



WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHURCH LEADER ALSO MAKES A GOOD BUSINESS LEADER

1 TIMOTHY 3

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ABSTRACT

The qualifications of church leaders detailed in 1 Timothy 3 provide an excellent foundation for successful business leaders today. By studying both the character and competencies that Paul required of church leaders, one can learn to apply them as a standard for identifying, holding accountable, and developing business leaders. Through the successful application of these timeless leadership characteristics and competencies, first found in the early church, today's businesses will ensure that they are well led and set up for achieving success.

Keywords: leadership qualifications, leadership development, church leadership, business leadership

INTRODUCTION

Leadership development starts with understanding desired leadership qualifications. 1 Timothy 3 provides a detailed set of qualifications for both senior leaders and middle management within the Church. The strength and comprehensiveness of this list can also be applied to identifying and developing leaders in business organizations. Thus, 1 Timothy 3 becomes the leadership standard for identifying, holding accountable, and developing leaders. The purpose of this paper is to show the relevancy of the qualifications for church leadership detailed in 1 Timothy 3 being applied to satisfy today's business organization's needs for leaders. The following provides an analysis of 1 Timothy 3 that will identify qualifications of church leaders, discuss the development for qualified leaders whether they are in the church or businesses, and then apply these leadership qualifications to today's business organizations.

ANALYSIS OF 1 TIMOTHY 3

As one of the three Pastoral Epistles to an individual as opposed to a Church, 1 Timothy "stands out" (DeSilva, 2004, p.733). Paul is writing to one of his key proteges, Timothy, and giving him both instructions and advice on leadership and how to conduct affairs of the church (DeSilva, p.734). The early church lacked at the time a lot of the organization that we find today in most churches. Therefore, Paul sought to give Timothy a few key positions from which to organize a church: the Overseer and the Deacon (1 Timothy 3). Paul knew that by naming a few leadership positions that Timothy would be able to then identify leaders to help with the ministry. After all, Paul's primary goal was to fulfill the Great Commission and to build the church.

In Exodus, Moses was given the same type of advice by his Father-In-Law, Jethro. The Israelite nation, having escaped generations of slavery, was without structure and organization. Moses being one man could not rule and judge over every affair, so he appointed leaders of different qualifications and matched them with a certain number of people to lead and issues to decide. Jethro instructs Moses on how to delegate leadership responsibility and how to identify desirable leadership characteristics. "Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs

of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens” (Exodus 18:21). The four qualifications for leadership that Jethro identified for Moses were competence, followers who fear God, trustworthiness, and full of integrity.

Paul knew that leadership began with leadership selection. Paul “reminds us that leadership in the church is a noble task” DeSilva, 2004, p. 771). He is determined to instruct Timothy down a path that will establish leaders in the church and set the criteria for those who desire to become leaders. Similar to the criteria that Jethro gives to Moses for whom leadership positions would be sought, Paul details qualifications for both senior (Overseer) and servant leadership (Deacon) positions.

The 15 Qualifications of the Overseer (Senior Leadership)

1 Timothy 3: 1-7

The senior leadership position in a church today goes by many names, but it is summarized by the term Overseer in 1 Timothy. The following lists each of the fifteen identified qualifications for an Overseer that Paul details for Timothy:

“Above Reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2). This qualification serves as an umbrella over all of the following fourteen criteria. It “describes someone whom no charge of wrongdoing can be brought” (Barker and Kohlenberger, 2004). This also speaks to competency and ability.

“The Husband of One Wife” (1 Timothy 3:2). This qualification speaks to faithfulness and dedication. To be dedicated to one wife (spouse) is an honor, faithfulness, commitment, and responsibility. It shows that the Overseer can be trusted to lead in a community because they have proven they can lead at home. To prove faithful and trusted in a few things, means that God will be able to trust someone in many (Matthew 25:14-30).

“Sober-minded” (1 Timothy 3:2). This qualification has to do with reactions and actions taken towards others primarily in communication. An overseer is to be “temperate” and even-keeled in their interactions (Barker and Kohlenberger, 2004).

“Self-controlled” (1 Timothy 3:2). Similar to being sober-minded, self-controlled refers to being “of sound mind” and of measured response in their actions (Barker and Kohlenberger, 2004). It speaks directly to the ability of a person to first lead themselves in a controlled manner before proving they can lead others.

“Respectable” (1 Timothy 3:2). An Overseer must be able to command the respect of others and able to show respect when warranted.

“Hospitable” (1 Timothy 3:2). “Christians traveling in the first century avoided the public inns with the pagan atmosphere” and would look for Christian homes to stay in (Barker and Kohlenberger, 2004). An Overseer would be expected to be hospitable with their own home and help provide for Christian travelers.

“Able to Teach” (1 Timothy 3:2). An Overseer, unlike other church leaders who may or may not have the gift of teaching, must have the gift of teaching. The spiritual gifts may differ between Overseers but this one is a requirement (1 Corinthians 12).

“Not a Drunkard (1 Timothy 3:3). This qualification requires an Overseer to not allow themselves to drink wine or alcohol to the point that their mind and judgment are impacted or questioned by those around them. It sets the example for others to follow and commit to not getting drunk and thus impaired and not able to do God’s work.

“Not Violent” (1 Timothy 3:3). Similar to drunkenness, a violent person is uncontrolled and prone to making rash choices that often prove to be wrong and foolish.

“Gentle” (1 Timothy 3:3). This speaks both to a person’s demeanor as well as their actions. This is one who is “gracious, kindly, forbearing, considerate, magnanimous, and genial” (Barker and Kohlenberger, 2004).

“Not Quarrelsome” (1 Timothy 3:3). Organizations that are filled with quarrelsome individuals are constantly on edge and find it difficult to reach a consensus on even the most trivial matters.

“Not a Lover of Money” (1 Timothy 3:3). An individual who puts a high emphasis on money often finds it hard to find any time for God. Luke 16:13 states “No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

“Must Manage His Own Household Well” (1 Timothy 3:4-5). This follows the similar logic found in Matthew 25:14-30 where a person that can be trusted with a little can be trusted with more. However, the opposite is true where failure in a little oversight occurs (i.e. the household) then one cannot be expected to be trusted with more (i.e. a congregation in a church).

“Must Not Be a Recent Convert”(1 Timothy 3:6). Unfortunately, arrogance and conceit can occur in those that are elevated to positions to fast. Faith is a process that takes time to mature. New believers may become conceited and full of “pride” (Barker and Kohlenberger, 2004).

“Must Be Well Thought of By Outsiders” (1 Timothy 3:7). “ When a leader in the church has a bad reputation in the community, it often brings irreparable damage to the local congregation and indeed to the entire cause of Christ.” (Barker and Kohlenberger, 2004). A good reputation will often have the opposite effect and bring favor to the church through the righteous actions of the respected leader.

The Qualifications of a Deacon (The “Servant” Leaders) 1 Timothy 3: 8-13

The responsibilities of the deacons in the church are both similar and different from those of the overseers. The term deacon means “servant” and they would often attend to the “material affairs of the church” (Barker and Kohlenberger, 2004). This would free up the overseers to lead the

church in a strategic way through teaching and worship. Although the list is not as long for the qualifications of a deacon compared with an overseer, they are to be just as “dignified” as an overseer (1 Timothy 3:8). This requires them to be “sincere”, “not addicted to wine”, “not greedy”, they must be mature in their beliefs and faith, and possess a “clear conscience” (1 Timothy 3:8-9). 1 Timothy 3:10, discusses that deacons must be tested or have been tested before prior to serving as a deacon. This requirement helps ensure that they are also mature believers and not new in their faith. The deacon’s wives must also be above reproach and meet the deacon’s qualifications so that as a couple, together, they can serve the needs of the church (1 Timothy 3:11). Finally, a deacon must also be faithful and loyal to one wife and manage their own household well (1 Timothy 3:12).

DEVELOPMENT OF QUALIFIED LEADERS

Paul wrote his instructional letters knowing that church leaders would need to be identified and developed. Leadership development prepares one to be a deacon or an overseer in a church. The characteristics do not all come naturally, but must be taught and developed. For example, how does one become mature in their faith? By experiencing the challenges of life, learning from them, and applying lessons learned to develop a deeper understanding of God, how they can serve them, and what they can do better next time a challenging situation presents itself.

The church is a great proving ground for aspiring leaders. The needs of a growing church are endless. However, “many churches do not develop leaders intentionally and consistently” (Geiger & Peck, 2016). As a complex organization, the church provides an opportunity for leaders to develop, prove capable in a little, and then prove worthy of more. The development of church leaders as strategic thinkers and leaders can be used to help the church develop “a pattern of action that makes the work of being and doing what the church is called to do more targeted” and effective (Jenssen, 2019, p. 18).

A healthy culture of leadership development is paramount for both the church and a business organization. Leadership development can often be linked directly to organizational performance metrics and effectiveness (Grandy, 2013, p. 634). “All leaders can accelerate their progress

toward effectiveness by asking, learning, and then managing expectations, thus allowing the clarified expectations to become the bar by which they are measured” (Anderson & Adams, 2016, p. 1). These include both explicit (“expressed expectations”) and implicit (“unspoken expectations”) (Anderson & Adams, p. 1). As leaders seek to fulfill their organization’s defined explicit and implicit expectations, they are developing and improving. The expectation for a developed leader is that “they relish the chance to influence people, create positive results, and change things (Anderson & Adams, p. 1). Therefore, the development of qualified leaders requires certain defined minimal characteristics and standards paired with performance metrics to motivate a leader to learn and change.

APPLICATION TO TODAY’S BUSINESS LEADER

“Churches exist to fulfill moral, spiritual and community ends and studying churches can provide insight into the role of values, those of leaders and organizational members, in the enactment of leadership, culture, decision making and strategy in a variety” of organizations (Grandy, 2013, p. 619). Simply put, what makes for a good church leader also makes for a good business leader. Whereas a church leader must prove to be above reproach and aspire to the qualities outlined in 1 Timothy 3, a business leader may often be given a few more chances to succeed if they stumble along the way. In many ways, businesses are more forgiving and recognize that leaders are a work in progress. “Leaders are real people. They are not perfect. While they strive to display virtues and character strengths in their behavior, they also are challenged by their own personal vices and idiosyncrasies” (Sosik & Jung, 2018,p. 43). If a business leader also meets the qualifications of a church leader (either overseer or deacon), they possess the character to be a strong leader. However, the opposite cannot be said since not all successful business leaders can meet the qualifications of a church leader. Character counts in businesses and anything that is indicative of the character of a leader should be examined, identified, and reviewed against the desired qualities of a particular business leadership position.

Since a leader is never perfect, the minimum standard for any leader should be based on integrity, commitment to serve others, and a strong desire to learn and improve. By copying the qualifications for overseers and deacons, a business develops a baseline for leadership

selection and development. The organization can then add explicit requirements such as competencies, financial performance metrics, and growth targets to complete its leader requirements. This then forms a complete set of metrics and goals for leadership development. Where a leader falls short in a qualification, the leadership development can be tailored to meet the need.

The resiliency and relevancy of 1 Timothy 3 qualifications for church leaders to today's business organization leaders is amazing. While it can be argued that some of the qualifications of church leaders are not necessarily a requirement for a business leader, they are still desirable. For example, having one spouse and remaining loyal to that individual is more desirable than a leader that proves unfaithful. Many organizations post leadership job descriptions that match up very well to the leadership characteristics and qualifications of 1 Timothy 3. Amazon Web Services (AWS) lists qualifications as "Amazon's Leadership Principals" and proudly posts them on its main career site (AWS, 2021). Ten of the fourteen principles detailed by Amazon parallel the qualifications for overseers as defined in 1 Timothy 3.

CONCLUSION

Paul, in his letter to Timothy, details the qualifications for church leaders (overseers and deacons) that remain relevant today in both the church and in business organizations. It is expected that senior leaders should have more requirements and be held to a higher standard in the church and businesses than more junior leaders. That is why he takes the time to develop two sets of similar, but different qualifications. Since leaders are not born but developed, the list of character qualifications provides a strong foundation for identifying potential leaders and creating a leadership development plan that has a proven history of success. God has blessed us with the ability to learn and to develop beyond what we think is possible. 1 Timothy 3 shows what it takes to be a good church leader and creates a blueprint for us to model and apply to today's businesses and organizations in identifying and developing their successful leaders.

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