

163. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 4:54:51 am
Acts 20:20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house,

164. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 4:53:03 am
Acts 20:17 ¶ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

Dear Timothy, Small Group Bible Studies

STUDY 5

ELDERS AND DEACONS

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To be able to give the reasons why the qualifications for an elder of church are character traits rather than purely skills-based.
- ❖ To compare and contrast the requirements of an elder with that of a deacon.
- ❖ To be able to explain why *testing* is a necessary phase for appointing a leader within a church.
- ❖ To describe why a church needs elders and deacons.



BACKGROUND

While Paul had lived in Ephesus and ministered there, he had encountered much cultural backlash from idolaters and resistant Jewish leaders. Even though what appears to have been a coalition of householder church leaders had emerged (note Acts 20:20) from Paul's time there (as seen in Acts 20:17 when Paul summons these men to meet him at the nearby port town of Miletus). It was during this meeting with the various elders of the householder churches of Ephesus that Paul prophetically stated that some of these elders would be disqualified as elders because they would embrace and

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24 March 2021 at 4:58:35 am
Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;
Acts 20:30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

166. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 8:27:01 am
1Tim. 3:1 ¶ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

167. Dr. Andrew Corbett

25 March 2021 at 2:54:51 pm
√

Dear Timothy, Small Group Bible Studies

165 teach false doctrines (Acts 20:29-30). It seems that near the time when Paul’s life was drawing to an end, that this prophecy was beginning to be fulfilled. This was why he had left Timothy as his delegate to address this. To correct the drift into deception involved the appointment of good, godly, genuine, Spirit-filled, leaders who exhibited certain necessary qualities. was needed These leaders were to cooperate together to form a type of elders’ council of the various householder churches in Ephesus. It appears that Paul’s directives were successfully carried out by Timothy and that by AD 65 when the Apostle John wrote and sent his Revelation to the church at Ephesus that he himself had relocated there as a resident apostolic coordinator of this elders’ council.

Paul’s instructions to Timothy (and the later involvement of the Apostle John) about establishing the appointment and overseeing of qualified leaders highlights that “a church” is not merely a loose gathering of believers. For any group of believers to be constituted as a church there had to qualified leaders, a leadership structure, membership, discipline, ordinances (such as the Lord’s Table and water baptism), the sound teaching of God’s Word, and a cooperative external connection with other similar churches.



INSTRUCTION

Objective #1. To be able to give the reasons why the qualifications for an elder of a church are character traits rather than purely skills-based.

- 166 1. Based on First Timothy 3:1, how did the apostle Paul feel about those who aspired to be leaders within a church, and why might he have felt this way?

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24 March 2021 at 8:27:22 am
1Tim. 3:2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

169. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 10:58:21 am
Titus 1:6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.
Titus 1:7 For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,
Titus 1:8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.
Titus 1:9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

170. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 8:27:33 am
1Tim. 3:2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

171. Dr. Andrew Corbett

25 March 2021 at 2:56:33 pm
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172. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 8:32:23 am
character

173. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 8:34:23 am
householder

174. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 8:34:16 am
flexible

175. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 8:38:11 am
1Tim. 3:2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

176. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 11:02:31 am
An elder is expect to be able to:
1. Teach the Word of God
2. Show hospitality.

Paul describes the primary leaders of a church as ‘overseers’ (the Greek word is *episkopos* from which we get the English word, *Episcopalian* which is what the Anglicans are called in America). The King James Version renders this word as *bishop* which is, as one commentator stated, “It seems preferable to avoid the translation ‘bishop,’ since this term carries so much later ecclesiastical baggage with it” (NICNT).

- 168 2. Note the foremost requirement for an elder mentioned in **First Timothy 3:2** and compare this with **Titus 1:6-9**.

In the Greco-Roman world, polygamy was lawful until the influence of Christians eventually led to it becoming illegal. Some modern readers, perhaps unaware of this cultural background, have assumed that Paul was saying that an elder could not be a *divorcee*.

- 170 3. Based on **First Timothy 3:2** why might they assume this?
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Most job advertisements emphasise what the job involved. But Paul’s requirements for an elder didn’t. There seems to be three reasons for this:

- 172 (1) Godly **c _____ r** was more important than the skills needed.
- 173 (2) An elder was likened to the familiar role of a **h _____ r** .
- 174 (3) The requirements of an elder seem to have been **f _____** depending on the culture in which the church was located.

4. While most of the qualities needed in an elder were *character* qualities rather than functional skills (the ability to do something within the church), in **First Timothy 3:2** Paul does list two skills that an elder must be able to do. What is it, and why might this be important for an elder?

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24 March 2021 at 11:11:10 am
teach

178. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 11:18:18 am
1Tim. 3:3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

179. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 11:18:33 am
If they were a drunkard this would be a bad example for those they lead and impair the judgment.
If they were 'violent' and angry they would quickly lose the trust of those they lead.
If they were also quarrelsome they would not be a good listener or exhibit patience (a fruit of the Spirit).
If they were a lover of money they could be tempted to manipulate people for financial gain — something which the Scriptures condemns.

180. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 11:23:58 am
1Tim. 3:4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,
1Tim. 3:5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

181. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 11:24:37 am
Being a good householder was seen as a close parallel to being an elder in the church.
Today, an elder should be someone who has set a good example in raising their own children and have some experience in managing people.

182. Dr. Andrew Corbett

25 March 2021 at 3:03:56 pm
gifted

183. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 12:25:57 pm
double

184. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 12:26:48 pm
1Tim. 5:17 ¶ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.
1Tim. 5:18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

185. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 12:15:12 pm
1Tim. 3:6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation

A good Christian leader does not have to know everything, but they must be *teachable* in order to be qualified to **t _ _ _ h**. This is a necessary *character* trait. *Skills* can be learned, but *character* requires a series of decisions that shapes who a person really is even when no-one is watching them.

177 5. Why are the five character traits for an elder listed in **First Timothy 3:3** important for them to have as a leader within a church?

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179 6. What previous experience was helpful for someone aspiring to be an elder based on **First Timothy 3:4-5**? What might this look like today?

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181 Like a householder, a church elder served as an overseeing *shepherd* over the church along with the other elders. While all elders had to be able to teach, not all elders were **g _ _ _ _ d** as teachers. But those that were, Paul writes, were worthy of **d _ _ _ _ e** honour (**1Tim. 5:17**).

182 7. A Christian becomes an elder long before they are *officially* appointed. But before they can be appointed, two things are necessary. According to **First Timothy 3:6-7**, what two things are necessary before someone could be appointed as an elder?

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of the devil.

1Tim. 3:7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

186. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 12:31:47 pm

They could not be a novice and they had to be well spoken of by outsiders.

187. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 12:54:44 pm
Eph. 3:7 ¶ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

188. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 1:42:34 pm
1Tim. 3:8 ¶ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.
1Tim. 3:9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.
1Tim. 3:10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.
1Tim. 3:11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.
1Tim. 3:12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.
1Tim. 3:13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

189. Dr. Andrew Corbett

24 March 2021 at 1:42:39 pm
The requirements for a deacon are essentially the same as an elder - with the exception of 'teaching'

190. Dr. Andrew Corbett

25 March 2021 at 11:15:55 am
trust

191. Dr. Andrew Corbett

25 March 2021 at 3:12:03 pm
1Tim. 3:10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.

Objective #2. To compare and contrast the requirements of an elder with that of a deacon.

In Philippians 1:1, Paul writes to elders ('overseers') and deacons. It seems that the early church functioned largely on the basis of these two groups of leaders. The word *deacon* comes from the Greek word *diakonos* which means "servant" or "minister". It is the word that the apostle Paul uses most commonly to describe himself (note **Ephesians 3:7**).

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- 8. Read through the requirements for a *deacon* in **First Timothy 3:8-13** and then note how these requirements differ from the requirements for an elder.

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We generally consider that *elders* oversee the governing and spiritual care of a church while *deacons* oversee more of the practical needs of a church.

Objective #3. To be able to explain why testing is a necessary phase for appointing a leader within a church.

Being a Christian leader, especially within a local church, is both a privilege and a responsibility. Church members should be able to **t _ _ _ t** their leaders. But *trust* requires a confidence that takes both time and transparency where it is then earned.

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- 9. Why then would the apostle Paul require his instructions for any leadership appointment as described in **First Timothy 3:10**? Discuss.

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- 10. What possible risks are there for a church if they do not *test* a candidate for leadership before appointing them?

- 192. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
25 March 2021 at 11:21:43 am
blameless
- 193. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
25 March 2021 at 11:35:22 am
1Tim. 3:13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.
- 194. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
25 March 2021 at 11:35:30 am
1. Taking responsibility as a deacon within a church enables a unique opportunity for a believer to grow - their 'standing' is strengthened
2. It develops their trust in God and encourages to draw closer to Christ
- 195. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
25 March 2021 at 11:54:43 am
governed
- 196. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
25 March 2021 at 11:57:44 am
evangelism
- 197. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
25 March 2021 at 11:58:13 am
teaching
- 198. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
25 March 2021 at 11:58:53 am
worship
- 199. **Dr. Andrew Corbett**
25 March 2021 at 12:00:26 pm
healthy

For a deacon to pass the testing required by their church involved them being proven to be **b_____s** — this didn't mean that they were expected to be *perfect*, rather, it required them to have demonstrated a consistent Christian walk where no *accusation* of unethical or immoral conduct could be warranted against them.

Objective #4. To describe why a church needs elders and deacons.

11. What two benefits for serving as a deacon in a local church are noted in **First Timothy 3:13**?

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The coalition of elders and deacons within a local church provides a means by which a congregation can be **g_____d** and administered well. Not all elders are spiritually gifted the same or expected to be able to accomplish the same ministry roles. A team of elders complements each other with their various gifts and abilities. They enable a church to keep its focus on its mission of reaching *out* in **e_____m**, reaching *in* by care and **t_____g**, and reaching *up* in **w_____p**. But this cannot be at the expense of not being organised and mindful of practical matters which deacons take care of. The ministry synergy of elders and deacons within a church is a means by which a local church can be **h_____y**.

APPLICATION

12. If you were in a position to nominate and/or consider someone for the position of an *elder* within your church, on what grounds would you consider someone for the position of an elder and what aspects of their life would you be wanting to know about?

13. Since the Scriptures command that a deacon should be tested before being appointed as such, what kind of testing would you wish to see? Would you tell them that you are about to “test” them for the role of a deacon? Could someone be a deacon and not be referred to as such?

14. If someone asked you why your church has elders and deacons, what would you say to them and how would you explain their different roles?
