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**BIBLE STUDY**

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**"THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS"**

**1 Timothy 3:1-16**

***I Timothy 3:1 "This [is] a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."***

We could render the verse as follows: “This is a reliable or consistent statement: if anyone strives for the position of bishop (overseer), he desires a noble task.” To desire to work for God all the rest of your life is a sacrificial thing. It is a life of self-sacrifice and discipline. However, regardless of the nobility of one’s desire, there are restrictions and requirements. Having addressed the restrictions, requirements, role and function of women in ministry (2:11-15), Paul goes on to reveal more about the “Great Mystery of Godliness” and explain to Timothy the restrictions, requirements, role, and function of men in ministry and for appointing them to leadership in the church. Those who do not understand the mystery teach that "man" in the verse above, means mankind (any male or female). However, this is false. This leadership office and accompanying gifting is gender specific and exclusive to certain God chosen males.

***Hebrews 5:4 “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”***

***Ephesians 4:8 “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”***

***Ephesians 4:11 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;”***

The word "bishop" was translated from means inspection {for relief}, or superintendence. It can be stretched to mean office of the bishop {episcopate}. Bishop is an office to give relief. The title bishop or overseer is interchangeable in the New Testament with the title elder (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-7). It is also interchangeable with the office of pastor because overseers and elders are charged with the pastoral duty of “shepherding” and serving as the final human authority in the church. When Christ returns, He will judge and reward these pastors (elders) according to their faithfulness in leading the church to accomplish God’s will (1 Peter 5:4). The title bishop emphasizes the administrative function of the office. The word pastor emphasizes the responsibility of caring for the church, as a shepherd cares for the sheep. The word preacher emphasizes the ministry of publicly proclaiming God’s Word. The title teacher emphasizes that the pastor should be “apt to teach.” The pastor is also called a servant, reminding him that he is to minister to others; and he is a steward, managing the property of others (the church of Christ).

***I Timothy 3:2 "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;"***

Paul then provides a list of qualifications for overseers. We see that the leader of the church must be someone who has very high moral character. At the top of the list is that he must be above reproach—that is, he must be blameless. There should be no grounds for accusing him of improper behavior. He should also be the husband of one wife, a necessary stipulation in a culture in which men often took more than one wife. "Vigilant" means sober and temperate. This speaks of spiritual sobriety: not intoxicated or controlled by fleshly passions and sensual appetites. To be sober is to be of sound mind; that is, not of frivolous disposition, but serious and possessing good judgment. Of good behavior means orderly in life, habits, and work. Furthermore, an overseer must be self-controlled (not enslaved to the desires of the flesh), sensible (wise and balanced in his judgment), respectable (living an ordered and honorable life). Given to hospitality is a description of what every Christian should be, especially those in leadership. One who is given to hospitality receives strangers warmly and treats guests generously. To be apt to teach is to be skillful in teaching Scripture (capable of communicating God’s truth). To teach the Word of God is a high calling. The “great mystery of Godliness” and eternal powers in this world are revealed in the written and the spoken Word of God.

***I Timothy 3:3 "Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;"***

These are more things showing that the character of the leader of the church must be an example to the members. Not given to wine means not addicted to wine. Wine causes the person drinking in excess to not be able to make sound judgements.

***Proverbs 23:29-32***

***29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?***

***30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.***

***31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.***

***32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.***

Some of the things here mentioned come from losing control of your own will. We should be careful to note {not greedy for filthy lucre}. Greed for money has been the downfall of many. To covet is specifically spoken against in the 10 commandments. When you want anything that belongs to someone else, you are coveting. No striker means not physically violent. Physical fighting should not be part of the minister's vocabulary. These things go against a tender kind, patient spirit that the minister needs. Patient means not quarrelsome, peaceable; that is, does not argue over minor matters or always seek to have his way, but defers to the wishes of others when no cardinal doctrine or policy is sacrificed. Not covetous, literally, “not a lover of money”: His main priority is not the acquisition of money. Materialism ill befits one called above all to care for the spiritual welfare of souls.

***I Timothy 3:4 "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;"***

***I Timothy 3:5 "(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)"***

The leadership that the minister would need to lead the church members should be evident in the home, as well. As a husband and father, an overseer must be able to manage his own household and lead his children well. “Ruleth well” his own house means that he manages his family rightly. Having his children in subjection means that he brings about with all gravity (in a dignified manner) obedience in his children. After all, if he can’t manage his own home, how will he take care of God’s church? To competently manage one’s home or church does not mean that no problems arise. It means that when they do, he takes responsibility for addressing them biblically and properly. Children obey your parents. Parents, make your children obey you. This just means that someone who cannot take care of his own personal affairs, should not be the leader of the church, because he has proven that he is not leadership material. Paul’s reasoning is from the lesser to the greater: a man poorly managing his own family is incapable of giving proper leadership to the church family. This is consistent with God’s divine order and leadership.

***1 Corinthians 11:1-3***

***1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.***

***2 Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.***

***3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.***

***I Timothy 3:6 "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."***

A "novice" is a newcomer to the faith. This would be someone who had not been grounded in the Word of God. This would be someone who wanted this job for the power to rule over others. A novice means newly planted. A tree that has been recently planted does not have deep solid roots. The roots that are necessary to lead a church would be grounded solidly in the Word of God. Winds of false doctrine would not be able to uproot him, because he would be solidly planted {over much time} in the teachings of the Word of God. We may render the last part of the verse: “lest, being conceited, he fall into judgment incurred by the Devil.” Lucifer fell to the temptation of pride. As Satan fell through pride, similarly a neophyte could be ruined by pride after being promoted to leadership too swiftly.

***I Timothy 3:7 "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."***

The bishop (overseer) must “have a good report” and not be the object of justified criticism by non-Christians (them which are without). Otherwise, he is likely to become a target for reproach [disgrace] and the snare sprung by the devil. The devil goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. All eyes will be on the leader of the church. The leader of the church must live without even giving the appearance of evil. Any misconduct upon the part of the leader, opens the gate for the devil to deceive the members. Paul had said before, to follow him as he followed Jesus. This should be the pattern of all who minister. They should live a life free from sin.

***Luke 6:26 “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”***

***Matthew 5:11 “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.”***

***I Timothy 3:8 "Likewise [must] the deacons [be] grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;"***

After addressing bishops, Paul gives qualifications for deacons. The Greek word deacon is diakonos, which means “servant.” The deacon is to execute the ministry for the well-being of the people by serving them under the leadership of the overseers/elders. The qualifications for deacon are similar to those of overseers, demanding high-quality character. The only differences are that deacons are not required to be able to teach or to manage the church (3:2, 4-5). Deacons are a serving office in the church. To free the apostles for the more important duties of prayer and ministry of the Word, seven men were appointed to care for the church. These are generally thought to have been deacons (Acts 6:1–4). While there is no “job description” for a servant, the nature of a deacon’s qualifications gives insight into his duties (Acts 6:1–8; 1 Timothy 3:8–13). The first deacons performed routine labors in the church and were responsible for promoting harmony among various groups within the assembly. Deacons may also have served in an advisory capacity, and they engaged in spiritual ministries, including preaching and church planting. In one sense, every Christian should act like a deacon in encouraging church harmony and helping others serve Christ more effectively. Grave means worthy of respect. Not double-tongued means saying the same thing to one party as to the other. When we think of someone who is double tongued, we think of a two-faced person. They are unstable in all of their ways. They cannot be trusted, because they say whatever is convenient to say at the time, whether it is true or not. We see from the description above that this person needs to be in full control of his thoughts at all time {not given to much drink}. Greed certainly must not be a character trait of a deacon. One of the jobs of the deacon of the church is to see to the financial needs of the church. The minister should not be involved with raising money for the church to function on. That is the job of the deacon. The minister should be interested in the souls of the people. His time should be spent in prayer and the study of the Word of God. He is like the shepherd who sees to the need of the flock.

***I Timothy 3:9 "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."***

Holding the mystery of the faith: What is a mystery? Something not understood. We know that Jesus opened our understanding to the mystery of God when He sent the Holy Spirit to instruct us into all Truth. As capable apologists and defenders, deacons must preserve the truth as God revealed it. Nevertheless, a deacon is to hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. That is, he must be well grounded in Christian doctrine. A Christian with a clear conscience is one who is allowing Christ in them to live through them. A pure conscience is one not worried over whether you are doing right, or wrong. You know you are doing right because you have turned your will over to the Lord.

***I Timothy 3:10 "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being [found] blameless."***

The verse may be translated, “and let these, too, first be examined; then let them serve as deacon, if found blameless.” This probably refers not to a probationary period, but to an examination of the required qualities of character. The word “too” implies that this requirement applies also to overseers (elders). Some ministers will not let anyone serve as a deacon, until they have attended their church for several years. This is so they can get to know them and find out how they react in time of crisis. The deacon must be of very high moral character. He must be of such a nature that he will be an upright representative of the church. Before he is given this office there must be an examination of his character so there will not be something come up unexpected in the future.

***I Timothy 3:11 "Even so [must their] wives [be] grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things."***

***I Timothy 3:12 "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well."***

We see in this, that the entire family must be godly people for the husband to be deacon, or the wife to be deaconess. Many times, husbands and wives serve together in this capacity. In Romans 16 Paul recommends Phebe as a female servant (deaconess) of the church. The women who held this office ministered in support to male leaders.

***Romans 16***

***1 I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:***

***2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.***

***3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:***

***4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.***

***5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ.***

***6 Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.***

***7 Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.***

Grave means dignified or worthy of respect. Not slanderers means not guilty of defamation of character. Sober means temperate, possessing self-control. Faithful in all things is dependable in all matters. Again, we see the spiritual necessity for the home to be on solid ground before one member is appointed to serve. To be in leadership in the church, it is important to show your leadership in the family first.

***I Timothy 3:13 "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."***

The verse may be translated, “For they who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and much joyful confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” This “good standing” is spiritual progress acquired by faithful church service. It is especially important for the deacon to be bold in the Lord since he is responsible for seeing to the needs of the church. We do know that men who are chosen out for this job have a big task to do. Their faith in Christ Jesus is extremely important. They must believe in the work that is going on, to be able to feel free to work to keep it going.

***I Timothy 3:14 "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly:"***

***I Timothy 3:15 "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."***

When Paul went to Macedonia, he had to leave Timothy in Ephesus. Though he hoped to return to Ephesus soon, this letter was to provide Timothy with instruction if the apostle was delayed. Paul loved Timothy, and really wanted to be with him. We think why did Paul not go, if he wanted to? The answer is that Paul followed the will of God, not what he desired to do in the flesh. Paul was aware that he might not be able to go and tell Timothy personally all the things he wanted him to know. The letter would bring instructions to this young minister from his teacher, Paul. We see in this letter, that the meeting place of the believers in Christ was spoken of as the church of the living God. It focuses on the church’s motivation, Master, mission, and message. As God’s household, the people of God needed to know how to conduct themselves. Our motivation for gathering together is that we may learn how to live differently under God’s kingdom rule as members of his family. This includes knowing how to raise up godly church leadership, as Paul has just described. The problem with many Christians is that they are out of kingdom alignment. As a result, they don’t run straight. The job of the church is to bring people into alignment with God’s character. Paul also reminds Timothy of the Master of the household: it is the church of the living God. The church is no human institution. Man neither created it nor determines how it is run. The Lord Jesus purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28), and he is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18). It’s his house, and he decides the rules. Next the apostle describes the church’s mission: It is the pillar and foundation of the truth. Truth is the fixed standard by which reality is measured. It is God’s perspective on every subject. Truth is absolute and non-negotiable. Jesus told his disciples, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The church is tasked with the mission of undergirding and upholding this reality. The Word "living" says a lot in itself. It means that Christians believe the Lord Jesus Christ is alive. We believe he rose from the grave.

***I Timothy 3:16 "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."***

Finally, in 3:16, we find the distinctive message or confession of the church—the mystery of godliness, something that was formerly unknown but which has now been revealed. This was a hymn sung by the church in Paul’s day, affirming the good news about Jesus Christ. Great is the mystery of godliness may be translated: “Great is the mystery of the [Christian] religion.” The importance of the faith (truth) preached by the Christian church is another reason Timothy must “behave” himself and manage ecclesiastical affairs as set forth in this epistle. Should he fail to do so, the heralding of the Christian faith will be hindered. God was manifest in the flesh: Jesus was revealed in human form. Justified in the Spirit: The Holy Spirit vindicated Jesus in that His true nature was disclosed and His messianic claims substantiated. Seen of angels: They witnessed Jesus’ whole earthly career. Preached unto the Gentiles: The gospel of Jesus has been proclaimed to the nations. Believed on in the world: Multitudes have accepted the gospel, trusting in Jesus. Received up into glory: Jesus was divinely taken back into heaven.” The mystery of godliness was revealed by Jesus Christ to His followers. The veil to the Scriptures was removed. The Spirit of God opens the understanding of the believers to the godliness, which is still a mystery to those of the world who do not accept Jesus as Saviour. God the Word took on the form of flesh and dwelt among us. His body was crucified on the cross for our sins. He preached the good news of the gospel 40 days on the earth before He went back to heaven. In the book of Acts we read about his heavenward journey.

***Acts 1:9 "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." The great promise, to me, is what the angels told the disciples as they saw Him going up.***

***Acts 1:10 "And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;"***

***Acts 1:11 "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."***

**QUESTIONS**

1. What does "bishop" mean?
2. What are the qualifications of a bishop in verse 2?
3. What does "vigilant" mean?
4. What are the great powers in this world?
5. When you want anything that belongs to someone else, you are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
6. What type of spirit does the minister need?
7. Children, obey your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
8. What is a "novice"?
9. What would cause him to fall into the condemnation of the devil?
10. How can a person not be moved by winds of false doctrine?
11. Lucifer fell to the temptation of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
12. The devil goes around like a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_, seeking whom he may devour.
13. A double-tongued person is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in all their ways.
14. What is the job of the deacon?
15. What should the minister spend his time doing?
16. What is a mystery?
17. When was the Christians understanding opened to the mystery of God?
18. What should you do, before you appoint someone to be a deacon?
19. What characteristics should their wives have?
20. Why must a deacon be bold in the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?
21. Why had Paul sent this letter to Timothy?