

Sermon or Lesson: 1 Timothy 3:6-7 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: The Danger Of Having An Unqualified Person As An Overseer

READ: 1 Timothy 3:6-7, with vv.1-5 for context

BACKGROUND:

- - God has lists of specific requirements that a person must possess in order to be qualified to hold a position of overseer in a church or ministry.
- - In previous verses are listed personal character qualities and good management skills that the person must possess, exhibit, and have a proven history of.
- - In the study of these next verses, we will see there are more qualities the person must have demonstrated that he possesses in order to be qualified to be an overseer.

v.6 - READ

[Lesson Question: Expound on the spiritual deficiencies a recent convert naturally has which disqualify him from being an overseer.]

SECTION POINT: A recent convert lacks the spiritual maturity and experience to be qualified to be an overseer.

- - To be qualified as an overseer, the person "must not be a recent convert", a believer for only a few years so far, a relative "beginner, newcomer, fledgling, novice, apprentice in the faith". (AHD - 'novice', from Strong's #3504)
- - The danger likely to develop is that the new believer being prematurely put into a ministry position of such high influence, status, and responsibility will "become conceited".
- - Being quickly elevated to the position of overseer, this novice believer can easily and likely "construct an inflated opinion of his own abilities or worth", even to the excessive extent of being "pompous", harboring an extreme self-pride and a haughty disdain for others. (AHD - 'conceit', 'pompous', from Strong's #5187)
- - Conceit has the enormous and powerful potential to carry a person off, away from godliness and into sinfulness, which it did with the devil.

A recent convert or novice believer can easily fall into this kind of faulty self-assessment because of any one or combination of reasons, such as:

- - A recent convert is inexperienced in the faith, not yet having gone through many different situations and applications of his faith.
- - A recent convert is relatively untested in the faith, not having yet faced and been put through "trials of many kinds" that "develop perseverance" and other virtues. (James 1:2-3)
- - A recent convert is thereby naive and uninformed in the faith, which is conducive to drawing incorrect conclusions about aspects of the faith. (see v.10)

- - A recent convert is not yet established in the faith, not solidly grounded in the tenets of the faith, which he has not learned yet and thereby can easily fall into faulty doctrine. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3)
- - A recent convert has not yet developed a rock-solid commitment to his faith and devotional life, sticking to the disciplines of the faith no matter how distant God seems to be at times. (Psalms 22:1-3,22-24)
- - A recent convert has not yet developed any spiritual maturity in the faith, not having wrestled with nor resisted his own strongholds of sin to the point where he has learned how to draw on God's power to gain victory over his strongholds of sin. (James 1:4; Ephesians 6:10-11)
- - A recent convert needs time to develop solid unshakable humility, which is opposite of and hindering to conceit. (James 4:6)
- - A recent convert lacks experience doing ministry, which involves observing, learning, and hands-on exposure to and participation in how leadership functions in churches and ministries.

- - From verses 4-6, clearly God does not want a novice filling the position of overseer in ministries, and like the deacons in verse 10, the candidate for overseer must prove through prior testings in life that he is qualified.
- - A recent convert overseer will have a major propensity to think he is spiritually mature, that he has made himself superior and is a perfect gift to the church, when in reality he is not, nor is he spiritually mature.
- - God opposes this proud thinking, which is identical to what the devil thought of himself and thereby deserving of the "same judgment as the devil". (James 4:6)
- - With a high level of ministry responsibility and authority comes a high level of accountability from God, and failure earns a correspondingly high level of consequences, which for this job position is right up there similar to the consequences for the devil.
- - And having God actively oppose an overseer in your ministry is not wise or productive for the well-being and growth of your ministry.

v.7 - READ

[Lesson Question: Expound on why an overseer must have a good reputation with outsiders. What effect would there be on the church or ministry if he had a bad reputation with outsiders?]

SECTION POINT: An overseer must have a demonstrated track record of relating well with unbelievers in the community.

- - To be qualified as an overseer, the person "must also have a good reputation with outsiders", having good relations with unbelievers in the community and holding their respect.
- - He is to have experience and demonstrated success at relating well with unbelievers and people in the community, "being well thought of". (AMP)
- - And he is to have demonstrated success at being a good ambassador and witness for God's Kingdom in the community. (Strong's #3141 - "reputation"; Acts 1:8)

- - Unbelievers outside the church in the community are important because they are the primary targets to bring into the church, which is a main objective and mission of the church or ministry. (Matthew 28:18-20)

- - The danger here is that as a visible high-ranking representative of the church and of God's Kingdom, an overseer with a bad reputation in the community automatically has his bad reputation transferred onto the church and God's Kingdom by the community, which equates and perceives that the bad attitude, behaviors, and treatment they have experienced from the overseer is what they can also expect from the church.

- - Churches and ministries do not want outsiders to be regarding and/or speaking negatively about a leader in their church; this destroys the reputation of the church and hinders the achieving of its outreach goals and mission.

- - An overseer with a bad reputation in the community would bring "disgrace" upon himself and his church or ministry, a heaping of "reproach, dishonor, disrespect, shame, disfavor, discredit", "disapproval, criticism, disappointment, rebuke, blame", "contempt, insults, discourtesy, offensiveness, railing", and etc. (AHD - 'disgrace', 'reproach', 'contumely', from Strong's #3680)

- - Another danger here is that the bad-reputation-ed overseer erroneously thinks he needs to hold the respect of only those in the church and not those outside the church.

- - This perspective is a deceptive trap, which the devil would love to implement and thereafter capitalize on, effectively shutting down the outreach of the church or ministry.

- - A church or ministry with a bad reputation in the community will stagnate, and because people tend to leave or abandon an unhealthy church, it will eventually wither and die - all of which the devil especially delights to see happen.

- - The "devil" is mentioned in both verses 6 and 7, suggesting both situations described in these verses are potential footholds for the devil's agenda - the overseer being a recent convert, or the overseer having a bad reputation in the community.

- - This threat of involvement by the Kingdom of Darkness implies and warrants that significant and extra precautions need to be taken in order to prevent the devil from gaining these influences and footholds in the ministry, especially at this high level of leadership in the ministry.

- - A main point here is that the overseer is suppose to be a teacher of the Word, a guardian of sound doctrines, and a main manager and implementer of productive ministry functioning, which he cannot do if he is a new convert or has a bad reputation in the community, potentially resulting in creating fertile opportunities for the devil to gain a foothold. (vv.3:2,5; 5:17; Titus 1:9)

BIG IDEA: Opportunities for footholds for the devil are opened when an unqualified person is given a position of overseer in a church or ministry.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you who select, nominate, or vote on candidates to be overseers in your church or ministry, do you see some of the spiritual dangers that are opened when an unqualified person is given a position of overseer?
- - Have you or do you use the typical popular method known as cronyism to select an overseer, "showing favoritism to friends and relatives without regard for their qualifications" and lack thereof? (AHD - 'cronyism')
- - Do you realize that by using the method of cronyism, you are effectively opening opportunities for the devil to gain a foothold in your church or ministry through your unqualified buddy you just selected to be an overseer?
- - Even though you are probably trying to avoid future conflicts by selecting a buddy, do you see that by default you are in reality needlessly creating the potential and probability of other significant problems developing in the future which may greatly damage your church or ministry?
- - Nowhere in these lists of qualification requirements is there listed a need or preference for selecting a crony, and matter-of-fact the opposite is endorse here - that the candidate for overseer **must be qualified as specified in God's lists**, regardless of whether he is a buddy or not.
- - If avoiding conflicts is so scary for you, then why not do some advanced academic study on how to do conflict management in ministries and on how to do effective leadership that embraces and capitalizes on diversity of opinions?
- - A vast majority of church people and leaders fail to appreciate how dangerous it is to use cronyism and thereby they essentially ignore God's mandate that the overseer must be qualified.
- - Why not start using God's lists of requirements as the supreme guide for selecting an overseer? The position of overseer is too vital to be left to an unqualified crony, or a recent convert, or a novice, or a person of disrepute.

[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - Without disclosing names, what other areas of initial disqualification of an overseer have you seen the devil gain a foothold in a church or ministry? Was cronyism used as the method for determining qualification of the person? What short-term damage was done by means of the devil's foothold? What long-term damage was done?
 - - Discuss other relating ramifications derived from Colossians 4:5 and 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.]
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