**Oh, the Places You’ll Go!**

**I Timothy 3:1-13**

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Today I’m going to look at 1 Tim. 3, about the amazing place living the

gospel will take you, and the kind of life that shows up because of it. The passages

we come to in 1 Tim. 3 are the go-to passages for us when we select elders and

deacons in the church, but they are far more than just that.

You remember last month (no probably not) as we looked at Paul’s song in v.14-16 that this is more than a check-list of who is best qualified to serve, but rather this is about how to behave in this amazing place we call the household of the living God.

This is about serving Jesus and it’s about the gospel. It’s about being part of

God’s household and carrying out his mission, and there is the understanding

that as we all do that, some are called to lead that mission and its obvious

here that they need to be amazing people who love Jesus and love what Jesus is

doing in this household of God.

Several weeks ago, Bill Little and I were talking about me helping put together a profile for a pastor as you go through this search, and I came up frustrated, and then one day I was reading 1 Tim. 3 again, and I thought, wait, this is it. I don’t need to Google this, it’s right here. But this passage, again, does far more than just cover a list of qualifications for elders and deacons or provide help in a pastor search. This is about all of us striving to live lives that represent Jesus well but knowing there are some of us who will step out

and be examples of it. Yes, some are selected to lead, but to lead all of us to this

mystery of godliness and to behaving in the household of God in the way that v.14 talks

about.

I really think by the end of this, and I am serious when I say this, I don’t

want anyone leaving feeling, “Oh, man I fall so short”. I know I started reacting

that way as I was studying this. Instead, I hope when we pray, sing the closing

song and after I give the benediction that you leave excited by the possibilities

of a life lived out for Jesus. That this refines it for us. That as leaders here you

would come to Jesus longing to be what is described here and that as the wife

of that man, that you would pray for him and encourage him to be this kind of

man. So let’s read this and then look at what it calls for.

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he*

*desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the*

*husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable,*

*able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a*

*lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity*

*keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to*

*manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? 6 He must*

*not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall*

*into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by*

*outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

*8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to*

*much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of*

*the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let*

*them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives*

*likewise (Because this is a team thing) must be dignified, not slanderers, but*

*sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of*

*one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 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.*

**Illustration:** I love the story of a couple being married, and the pastor asks the couple

to repeat these vows, Will you Jim take Alisa to be your lawfully wedded

wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for

richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part? To the

shock of the pastor, and the wife, Jim responded, “Yes, yes, yes, yes, no, yes, no,

no, yes, no.” I don’t think that is a true story but it does illustrate powerfully

how selective we can be on the terms of following Jesus and living for him.

One of the things that I come away with having studied this chapter is how

belonging to Jesus is ***yes*** to everything. That I take seriously my commitment to

him, and when I do, and here is where the application is really strong for all of

us, I look at everything that is being called for here and I strive after it as v1

calls for, that I aspire to this noble office. We see it as part of the terms of this

relationship with Jesus. Let me set this up by making two statements that will

build the platform for this kind of life where it’s all “yes” to Jesus, then I will take

the balance of time talking about **(1) how this begins in the heart, (2) then**

**shows up in the home.**

**1.** **An Example for All of Us**: While Paul writes this to the elders and deacons, he is doing it so we all have an example to follow. I love the way Paul puts it in 1 Cor. 1:1 “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. Leaders are to be a certain way to show the rest of us

what it looks like to follow Jesus.” There are not two standards here, one for

leaders and a lesser one for everyone else. It’s not just elders and deacons who

are supposed to be ***above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded,***

***self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle,***

***not quarrelsome, not a lover of money and managing his own household well,***

***with all dignity keeping his children submissive***. This is something we are all

called to do, but the leaders stand out as examples. The only thing that is really

not normative to all here is the phrase “able to teach” at the end of v.2. So this is

for all of us.

**2. It’s About the Gospel…*“The Noble Task”*:** Secondly, what Paul describe here is what it looks like to be gospel driven. All the qualities you read here (led by elders and deacons) describes the life of someone who embraces the gospel of Jesus. In fact, this brings us to vs.1. Notice Paul begins with this. ***The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task***. Paul seems to be referring to a popular quote and applies it here. ***The saying is trustworthy***. KJV version says,

***the saying is true***. Another translation uses the phrase, ***this is a faithful saying***.

Notice in the saying that Paul brings up here the drive behind this kind of life.

That is what he calls ***a noble task***. ***If anyone aspires to the office of overseer he***

***desires a noble task.*** Two words ***aspires*** and ***desires*** stand out to me here.

According to John MacArthur, the two words put together describe an outward

pursuit, because you are driven by a strong internal desire. Paul is describing a

life driven by something that really matters, and it’s the gospel of Jesus. It’s the

***transformed heart showing up in a transformed life***. That is the noble task,

and I will say here if that is your drive, then guess what? All the following

things Paul describes in this chapter will show up in your life, or more

realistically you’ll find yourself longing for it.

A gospel-driven life is a life that ***is the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable,*** ***hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not*** ***quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He manages his own household well,*** ***with all dignity keeping his children submissive***. This is a man who looks at

his life, looks at Jesus and all that Jesus did for him and for the church and for

the world, and then says, how can I be about that? How can this life be about

him and serving him? Do you ask yourself that question? It’s a great way to

reset things in your life. Look at your life for a minute, again, not to induce

guilt. This is meant to set you free, to open up the opportunities, like “Dr. Seuss”,

***Oh the Places You’ll Go***, when the gospel is the drive, wow! Suddenly it’s

more than about just working, coming home, turning on the news, cutting fire

wood. All good stuff, but deep down from the gut, something deeper drives

your life. Like Paul in 1 Cor. 9:16 ***For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no***

***ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not***

***preach the gospel!*** Let me ask you again, what drives your life? Is it the

gospel? Something amazing will happen if it is. You will be longing, aspiring

to be a godly man or woman, longing for others to imitate your life because you

are imitating the life of Jesus. So that sets it up. **This is for everyone**.

Elders and deacons just set the bar higher so we will all seek godliness. And

secondly **this is about a life driven by the gospel.**

**3. It Begins in the Heart**: Notice next how this all begins in the heart and then we will look at how it then **4. Shows up in the home**. In other words, you’ll know it’s in your heart when you see it displayed at home. Notice Paul speaks first to elders in v.2 and

then to deacons in v.8. To the elder he says, ***Therefore an overseer must be above***

***reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled,***

***respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle,***

***not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*** And then to deacons he writes in v.

8-10, ***Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to***

***much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.*** They must hold the mystery of the

faith, that is the gospel, the noble task of v.1 with a clear conscience. And let

them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove

themselves blameless.

Might be good before we look at what’s in the heart, that we define the terms here. Elders in v.2 are overseers. Simply elders and pastors. They are the ones with spiritual responsibilities over others. Some translations use the word bishop here and it comes from the Greek term *episkopos*. All these words, *bishop, elder, overseer, pastor* are used interchangeably in the NT. Again, if you are an elder, as you look for a pastor,

the call here is a high one. Deacons in v.8 were those who served. Literally the

word means *to serve*. You remember it started in Acts 6 when the apostles were

doing everything, even helping serve food and it kept them from their spiritual

responsibility of leading and preaching, so deacons were chosen and that is

when people like Stephen and Philip show up. But again, what I am interested in

right now is what Paul calls them to, what needs to exist in their hearts. If you

are led by the Spirit, desiring and pursuing the gospel, this will show up. You

will be above reproach. The phrase literally means *blameless*, or *not arrested*.

Where no one can find any blame. Like Jesus. Do you know they had to make

up charges against Jesus to find blame. Jesus was the only one who was ever

really blameless, but we should strive for it. We get to be blameless because of

him. Phil 2:14-16 tells us one way we can do that. ***Do everything without***

***grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children***

***of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will***

***shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.***

**Illustration:** When I lived in England, Police set up a road block and were stopping people. Oh no! I pulled my window down, and the policeman leaned in and said, “I want to thank you for obeying the traffic laws.” Only in England! What Paul is really doing here when he calls the elder, and all of us to be above reproach is he describes it by the

other phrases that come next. You could read it like this, v.2 An elder is to be

above reproach. How. Well by being the husband of one wife, sober-minded,

self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not

violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. It is really

challenging, and I encourage you to do this, to spend some time, like I did this

past week, and look hard and seriously at each of these and ask, how am I

doing here? Strive to live in such a way that if you were arrested, no one could

ever find fault in you. Can you imagine if police barged in here this morning

walked up to me and put hand cuffs on me and said “Mitch, you are under

arrest.” I said “what for?” They said for murder. I could look at them and without

any hesitation I would say, officer, you have the wrong man. I am blameless,

above reproach on this one. But, imagine when they put handcuffs on me and

said, “Mitch Schultz, you are under arrest” and I said, “what for?” and they said

“because there is lust in your heart, or because you are not gentle, you have

no self control, you get so impatient, you are not always gentle, or you are a

lover of money...” What would I be able to say? Could I say, you have the

wrong man. I am blameless, above reproach? I don’t know, but here is what I

want, because of the gospel, because of Jesus, I want to strive for it.

Elders are called to this standard so I am also motivated to that kind of life too because I love Jesus so much, and I care so much about what is going on here in what we call the

church, (v.14) this household of God. I want it to start in my heart. It’s interesting

to me how the instructions to deacons beginning in v.8 don’t seem to just

describe a serving role, the standard is amazing, and also quite high. ***Deacons***

***likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine,***

***not greedy for dishonest gain*** (especially since they have a service role and

have access to material things). ***They must hold the mystery of the faith with a***

***clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as***

***deacons if they prove themselves blameless.*** Notice they are to be tested, not

for how well and skilled they are in serving, but by what is in their hearts. What

a challenge. Even if you are someone who serves in the background, unnoticed,

unimpressive, the call to holiness, the insistence to pursue this noble task and

be dignified, not double tongued, not greedy is high. Even someone who

serves in v.9 Paul says holds the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.

In Acts 24:16 Paul said this, “I strive always to keep my conscience clear before

God and men.” Now that is interesting isn’t it. Before God, and men.

We are getting really tired, aren’t we, as we watch one person after another falling into

disgrace - people who look so good, great reputation, whether a news anchor or

politician, movie star or a pastor, and then we find out behind the scene they

had secrets. And their behavior toward women or others was terrible. Do you

know what Paul is really calling us to here? To actually be what others think

we are. But deeper than that because that sounds like we do it to impress

others. We should be what Jesus set us free to be. We were filled with the Holy Spirit to be people who are holding this mystery of faith, this gospel, with a clear

conscience. Even if no one really notices you. Even if you don’t have a

standout visible place in the church, or in life. Where again, like Paul, we are striving, working hard at always, keeping a conscience clear before God and men. What Paul is asking for is a life lived with a clear conscience, where there is no discrepancy between

how God views us and how man views us. And its not that we are perfect in

this, but again in v.1 we strive for it and desire it. That’s what God is longing

for. Do you? **It starts in the heart**, but

**4.** Notice **It shows up at home**. You will know it’s in your heart if it shows up at

home. Notice the number of references to the home life. v.4 He must manage

his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive

***12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children***

***and their own households well.*** Why? Because it’s totally meaningless what

we project as godliness to others, when at home there is ungodliness. I think

this is what Paul means when he says in v.9 “They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience”. You know in your heart that what others see in you is really what is there. It is the true you. A couple weeks ago Elaine and I were driving, had had a nice few hours together, mood was good. I reached out my hand and placed it on hers and asked what turned out to be a dangerous question. *“Elaine, how are we doing?”*

Long Pause. Oh oh. There is a risk being married to an extremely honest

woman. She said, *“Well it depends if you’re in a good mood or not.*” (Someone

asked Elaine once if she ever wakes up grumpy in the morning. She said, “No I

usually let him sleep!) That question and subsequent conversation in the car

turned out to be such a good conversation for us, because it lays out on the

table for both of us what is really going on in our hearts. It made me want to

work harder, to strive and desire to be careful not to fall into any bad unhealthy

patterns in my marriage. And here in 1 Tim 3 I’ve got some specifics to work

on. Listen, **what is in your heart will show up at home**. If it doesn’t appear at home, it’s not in your heart. What should be seen in your home?

**A. First, it shows up in a husband making his wife feel like she’s the only one**

and a wife who, in turn, encourages him to lead well in their marriage. Look what

Paul writes, first about elders and then to deacons but also their wives. vs. 2 ***an***

***overseer is to be the husband of one wife*** and then to deacons v.9 and 10-12

***Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded,***

***faithful in all things*** (v.12) ***Let deacons each be the husband of one wife***, The

phrase “husband of one wife” does not mean someone who has been divorced

can never be an elder or deacon. Neither is this talking about polygamy since

that was not at all common in Ephesus at this time. In the Greek, it literally

means a one-woman-man. John MacArthur says the issue here is sexual purity

not marital status. Again, this is about striving for godliness. It begins in

the heart and shows up at home, especially in the marriage. The church and the

world need to see men who love their wives like they are the only one and

wives who are dignified and not slanderers, but sober minded and faithful in

all things. Wives who are promoting a good marriage, empowering their marriage to be a platform for the gospel. One of the saddest things to me is to see marriages well

into several decades get cold. Paul is motivating us to strive for something here,

it’s part of the noble task in v.1. Your marriage should be alive, and exciting and an example to others. A marriage where what is in the heart spills over to each other. How? Well, men, treat your wife like she’s it. And wives, v.12 Paul’s call to be dignified, not a slanderer, but sober minded and faithful in all things, calls for a heart that continues to be empowered by Jesus. Listen, the secret to a godly marriage is that it mirrors the gospel. Two people show what the gospel looks like when two sinful people live out what it means to forgive and be forgiven.

**B. When You Practice Hospitality as a Family**: There is another way where what is in the heart shows up at home. I think it’s really interesting that Paul refers to hospitality as one of the qualifications for an elder in v.2. It shows up there, doesn’t it, in a list of seemingly more spiritual descriptions. Look at it again in v.2 “Therefore an

overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded,

self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not

violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.” The word hospitable

comes from a compound Greek word meaning, *love of strangers*. In Romans

12:13 that same word shows up calling the church to open up their homes to

people who were traveling during dangerous times, especially to fellow

believers. Paul was writing during a dangerous time where, when believers

traveled, there were few safe places to stay. Okay, I can do this, because I am

your interim pastor and I can drive home today and not see you for another

week, but let me ask you what might seem like a bit of a pressing or intrusive

question. I hope it stirs something exciting, in an ***Oh-the-Places-You-Will-Go***

kind of way. How well do you really know each other here? Is there a sense

where people can meet week after week and not really know each other. Elaine

and I have found that we never really get to know people unless we see them in

their homes. (Neighborhood cook out.) NIV translates Romans 12:13 this way,

“Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” Practice

means you start rough, it’s hard at first, but you practice and it gets easier, its

fun. And elders and deacons get to start, and set the example for this. And it’s

there in the home that people will see what you are really like, and by doing so

get a glimpse of what Jesus is really like.

**C. Show Others How to Lead Through Family Pain:** There is a third way that **what is in the heart, shows up at home** and it has to do with those in leadership who are able to manage through the pain of family. I’ve come full circle on Paul’s call there in v.4 and v.12. V.4 ***He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive***, and v.12 ***Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children*** ***and their own households well***. I used to think that Paul meant only those who have perfect kids, completely obedient, not a hair out of place, kids that say *yes sir*, *yes ma’am,* could be church leaders. These are the epitome of perfect kids. And then I had children. And then I realized, we would have no one serving if this were the standard. The key word in v.4 and v.12 is the word *manage*. I know some pastors whose children are prodigals, but I watch that mom and dad, showing the rest of us how to serve Jesus and serve the church through that pain. We need examples of how to manage through family pain. Among other things, this means being vulnerable with each other. Share your burden. Pray with each other. I wonder if Paul is touching on that in v.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.” We need examples of what it looks like to have great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus when things are messy at home.

Listen, when the Holy Spirit grabs your life something happens that the

world has never seen before and it is the mystery of godliness. There is no

explanation for it because it is so different. And it shows up in what comes out

of your heart. It shows up in the way you are at home and the way you talk and

walk in the community. Do you want it? It could be you’ve been doing an

inventory this morning, you’ve looked at what this gospel driven life looks like

the way Paul describes it here, then you found yourself looking at yourself, and

you’re thinking, I’ve allowed myself, even my marriage to get cold. Or I’ve given

up on pastoring my children. Are you willing to live for something more?

Moms. Dads. Teens. Are you willing to not settle for the way it has been, and

this morning you are ready to say, “Lord you want more from me” don’t you? I

know you do.. If you are willing to say “I am no longer willing to settle for the way it is. I want to reach for more. Raise the bar. I can do better. My attitude stinks and I know it needs to change.” Jesus, our champion, our wonderful example of how this life can be lived is looking for a few good men and women willing to step forward to say I am willing to live higher and reach deeper. I am willing to let the Holy Spirit completely take

over this life to show the world what it means to belong to Jesus. **It will show**

**up in my heart**, and I know it’s there because **it shows up in my home**. Amen.