

## Bible Study and Discussion on the Ministry of the Bishop

### The Bishop has a ministry of oversight

In the letters to Timothy and Titus (the so-called Pastoral Epistles) we see that a variety of leadership roles (bishop, deacon, presbyter) have begun to develop in the early church. A “bishop,” as the title implies, has a ministry of oversight. The longest New Testament passage speaking of the office of bishop (ἐπισκοπή) is 1 Timothy 3:1-7. [Note the cultural context: in this community, it was assumed that a bishop should be a male and “the husband of one wife,” that is, not engaged in polygamy. (We do not hold that this passage somehow precludes either a woman or someone who has been divorced from taking on the bishop’s role.)] Read and reflect together with some of the following questions.

- A. In v. 1, note that Paul speaks of “aspiring” or “striving” for a “noble task” (that is, a “good work”). This is a reminder for potential overseers (bishops) not to strive for the honor of “having” the office, but to aim to conduct themselves virtuously “within” the office.

***What is the difference between focusing on gaining a ministry position and serving well within that ministry position?***

- B. In vv. 2-3 are a list of various virtues.

***Which of these common virtues would you select as most important for a bishop?***

- C. In vv. 4-5 there is a parallel between good management of one’s own household and taking care of the “assembly” or “church” (ἐκκλησία).

***Some of the functions suggested in these verses include leadership, management, partnership, and caring for the assembly of believers. How might a potential bishop carry forward these qualities from his or her current life and ministry into the call of being a bishop?***

- D. In vv. 6-7 the bishop is reminded to live out a good “witness” or “testimony” to those outside the church community.

***What are some of the important public dimensions of the bishop’s ministry, as you understand it?***

### Installation passages

Passages read at the installation of a bishop may include Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21-23; and 2 Timothy 1:13-14. Read these brief passages and note the role of the Holy Spirit in each.

**How is the bishop’s work in the church informed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, according to these Scriptures?**



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