

Message Discussion Guide

THE GOSPEL AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

August 3, 2008

1 Timothy 3:1-16

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Explain that the idea of church leadership can often create bad or good emotions within us. Often, church leaders are the ones who can negatively affect how the world views the Church.

- Invite learners to give examples of how a church leader has positively affected their lives.
- Invite learners to give examples from the media of how church leaders have negatively affected how others view their church or the Gospel.
- How do these examples exemplify the importance of church leadership?

Inform learners that we're going to discuss church leadership today and how it impacts the church.

Option 2

Ask the following questions and allow a short time of discussion:

- What are the non-negotiables of a leader?
- What qualities make a great leader?
- What are the responsibilities of a good leader?
- What is the responsibility of the followers of a leader?

Explain that today we're going to discuss leadership within the church and what Scripture teaches about a biblical leader.

Review the Message . . .

Foundations . . .

- **The Bible identifies two primary leadership roles in the church . . .**
 - **Elders, who are servant leaders.**
 - **Deacons, who are leading servants.**
- **Church leadership is designed by God . . .**
 - **To be a display of His glory.**
 - **To be dependent on His Gospel.**

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Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 3:1, 8. What are the two leadership roles described in this passage?
- Remind learners that the New Testament writers use the terms overseers, pastor, and elders interchangeably. What insight do these descriptive words give about the leadership role of elders? Where does the senior pastor fit into this leadership role?
- Explain that the word for deacon is one meaning servant and is used throughout the New Testament to distinguish acts of service and people who led with service. How does this knowledge affect the role of a deacon concerning church leadership?
- Invite a volunteer to read 1 Timothy 3:15. Why does Paul say that he is instructing them on the leadership qualifications of elders and deacons?
- Looking at Verse 15 through the lens of the Gospel, why does God provide this design for church leadership?

Application . . .

- Is church leadership important in the body of Christ? Why or why not?
- How do church leaders affect how a church displays God's glory?
- How do our previous experiences with church leaders affect how we view their role?
- What is the danger in allowing our own preconceived ideas or past experiences to interpret what Scripture teaches about church leadership?
- Understanding that God designs church leadership, how does that impact the way that we respond to leaders and view our responsibility toward them?

Four Responsibilities of Elders . . .

- **Lead** under the authority of Christ.
 - Elders belong to the church . . .
 - They are appointed by the **Spirit** of God.
 - The church belongs to Christ . . .
 - Elders are accountable to the **Son** of God.
- **Care** for the body of Christ.
 - Elders **protect** the flock.
 - Elders **nurture** the flock.
- **Teach** the Word of Christ.
 - Elders **know** the Word extensively.
 - Elders **communicate** the Word effectively.
- **Model** the character of Christ.
 - The Primary Question: What will happen if the church **imitates** this leader?
 - In his personal life . . .
 - Is he self-controlled?
 - Is he **wise**?
 - Is he peaceable?
 - Is he **gentle**?

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- Is he a sacrificial giver?
- Is he humble?
- Is he patient?
- Is he honest?
- Is he disciplined?
- In his family life . . .
 - Is he the elder in his home?
 - If he is single, is he self-controlled?
 - If he is married, is he completely committed to his wife?
 - If he has children, do they honor him?
- In his social/business life . . .
 - Is he kind?
 - Is he hospitable?
 - Is he a friend of strangers?
 - Does he show favoritism?
 - Does he have a blameless reputation?
- In his spiritual life . . .
 - Is he making disciples of all nations?
 - Does he love the Word?
 - Is he a man of prayer?
 - Is he holy?
 - Is he gracious?

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Acts 20:28-38. What are the primary responsibilities for elders that Paul describes in this passage? What is the importance of these responsibilities?
- What is the purpose of elders?
- According to this passage, who appoints elders? To whom does the church belong? Therefore, to whom are the elders accountable?
- Read 1 Timothy 3:2-7. Describe the qualifications for elders. What qualifications are not mentioned in this passage?
- What is the purpose in having these standards for elders? Invite a volunteer to read Hebrews 13:7. Based on this verse, how is the church impacted by its imitating its leadership?

Application . . .

- Does the role of elder promote leadership in a way that values or devalues the entire membership?
- If the Holy Spirit is active in each believer's life, why shouldn't all members be part of making church-wide decisions?
- Why would God outline such stringent qualifications for elders? How can anyone attain these standards?
- Do we ever highlight some qualifications over others? What is the danger in maximizing and minimizing certain qualifications?

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- Why should we hold an elder accountable for his home life? Knowing that children can often make poor personal decisions regardless of their parents, is it fair to qualify an elder by the honor of his children?
- Do these passages indicate how the role of elder should look in each local church? How should we decide that?

Three Responsibilities of Deacons . . .

- **Meet needs** according to the Word.
 - **Arise from specific circumstances.**
 - **Accountable for specific commands.**
- **Support** the ministry of the Word.
 - **Deacons serve elders so they can lead.**
 - **Deacons lead others so they can serve.**
- **Unify** the body around the Word.
 - **Qualifications . . .**
 - **A Mission mindset.**
 - **A Christ-like character.**
 - **Questions . . .**
 - **Is this person honorable?**
 - **Is this person genuine?**
 - **Is this person self-controlled?**
 - **Is this person a sacrificial giver?**
 - **Is this person devoted to the Word?**
 - **Is this person faithful?**
 - **Is this person blameless?**
 - **Is this person honoring Christ in the home?**
 - **What about women?**

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read Acts 6:1-7. How did the role of deacons first occur?
- For what purpose was this leadership role created? Was it created for undetermined purposes or for a specific need?
- How did the role of deacon impact the ministry of the Word by the Apostles?
- How did their responsibility affect the spreading of the Gospel?
- Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13. What qualifications does Paul list for the role of deacons?
- Why are these qualifications imperative to the overall ministry and mission of the church? (See *Hebrews 13:7 again*).
- Explain that Verse 11 can be translated as “wives” or “deaconesses” and that Paul includes the ministry of seventeen different women in his writings. How does this information inform the interpretation or view of women serving in the church?

Application . . .

- What is the difference between functioning as an elder and a deacon?

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- Because deacons care for specific circumstances, how does this truth affect their role in the church?
- Remembering that a deacon's overarching role is one of supporting the ministry of the Word, are they less important than elders in the life of a church?
- Are women gifted and called for service within the church? Should there be limits on what types of service they can perform?

The Bottom Line . . .

- The church **appoints** and **follows** servant leaders who are wholeheartedly committed to accomplishing the mission of Christ.
- The church **affirms** and **honors** leading servants who use their gifts to build up the body of Christ.
- The church is comprised of **ministers** who **multiply** the Gospel throughout the world.

Application . . .

- What role does the church body play in regards to church leaders?
- What response is required of the church toward its leaders?
- If we are not elders or deacons, do we have responsibilities within the church or to the church? What are those responsibilities?
- Does Scripture endorse any passive roles within the church? Or, are all Christ-followers commanded to be active in the mission of the church in spreading the Gospel?
- What is the purpose of church leaders?