife and I being invited to the home of a seminary couple that we had just begun developing a friendship with. Their names were Tim and Becky, and Tim is now in the ministry. They were a couple of the kind of stretching people that God brings into our lives. Typically when we invite someone in, everything is ready, we have the evening planned, the ducks are in a row – it is the way we are. Marsha and I showed up at Tim and Becky’s apartment door and knocked, and Tim appeared in a t-shirt and jeans and said, “Great! Come on in.”

We went in, and Becky was at the couch folding laundry. We sat down and Tim talked for a while, and then asked, “What do you say about some ice cream?”

I thought, “You mean you don’t have the dessert cooked already?”

We went to the store and bought ice cream! They were not being disrespectful of our friendship; they understood this key principle about hospitality – hospitality is the ability to open your home without changing your lifestyle. That is tough to do.

## Conclusion

Do not mistake the three qualities that we have looked at today as being something natural. They are not – they are supernatural. They are developed and inspired by the Spirit of God in the life of a believer.

By the way, just because we are a little church in a little town, our commission has not changed. Our commission is still to mark ourselves by these qualifications.

We, as a church, are to produce people who mirror these qualities. How do we do that?

The first step is putting men into position to lead the church who mirror these qualities as well, and who in turn, will develop the next godly generation in the church.

I am convinced the early church never got together in a huddle and asked the question, “How are we going to grow? What kind of programs do we need to grow?”

These were never the questions the early church asked.

If I could brag on our leaders for a moment – it has been a delight to work for the last four and a half years and never have a meeting where we have asked, “What can we do to grow?”

The question is, “What can we do to grow people? How do we make disciples? How do we mature people? What do we need to put into place to make these qualities live in people’s lives?”

If we do our job, God will give us growth, perhaps numerically, but more importantly, spiritually. Then we will produce in our fellowship, whose size and budget is already pre-determined by a sovereign God – that is His issue – the next generation of godly people if we mark ourselves by these qualities first. This is our privilege and our thrill.