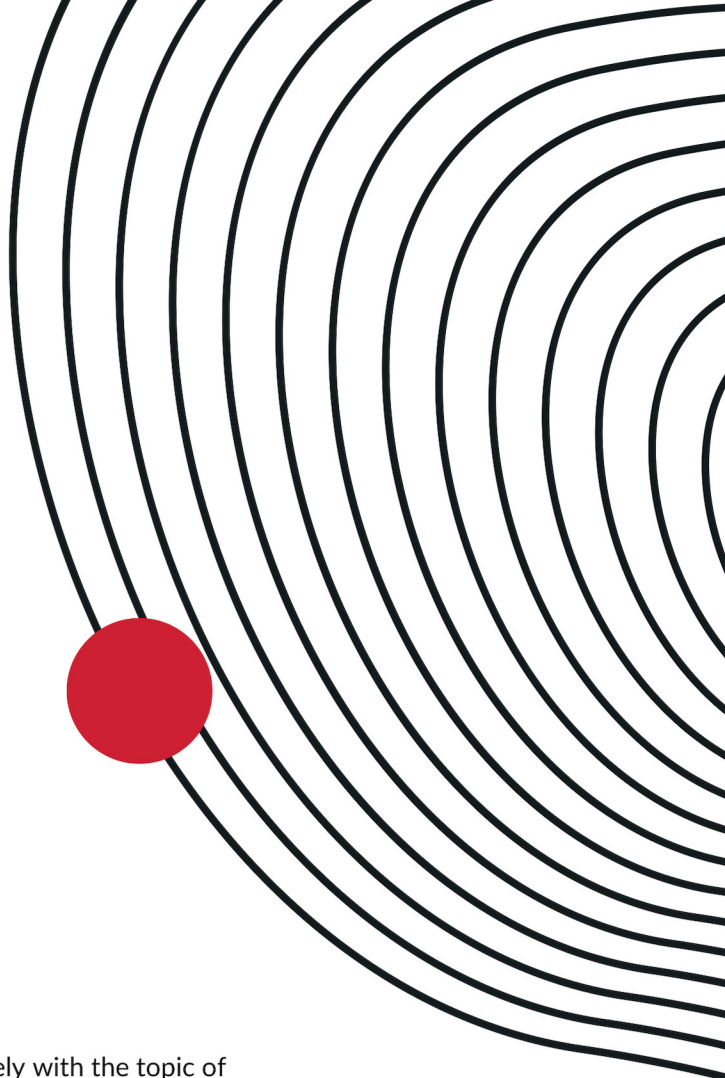


Sexuality AND LEADERSHIP



AN INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY IN 1 TIMOTHY

Sexuality AND LEADERSHIP



FACILITATOR'S NOTES

This Bible study is one of a series aiming:

- To resource local churches and others to engage positively with the topic of sexuality in the Bible.
- To enable the Church to have a more Biblically-resourced conversation about sexuality, including at Conference.
- To model approaches to scripture and good conversations, including good disagreement.

This 1 Timothy Bible study has three goals:

- Familiarise us with 1 Timothy 3:1-12.
- To show how translation and can give depth and clarity to our understanding.
- To consider how scripture can be applied to considerations about sexuality and leadership.

There are five sections to this study:

- Introduction.
- Getting in to 1 Timothy 3.
- Thinking about translation.
- Thinking about application.
- Conclusion.

In advance of the study:

- Read the Introduction for Facilitators.
- Look through the materials and make a plan.
- The core activities will take around 90 minutes. Fill the rest of your time by choosing which optional activities will suit your group best.
- Make a schedule for when each activity will begin and end.
- Make a list of what resources you need.

You will need:

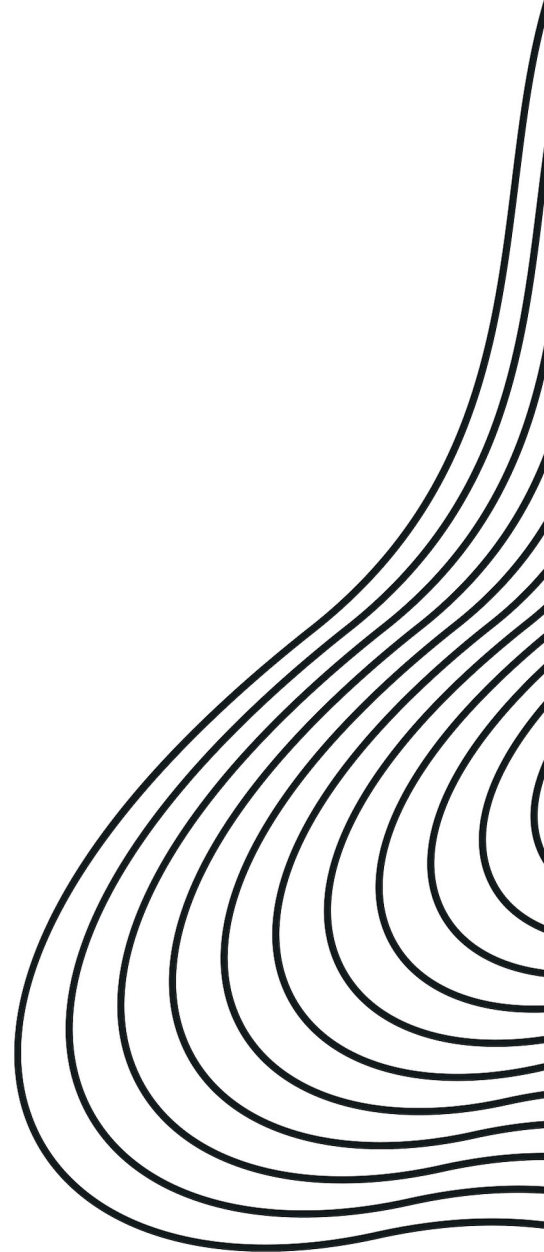
- Water, sweets and fruit for each table.
- A notebook or paper and pen for each person.
- Print outs of the text.
- Coloured pens.
- A screen with sound.
- A device to play the videos and display slides.
- A copy of the videos.

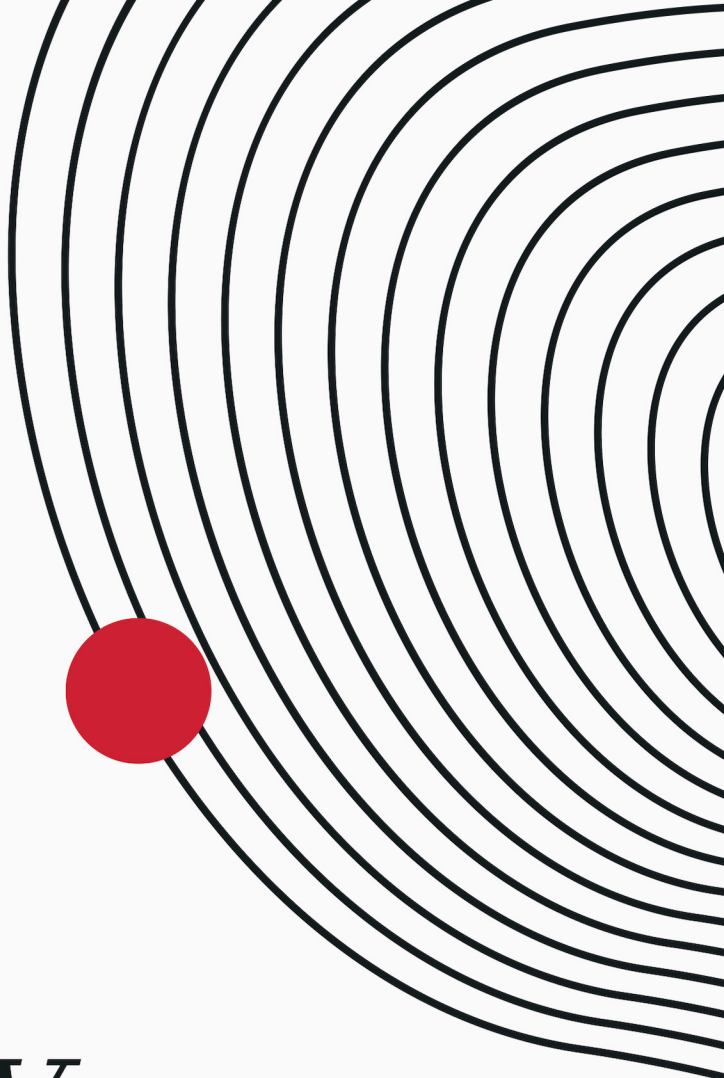
You may need:

- Post-it notes.
- Print-outs of the word bank or discussion materials.
- Large prints for walking debate and four corners activity.
- Coloured cards for spectrum debate.
- Internet access.
- Slides at [mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com) prepared in advance.

Pray:

- For the participants.
- For yourself.
- For good, Spirit-filled conversations.
- For God to be encountered in the words of scripture.





Sexuality AND LEADERSHIP



AN INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY IN 1 TIMOTHY



1. WELCOME

- *Direct people to tea and coffee facilities if you have them.*
- *Explain briefly how the Bible study will run.*
- *Acknowledge the range of abilities and experiences in the room.*
- *Ask for agreement that we will be sensitive and gracious to one another especially where there are differences of opinion.*

For example:

“You are all very welcome to this Bible study. We’re going to be looking at one of the letters in the New Testament and what it has to say to us about sex and sexuality. We have some short videos and activities to help us get in to it and then we’re going to be engaging with the scriptures together. This means we let the Bible speak for itself and then we bring our questions and our experiences. We talk together, we listen to one another’s perspective, and if we disagree, then the disagreement helps us to understand a different point of view and to see our own point of view more clearly. This is an ancient way of engaging with the Bible and it helps us really get the scriptures into our heads and hearts and allows it to shape our lives.

There will be a range of experiences in the room. Someone might be reading the Bible for the first time, someone might be an expert – both those perspectives are valuable. There will also likely be a range of experiences and opinions about sex and sexuality. These are important too. There is no pressure for anyone to share anything they don’t want to, but when people do share, and especially if there is a difference of opinions, can we agree that we will show Jesus-like grace to one another as we learn together? People need space to talk and think through ideas without being judged, so let’s give one another that space.

Finally, when it comes to Bible study, and when it comes to sex and sexuality, we are often much more comfortable talking about the experiences of others than about ourselves. The challenge today is that I allow the scriptures to speak to me – to shape me and change me.

Let’s get started.”



2. WHO INFLUENCES YOU?

Introduce this activity:

“Who influences you? Who do you look up to? Who are your leaders? Is there a teacher, TikTok personality, writer, politician, celebrity? Who influences you?”

Choose which version of the activity best suits your group:

○ ACTIVE VERSION

Resources: Thick markers, post-it notes.

You will need enough post-it notes and thick markers for everyone and somewhere to stick the post-its that is visible to everyone.

“Write your answer on a post-it. When you’re ready, come and stick it up where we can all see.”

Depending on your group you may want to add:

“If sticking your post-its up yourself is an issue, someone in your group can do it for you.”

Once everyone’s answers are displayed, give some time for people to glance over them. Read four or five of them aloud, and draw attention to any common answers.

○ ONLINE VERSION

Resources: Internet access. Mentimeter account. Mentimeter presentation prepared in advance.

- Log on to www.mentimeter.com
- Log In.
- Create “New Presentation”.
- Click “New Slide”.
- Select “Word Cloud”.
- Add the question: “Who Influences You?”
- Display the slide on your screen.

“If you have a device with you, go to **menti.com**, enter the code and then enter your answer. If you don’t have a device with you someone else in your group can enter your answer for you.”



○ ACCESSIBILITY VERSION

Resources: Thick markers, post-it notes.

This version is intended for groups where a significant number will have mobility issues and where the Online version would be impossible or inappropriate.

“Write your answer on a post-it note. When you’re ready, hold up your post-its, or stick them somewhere we can all see.”

You could follow up with some questions:

“Tell us who this is. Why do they influence you? Do you think the way they behave affects you?”



3. VIDEO 1: THE CHARACTER OF LEADERS

This video raises the idea of leaders and their character and behaviour and gives a brief introduction to 1 Timothy.

Play the video until the pause sign appears.



4. READING 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-12

Resources: Print of 1 Timothy 3:1-12, coloured pens.

Distribute copies of the text of Timothy 3:1-12. This will work best if everyone has their own copy. If visibility is an issue consider increasing to A3 size.

“One person in each group should read the text out loud. As you hear the scripture read, ask yourself ‘What’s the big idea?’, ‘What is the main thing that is being communicated?’”

Give enough time for each group to finish reading aloud.





5. DIGGING IN - PART 1

Resources: Prints of 1 Timothy 3:1-123, coloured pens, prints of resource sheet.



These activities are designed to help us get deeper into the text. Print a copy of the resource for each group. Read through the activities and make sure everyone is clear on what they are doing. This can be either an individual activity or a group activity, depending on whether you have given a copy of the scripture text to individuals or groups.



- A. Underline the words stand out as the most important.
- B. Draw a box around the sections of the text you think relate to sex and sexuality.
- C. Draw a circle around any words or phrases that you have questions about.
- D. Write any questions or thoughts in the white space.



6. DIGGING IN - PART 2

Resources: Print of resource sheet.



These discussion questions follow on from the previous activity. Ensure everyone can see a print out of the questions. Depending on your group you may want to encourage discussion in pairs, in threes, or as a whole table.



1. What words did you highlight as being the most important?
Why did you choose them?
2. Share and discuss any questions or comments you noted.
3. Which sections did you highlight as relating to sex and sexuality?
Why did you choose those sections?
4. What is the big idea that is being communicated in this text?
Can you summarise it in one sentence?
Can you summarise it in one word?

After some discussion time ask for feedback on a couple of the questions:

“What words did you highlight as the most important?

...

Did anyone else select those same words?”

“What sections did people highlight as relating to sex and sexuality?

...

Did anyone highlight anything different?”

“What is the Big Idea in this text? Can anyone summarise it in one sentence?

...

Did anyone summarise it in one word?”



7. SPECTRUM DEBATE

Read a series of statements and have participants indicate their response.

○ WALKING VERSION

Designate one end of the room “agree” and the opposite end “disagree.” People place themselves somewhere along the line based on how much they agree or disagree with the statement read.

“I’m going to read some statements. If you agree with the statement go to this end of the room. If you disagree with the statement go to this end of the room. Or, place yourself anywhere in between.”

○ TRAFFIC LIGHTS VERSION

Resources: Green, amber and red cards for each participant.

Each participant has a green, amber and red card. Read the statements. People hold up cards to indicate how much they agree or disagree.

“Everyone has three cards. I’m going to read some statements. If you mostly agree with the statement raise your green card. If you mostly disagree with the statement, raise your red card. If you are somewhere in the middle raise your amber card.”

○ ONLINE VERSION

Resources: Internet access. Mentimeter account. Mentimeter presentation prepared in advance. Agree-Disagree Spectrum image.

- Log on to www.mentimeter.com
- Log In.
- Create “New Presentation”.
- Click “New Slide”.
- Select “Pin on image”.
- Add the image of the agree-disagree spectrum.
- Change the title text to the statement.
- You will need a fresh slide for each of the statements you read.
- Display the slide on your screen.

Participants log on to menti.com using phones or other devices, enter the code, then place a pin somewhere on the image.



“Log on to menti.com and enter the code. I’m going to read some statements. If you agree with the statement then place your pin at that end of the spectrum. If you disagree with the statement place your pin at that end of the spectrum. Or, place yourself anywhere in between.”

○ DISCUSSION VERSION

Resources: *Print out of the spectrum debate statements.*

This activity could work well in pairs, threes, or whole tables. Give each group their own printed copy of the statements.

“On the sheet are a list of statements. For each you should decide if you agree or disagree or if you are somewhere in between. Have a chat about why.”

Choose some or all of these statements to read:

Statement 1:

“The behaviour of leaders doesn’t affect me. Agree or disagree?”

Choose two or three people in different positions and ask:

“Why have you placed yourself there?”

Statement 2:

“It would be a problem if a church leader was ‘quarrelsome’ (that’s verse 3) or a ‘malicious talker’ (that’s verse 5). Agree or disagree?”

Choose two or three people in different positions and ask:

“Why have you placed yourself there?”

“What could the problems be?”

Statement 3:

“This list in 1 Timothy 3 is more about what people are like on the outside than what they are like on the inside. Agree or disagree?”

Choose two or three people in different positions and ask:

“Why have you placed yourself there?”

Statement 4:

“This list in 1 Timothy 3 is about leaders achieving a higher level of perfection than others. Agree or disagree?”

Choose two or three people in different positions and ask:

“Why have you placed yourself there?”

“Why does 1 Timothy 3 set these standards for leaders?”

Statement 5:

“This list in 1 Timothy 3 is about leaders achieving a higher level of perfection than others. Agree or disagree?”

Choose two or three people in different positions and ask:

“Why have you placed yourself there?”

“Why does 1 Timothy 3 set these standards for leaders?”



8. DISCUSSION TOPICS – EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERS

Resources: Print of topics resource sheet.

This activity works well in threes, or as a whole table. Distribute print-outs with the discussion topics.

Choose two or three of these topics and share your thoughts and questions with one another.

1. Why do you think there are specific expectations for a church leader?
2. How would it affect you if a leader in your church was not ‘trustworthy’ (verse 11)?
3. What might the problems be with a ‘recent convert’ becoming a leader (verse 6)?
4. “They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience” (verse 9). What do you think this means and why might it be important?
5. Is this list more about how people are seen by God or more about how people are seen by outsiders? Or Neither? Or both?
6. Does the sexual behaviour of Church leaders matter? Why or why not?



9. QUOTE: ADAM CLARKE ON BLAMELESS BISHOPS

Resources: *Print of quote and questions.*

Provide a printed copy of this material to each group.



“This Christian bishop must be blameless; ανεπιληπτον, a person against whom no evil can be proved; one who is everywhere invulnerable; for the word is a metaphor, taken from the case of an expert and skilful pugilist, who so defends every part of his body that it is impossible for his antagonist to give one hit. So this Christian bishop is one that has so conducted himself, as to put it out of the reach of any person to prove that he is either unsound in a single article of the Christian faith, or deficient in the fulfilment of any duty incumbent on a Christian. He must be irreprehensible; for how can he reprove that in others which they can reprove in him?”

Adam Clarke, Bible Commentary, 1832

- What do you think of Clarke’s explanation of 1 Timothy 3:2?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of applying this metaphor to the whole text?
- Who is the intended subject of the bishop’s blamelessness? The church? Potential opponents? The community at large? God?
- In each case, how would being a one-woman man *mias gynaikos andra* – μιᾶς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα, “faithful to his wife”, contribute to this blamelessness?



10. PAUSE – PART ONE

This quiet activity allows a pause for reflection before moving on.



“It is good to pause for moment, to allow us to catch up with ourselves. So sit comfortably, and let’s have a moment of quiet.

...

And in the quiet, call to mind:
Anything you have found interesting.

...

Anything that has surprised you.

...

Anything that has been uncomfortable to hear.

...

Acknowledge it.

Hold it.

And know that you are held by God.

Leave a minute or so of quiet before continuing.



11. VIDEO 2: INTRODUCING TRANSLATION

This video introduces the idea of translation and layout as a way to clarify meaning.

Play the video until the pause sign appears.



12. TRANSLATING “LEADER”

Resources: Internet access and devices, or a range of Bible translations. Printed copies of topics resource sheet.

This activity gives an accessible introduction to translation and how using different translations can enhance our understanding. The activity can work in threes or whole table groups.



- A. 1 Timothy 3 uses two different words for church leaders. Mark them on the text with an *.
- B. 1 Timothy was originally written in the Greek language. The first word for leader in the text is *episkopēs* - ἐπισκοπῆς. The second word for leader in the text is *diakonous* - Διακόνους.
- C. Look at some different translations of those words. You could use different Bible versions in the room, or follow these links:



https://biblehub.com/1_timothy/3-1.htm



https://biblehub.com/1_timothy/3-8.htm

- D. Different Churches use different titles for their leaders. If you were translating 1 Timothy 3 for your own local church what two words would you use for church leaders?



13. DIGGING IN - PART 3

Resources: Printed copies of topics resource sheet.

This activity uses the idea of layout to highlight the structure of the text.



“Complete the first part of this activity by yourself, then get into pairs or threes to talk about your choices.”



We saw how the original Greek text of 1 Timothy has no spaces, paragraphs or punctuation.

- A. If you were going to divide the text into sections, what would the sections be? Draw lines on your copy of the text to show where each section begins and ends.
- B. Bible translators sometimes add headings or titles to the text of the Bible. What titles would you give each of the sections you have just marked? Write them on your copy of the text.
- C. Are any words, phrases or ideas repeated in each section? Underline them.
- D. Get into a larger group and discuss the reasons for your choices. What ideas are repeated in 1 Timothy 3? Why do you think they are repeated?



14. DISCUSSION TOPICS – REPUTATION

Resources: Print of topics resource sheet.

This activity works well in threes, or as a whole table. Distribute print-outs with the discussion topics.



Choose some of these topics and share your thoughts and questions with one another.



- 1. 1 Timothy 3:7 says a Church leader should have “a good reputation with outsiders”.
Why is this important?
How much does a Church leader need to fit in to the culture around?
- 2. Why is it important that a church leader be “worthy of respect” (verses 8 and 11) ?
Why is it important that a church leader be “above reproach” (verse 2) ?
- 3. Does verse 2 (and 12) mean that only men can be church leaders?
Why or why not?
Does it mean only married people can be leaders? Why or why not?
Does verse 4 mean only people with children can be leaders? Why or why not?



15. VIDEO 3: TRANSLATING “MAN OF ONE WIFE.”

This video shows how translation can change how we understand a text, and how scholarship and reading other scripture can give clarity.



Play the video until the pause sign appears.



16. FIND THE EVIDENCE

Resources: *Print outs. Envelopes.*

In this activity participants work in groups of around three to discover different pieces of evidence about how we read 1 Timothy 3:2.



Print the resource sheets, cut out the sections, and place them each in a numbered envelope. If you can't source envelopes you could simply fold the paper in half. Depending on your group size you may want to print extras.



○ TABLE-TOP VERSION

Place the envelopes in the middle of the table.

“We’re going to look at some evidence to see how we should read 1 Timothy 3:2, and whether it’s saying that only men could hold leadership roles in the early Church. On your table are 5 envelopes. Choose one, open it, read and discuss the questions. Then move on to the next envelope.”



○ WHOLE ROOM VERSION

Hide the envelopes around the room, on shelves, behind curtains taped under chairs and tables.

“We’re going to look at some evidence to see how we should read 1 Timothy 3:2, and whether it’s saying that only men could hold leadership roles in the early Church. Hidden around this room are 5 envelopes. When you find one, bring it back to your group, read it and discuss the questions. Then, once you’ve finished swap envelopes with another group.”



O QUICK VERSION

Give each group one envelope each.

“We’re going to look at some evidence to see how we should read 1 Timothy 3:2, and whether it’s saying that only men could hold leadership roles in the early Church. Read the information you have and discuss how it might inform how you read 1 Timothy 3:2.”

After about few minutes, ask them to pause their conversation and ask each group to briefly feed back what they discovered. Ask each group:

“Can you summarise the piece of evidence you had? How would it inform how we should read 1 Timothy 3:2?”

Conclude by asking two questions to the whole group:

“The question was,

“Does 1 Timothy mean that only men were to be leaders in the early Church?”

Did evidence from scholarship make things more or less clear?

Did evidence from the rest of the Bible make things more or less clear?”

● MARRIED WITH CHILDREN

If we assume that 1 Timothy 3 means only men were to be leaders in the early Church, do we assume that all leaders were to be married (verse 2 and 12)? Do we assume that only people with children could be leaders (verse 4 and 12)?

In 1 Corinthians 7:8 Paul writes to the early Church: “To the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do.”

Can you think of other early Church leaders that were not married?

● LOOKING AT THE GREEK

Reading 1 Timothy 3:2 as saying “a church leader must be a man” depends on decisions made by translators about the order and meaning of the words.

You don’t have to be an expert in Greek to look online and see what the original says and why it’s been translated into English in different ways.



Follow this link to see for yourself:

https://biblehub.com/interlinear/1_timothy/3-2.htm

● “HE”

Our English translation refers to the leaders by the pronouns he and him. Those aren't there in the original Greek language, but there is no easy way to translate that into English.

It can be hard for us to answer whether the language refers to men only or to everyone, so we can find out the opinions of scholars who read Greek all the time.

“Paul refers to the bishop throughout at a man. My reading of the rest of the New Testament inclines me to think that this is more because that's how Greek grammar normally refers to both genders together.”

Tom Wright

Paul for Everyone. The Pastoral Letters. SPCK, 2003

● FEMALE LEADERS

To answer our question we need to consider the list of female leaders in the New Testament. Some are named, some are not. Some had leadership titles. A few examples:

Phoebe, a deacon (Romans 16:1).

Junia, “outstanding among the apostles” (Romans 16:7).

Priscilla, a church planter (Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Timothy).

Nympha, who hosts a church (Colossians 4:15).

Consider: Some have argued that what these women did in the Church was not the same as the leadership roles mentioned in 1 Timothy. This is apart from Phoebe who is given the title ‘deacon’.

● MEN ONLY

It might be helpful to consider some common arguments that only men were allowed to be leaders in the early Church.

1. Jesus chose twelve men to be his apostles.
Consider: Jesus also chose twelve Jewish people to be his apostles, but there were non-jewish leaders in the early Church.
2. 1 Timothy 2:12 says: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.”

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 says “Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

Consider: Earlier in 1 Corinthians, in chapter 11, there are instructions about how men and women are to behave when they praying and prophesying, so it's not as straight forward as it seems when we read the verses by themselves. There is a lot going on behind both these texts.



17. "LIKEWISE, THE WOMEN."

Resources: *Print of quote and questions.*

Provide a printed copy of this material to each group.



Because the Greek in 1 Timothy 3:11 *gynaikas* - Γυναῖκες can be rendered either "women", or "wives", there is debate about whether this section refers to the wives of the male deacons, or is a word about female deacons.

Here is an excerpt from Andrew Robert Fausset's 1871 commentary:

"There is no reason that special rules should be laid down as to the wives of the deacons... there were doubtless deaconesses at Ephesus, such as Phoebe was at Cenchrea... it appears he requires the same qualifications in female deacons as in deacons, only with such modifications as the difference of sex suggested. PLINY, in his celebrated letter to Trajan, calls them "female ministers."

A. R. FAUSSET . The Pastoral Epistles of Paul the Apostle to Timothy and Titus, 1871

- What clues in the text point to a "deacon's wives" understanding?
- What clues in the text point to a "female deacons" understanding?
- What other factors, outside the text, influence how people make a determination like this?



ACADEMIC



18. PAUSE – PART TWO

Resources: Print of quote and questions.

This quiet activity allows a pause for reflection before moving on.

“We’re going to pause. To take time in the presence of God to process everything we have thought and heard. So sit comfortably, and let’s have a moment of quiet.

...

And in the quiet, allow yourself to be aware of the presence of God with us.

...

And before God, bring to mind:
Any questions that you have.

...

Any thoughts that are swirling.

...

Remember that all our thoughts, all our feelings, all our questions, are welcome before God.

...

Breathe deeply.
And know the peace of God.

Leave a minute or so of quiet before continuing.



19. VIDEO 4: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

This video moves the focus onto how we apply this scripture in our time and place, and outlines four approaches that could be taken.

Play the video until the pause sign appears.



20. APPLYING 1 TIMOTHY 3

This activity helps groups engage with the strengths and weaknesses of the four approaches to applying scripture discussed in the video.

○ ONLINE VERSION

Resources: Internet access. Mentimeter account. Mentimeter presentation prepared in advance.

- Log on to www.mentimeter.com
- Log In.
- Create "New Presentation".
- Click "New Slide".
- Select "Multiple Choice".
- Change the question text to: "Applying Scripture"
- Add a fourth option.
- Label the options: "Nothing to say to us."; "Word-for-word rules."; "The big ideas"; "Big ideas and specifics."
- Click "present"
- Display the slide on your screen.

"We're going to ask some questions about the four approaches to applying scripture discussed in the video.

If you have a device with you, go to menti.com, enter the code and then enter your answer. If you don't have a device with you someone else in your group can enter your answer for you."

When it's time to move on to the next question you can move your mouse to the left hand side of the presentation. The second button down in the menu is "reset results" and it allows everyone to vote again.

○ COLOURED CARDS VERSION

Resources: Blue, green, amber and red cards for each participant. Large blue, green, amber and red cards with the four options written on them: "Nothing to say to us."; "Word-for-word rules."; "The big ideas"; "Big ideas and specifics."

Display the four large coloured cards with the four options written on them where everyone can see. Each participant has four coloured cards. They hold up the card to indicate their view.

"Everyone has four cards. These represent four options for how you could apply a scripture like this and in a moment I'm going to ask you to hold up one of those cards. Blue is, this scripture has nothing to say to us today. Green means we use it to create word-for-word rules. Amber is we apply the big ideas from the scripture. Red is we apply the big ideas and the specifics."





ACTIVE

○ FOUR CORNERS VERSION

Resources: Four large pages with the options written on them: "Nothing to say to us."; "Word-for-word rules."; "The big ideas"; "Big ideas and specifics."

Display the four large pages with the four options written on them in the four corners of the room.

"We've marked four points in the room. These represent the four options of how you could apply a scripture like this, and in a moment I'm going to ask you to move to one of those point. Over here is where the scripture has nothing to say to us today. Over here is where we use the scripture to create word-for-word rules. Over here is where we apply the big ideas from the scripture. And over here is where we apply the big ideas and the specifics."

Ask each initial question, allow people to indicate their response, then use the follow up questions to generate a conversation:

"Which of these approaches do you think people apply to scripture most often?"
Does anyone want to tell us where they see this approach used?
Do you think it's a good or bad approach when it's used that way?"

"Which of these approaches has the most problems?"
Does anyone want to tell us what problems they see with this approach?"

"Which of these approaches do you see used most in your local church?"
Does anyone want to tell us where they see this approach used?"

"Which of these approaches do you think is most appropriate for 1 Timothy 3?"
Does anyone want to tell us why they chose that answer?"



21. THE IMPACT OF SCANDAL

Resources: Print of quote and questions.

Provide a printed copy of this material to each group.



ACADEMIC

Consider the conclusions of Frick, Moser and Simmons's event study of church scandal and the correlation to the number of people leaving the Church:

"Our preferred estimates show that the recent sexual abuse scandals had a significantly negative immediate as well as long-term impact, in the sense that, they increased the annual number of exits from the Catholic Church. Sexual abuse scandals in the Catholic Church also raised exit rates in the Protestant Church with a delay. In contrast, we find zero effects of the financial scandal on exits from the Catholic Church while there are positive impacts from these scandals on exits from the Protestant Church."

Bernd Frick, Katharina Moser, Rob Simmons, 'Spillover Effects of Scandals on Exits from the Catholic and Protestant Churches in Germany', Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Volume 60, Issue3, September 2021.

- What is the most notable thing about these findings?
- What anecdotal evidence is there about the impact of church scandals in your context?
- In your context, what are the differences between the impact of a scandal that involves sexual behaviour compared to another form of scandal eg. finance? What are the reasons for these differences?



22. DISCUSSION TOPICS – APPLYING 1 TIMOTHY 3

Resources: *Print of topics resource sheet.*

This activity works well in threes, or as a whole table. Distribute print-outs with the discussion topics. Depending on your group you might want to help them select which topics they discuss by advising them, circling certain topics, or scoring others out. This is where everything lands, so allot a good amount of time for this if it suits your group.

Choose two or three of these topics and share your thoughts and questions with one another.

1. It's a common question: Which parts of scripture do we live by and why?
Why do people find this difficult?
Is this a difficult question when it comes to sexuality?
2. What would it mean to “be worthy of respect”, “above reproach”, and “have a good reputation with outsiders” in your community?
How much does this differ between one community and another?
What stays the same?
How much is sexual behaviour a part of this?
3. Tom Wright says that 1 Timothy 3:
“implies that there were some, perhaps many, people in the early Christian churches who did have two or more wives – just as there are some converts in churches in Africa, for example, who have come from a background where polygamy is normal.”

Tom Wright. Paul for Everyone – The Pastoral Letters. SPCK, 2003. Pg 30.

Do you imagine the early Church being made up of people with a range of different sexual relationships and practices?

Do you think the Church today is made up of people with a range of different sexual relationships and practices?

Tom Wright comments:

“they should be accepted as members of the church as they are, but should not be put in a position of leadership where they would then be regarded as role models.”

Is the “role model” aspect of leadership a good reason to expect particular sexual behaviour from church leaders?

Are there other reasons?

4. Are there certain character and behaviour expectations for leaders in your local church?
Are there certain character and behaviour expectations for everyone in your local church?
Are the expectations the same or different?
Are there different character and behaviour expectations for different roles in your local church?
How might sexual behaviour come into this?

Finish the session with some group feedback.

“Who would like to tell us what topic they discussed and what their thoughts were?”



23. VIDEO 5: FINAL REFLECTIONS



Play the video until the pause sign appears.





24. RESPONDING

Resources: Pens and paper. Prints of Responding resource sheet.

Depending on your group you might want to leave them with more than just the two questions from the video to think about. This list of response suggestions can go home with people or, if you have some extra time, you could do them together

“There are lots of ways we can respond to what we hear in scripture. Here are a few suggestions that you can use to help get the scripture into our heads, hearts and lives.”

Responding to Scripture.

This week, ask yourself:

- Where are the places of influence God has called me to?
- What areas of my life can God be at work in so that I can be ‘above reproach’?

You might want to respond in some more ways. Here are some suggestions.

- Write a personal prayer responding to what you’ve heard in the scripture.
- Create something: a poem; a painting; a list; a sculpture; a meal; a photograph; a wordcloud.
- Read or listen to all of 1 Timothy at BibleGateway.com.
- Choose just one word or phrase and think about what it means.
- List some personal commitments that you want to make in the coming week.
- Read some more about how to apply scripture to our lives:



<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/how-to-apply-the-bible-to-your-life-in-four-steps>



23. CLOSING

“When we open the scriptures together there is always more to be said, deeper to go. So just pause for a moment and think about the questions you still have. What’s next for those questions? Is it something you need to hold in prayer? Or continue to think through? Or to bring to the scriptures again? Or to follow up with a conversation or an action?”

- Thank everyone for coming and taking part.
- Remind people to respect one another by keeping any opinions and stories shared confidential.
- Remind people where to find appropriate pastoral support if desired.
- Share details of any future Bible studies.



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