

# Leading God's People

**Key Verse:**  
***“Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.”***  
**—I Timothy 3:9**

**Selected Scripture:**  
**I Timothy 3:2-15**  
phases that this work of faith be held with a pure conscience.

In the apostle's first epistle to Timothy, he establishes, in chapter three, the qualifications pertaining to the service of elders and deacons who serve in the household of faith. “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop [Greek, overseer], he desireth a good work.”—I Tim. 3:1

However, restrictions apply that pertain to this important work. “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)”—vss. 2-5

Furthermore, Paul admonishes that an elder should be well-established in the Truth, humble by nature, having respect among all who may know him, “Not a

**IN THIS LESSON, THE APOSTLE** Paul draws our attention to important guidelines that are necessary for those who would be spiritual leaders of God's people during the present Gospel Age. Although this is a commendable work, there are essential conditions, and he emphasizes that this work of faith be held with a pure conscience.

novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”—vss. 6,7

The apostle also addresses the qualifications that are necessary for those who would serve as deacons within the ecclesia arrangement. Although the office of deacon does not carry the same degree of responsibility as that of an elder, we note that the qualifications are similar, with high standards for both elders and deacons. A deacon’s responsibilities are generally those of being assistants, or helpers, within the congregation. The elders share in the larger work as being shepherds of the flock. Although this lesson’s Key Verse (3:9) is directed to the deacons who are admonished to hold the ‘mystery of the faith in a pure conscience,’ it nevertheless applies to brethren serving in either capacity.

We also are given a glimpse of the apostle’s great sense of responsibility in writing this epistle. He was giving his younger brother Timothy valuable instructions concerning the acceptable rules concerning a congregation of the Lord’s people. “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 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.”—vss. 14,15

Throughout the Gospel Age, and during the present time, the order of the ecclesia, pertaining to the offices of elders and deacons, continues to hold to these instructions as given by Paul to Timothy. It is, however, the ecclesia’s responsibility to only vote for those brethren whom they know to be of good character, well-established in the Truth, and having a strong desire to serve the Lord’s people and to be good examples to the flock. If the scriptural instructions regarding these qualifications are adhered to, the congregation will surely be richly blessed. ■