

Theological Reflection on 1 Timothy 3:1-15 and Its Implications For Christian Leaders in Contemporary Nigeria

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Abstract

The Christian community at the global front is confronted with leadership issues that pervade the social landscape in which the church of God, particularly in contemporary Nigeria society, is not an exception. Hence, an examination of Paul's instructions to Timothy for the leaders and potential leaders of the church in Ephesus underscores the weight and expectation of God, and the society on Christian leaders at all times. Paul in his pastoral epistle to his disciple, Timothy, listed some qualities expected in the life of the would-be church leader. However, looking at some of the contemporary Nigeria Christian leaders, with attendant cases of moral ineptitude and leadership failure, there is a clear departure from Pauline list of qualifications for church leaders. This paper attempts an explicit and inductive explanation of the qualifications of Christian leaders: the office of the overseer and the deacon. It seeks to draw out biblical injunctions for Christian Leaders. Consequently, the diachronic approach of form criticism was employed to gain an understanding of the leadership qualities expected of church leaders who would bear the burden of leading others, which also serves as a model for contemporary church and society. As a result, a critical study of the Greek and English texts of the passage was examined in order to know what the text meant in their original context and their application to our contemporary society. The result suggests that leadership, in Biblical perspective, is devoid of any form of worldly features.

Key words: Theological Reflection, Christian Leaders, Contemporary Nigeria, Deacon, Overseer

Introduction

Christian leadership in the contemporary Nigerian society is gradually losing the honour and dignity attached to the office and men in the position of leadership. Ideally, the office of the pastor or overseer of the church should be that of trust and confidence. Lately, church leaders are daily being accused of different immoral activities ranging from rape scandal, sexual abuse of members, molestation of minors, diversion of church funds to personal use, flamboyant lifestyle, unwholesome competition among church leaders and much other morally deficient behaviour. These have often made the society cast aspersion on the name of the Lord and position of leadership in contemporary Nigerian society. Jesus Christ, in one of His teachings on the mountain to his disciples said “You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matt 5:13 NASB). The implication of the above statement is becoming real among Christian leadership in Nigeria. Paul in his First Epistle to Timothy instructed him on qualifications for anyone who desire to occupy the office of the pastor or overseer. The need to strictly adhere to Biblical qualifications for the positions of leadership in Christian cycle cannot be better emphasised than now.

Authorship of 1 Timothy

Although the first letter of Timothy begins with Apostle Paul's name, there have been disagreements among scholars as to the genuineness of this claim. There are four primary arguments used against Pauline Authorship of all three of the Pastoral Epistles.

The first is the question of historical accuracy. The life events of Paul listed by the author in the two Timothy Epistles and Titus do not appear to fit into the account of Paul's life found in Acts.

The second problem is ecclesiastical; the discussion of bishops, elders and deacons seems to indicate a more advanced form of church government than existed during the lifetime of Paul.

The third and strongest argument concerns linguistic style and vocabulary that differs from Paul's other letters. The final argument is about potential doctrinal emphasis that differs from Paul's other writings and teachings, (Gaebelein, 1997, p. 341).

With regards to historical differences, Towner (2006, p.23), argues that one must keep in mind that the Book of Acts was not intended to be a complete historical record of the early church, but to show the spread of Christianity from a small group of Jewish people in the heart of Jerusalem towards the end of the earth through the Gentiles. Furthermore, early church history and tradition teaches that Paul was released from prison in early 60s AD, travelled towards Spain, and was imprisoned a second time in which he was martyred in the hand of Emperor Nero in late 60s AD (Ellis, 1993, pp. 661-666). More so, the Book of Acts ends with Paul's first imprisonment and if he was released through an appeal to Caesar, this could account for the actions of Paul in Pastoral Epistles that are not found in Acts. The argument against Pauline authorship on historical differences therefore, cannot be downplayed when most scholars believed that 1 Timothy and Titus were written sometimes after Paul's first Roman imprisonment. As a matter of fact, a large number of scholars believed that the letter was written long after Paul died; hence it is a pseudonymous literature (Capes, Reeves and Richards, 2007, p. 241) Therefore genuine Pauline authorship is entirely subject to debate. However, this study is of the opinion shared by scholars who argued in favour of Paul's authorship.

On the ground of ecclesiology (church structure), in his letter to the Philippians, Paul addresses the saints of the church together with the overseer (bishop) and deacon, an evidence that there was church structure during the life of Paul (Towner, 2006, p. 23). A close examination of Paul's discussion of the church structure in his letters and obtainable in the New Testament, shows that Pauline epistle is congruent with New Testament church structure. The argument against Paul's authorship on the ground of church structure can also be refuted.

On the issue of linguistic style and vocabulary differences between the Pastoral Epistles and the other writings attributed to Paul, Mounce (2006) pointed out that the absence of certain vocabulary of Paul in different epistles does not mean that these words were not part of the vocabulary of Paul, it simply means that he chose to express himself in different ways in different circumstances. The situations of things or issues addressed in the letters vary greatly from those discussed in other Pauline writings; it is natural to expect Paul to use different vocabulary and style. More so, pastoral epistle were written to named individuals (Timothy and Titus), other letters were written to

the general public. The difference in linguistic style and vocabulary can be justified and Paul's authorship affirmed.

The final argument on doctrinal emphasis can also be refuted on the purpose and circumstances of the epistle. The Pastoral epistles were personal letters specifically addressed to Timothy and Titus, to instruct them on leadership as well as how to establish leadership within the churches at Ephesus and Crete (Carter, 2007). It could therefore be inferred that, Paul choose to emphasise on the doctrine of the church in his Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus because of their position of leadership in church, at the time of writing the letters. Based on Timothy and Titus' personal relationship with Paul, one can conclude that Paul's genuine authorship should not be in doubt. Although the authorship of Pastoral Epistles by Paul was contended by some scholars, however, readers have every reason to believe in Paul's genuine authorship and the authority of the epistles for the church today.

Dating 1 Timothy

Controversies surround the actual time the Book of 1 Timothy was written. According to Gaebelein (1997, p. 343), the dating of 1 Timothy depends on what one believes about the outcome of Paul's imprisonment in Rome where the Book of Acts ends. If Paul was martyred during the imprisonment which is believed to have taken place about 59-61 AD, it is most likely that he wrote this letter in late 50s AD. To compensate for the difference between the events in the Pastoral Epistles and Acts, it would be assumed there were omitted details in the Acts account. The early church almost unanimously testifies that Paul was put to death by Emperor Nero, who committed suicide in June of 68 AD and the second letter of Timothy was written from Roman imprisonment just before his execution. The first letter of Timothy is however thought to have been written between 62 and 66 AD. This paper adopts the date of 1 Timothy to be between 62-66 AD (Ibid, 343).

Historical Setting

The Book of 1 Timothy identifies Ephesus as the location of the church in which Timothy had been assigned to work (Towner, 2006). Ephesus was a strategic city identified by Paul. He made multiple visits there to establish and build up a Christian community and spent several years there, as contained in

the book of Acts. Ephesus was a large harbour and economically robust city. It was a centre of high point of diversity and religious complexity. It was a place known for the practice of sorcery and soothsaying, and the Christian community there faced great oppositions that required Paul's unending encouragement for perseverance in truth, in order to withstand pagan influence on the Christians, and to fight against false teachers.

A Study of 1 Timothy 3:1-15

A. Office of the Overseer, Pastor or Bishop -1 Timothy 3:2-7

Πιστοῦς ὁ λόγος· εἰ τις ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεται, καλοῦ
ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ. Δεῖ οὖν τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἀνεπίληπτον εἶναι, μιᾶς
γυναικὸς ἄνδρα, νηφάλειον, σώφρονα, κόσμιον, φιλόξεινον, διδακτικόν·

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer then must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?) and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (NASB).

The phrase Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος. in its transliterated form means “trustworthy is the word”. The New American Standard Bible translated it as “it is a trustworthy statement”. Accordingly, it is one of the unique styles of Paul in his pastoral epistles to draw the attention of the reader. It is the second of the five “trustworthy statements” in the pastoral letters (Utley, 2013). Paul sees the office of an overseer as a noble position and he that desires to occupy the office to be an honourable person. The Greek term *episkopos* translated in English to mean overseer, bishop (KJV) or pastor, a leader in a local church, an extension of one who guards, supervises and help (Goodrick, 1552). The word

ἐπισκοπῆς which in the Greek suggests a deeper meaning. For example, it is a combination of two words; ἐπι and σκοπῆς. The first *epi* means upon, and the second *skopos* which means one who is superintendant, an overseer, watchman, and guardian. Hence, the adoption of the NASB translation gives us an easier understanding of the text under study. In the New Testament, it was used only for church officials ordained to the body responsible for spiritual welfare of the church and governance (Zodhites, 1996, p. 1626). Ἐπισκοπῆς also conveys the idea of authority and points to ranking position of the official. It also involves his responsibility as one who along with other council of elders is accountable to God for the affairs of the church (cf. Heb. 13:7). However, Paul does not see everyone as qualified for the position; hence he lists the qualities that those who aspire for the office must possess, particularly men. To occupy the office of the overseer, Paul states that such an individual should be “above reproach” or be “blameless”. This quality of ἀνεπί ληπτου literally means “nothing to take hold on”. The phrase Δεῖ οὖν τὸ νῆπι σκοπονἀνεπί ληπτονεῖναι (in Greek is translated by the RSV thus: “Now a bishop must be above reproach...”. The first qualification stands as the generally overarching, all embracing quality over other qualities. An overseer must be above reproach, all that follows explain what this entails (Strauch, p. 188). The quality of being blameless shows moral purity that an overseer must possess such that Satan or unbelievers will have nothing to criticize or attack the church on his account.

Scholars share different views about the next requirement for the office of the overseer, μιᾷς γυναικὸς ἢ υἱοῦ (translated as “husband of one wife”). The phrase in Greek means “a one woman man” (Mounce, 2006, p. 197). A leader (Overseer, Bishop) who has the gift of celibacy can choose not to marry (just as Jesus Christ and Paul were never married). Also, a leader can remarry if his wife passes away. In essence, a leader should be one who is an individual capable of marital fidelity. This also suggests that a bishop should be able to demonstrate an evidence of being true and faithful husband of his wife (Olalekan, 2009).

The list of qualification for the office of the overseer continues in verse 2 with the characteristics of being temperate, self-controlled, and respectable. The three qualities exhibit outward character of a man that is well coordinated inside. The implications of these qualities enumerated suggest that the overseer must be a man of sound mind, balanced judgment, proper order or decorum.

The next quality of being *φιλό ξενον* (adj. accusmasc sing no degree) “**hospitable**” literally means 'loving strangers' or “friends of strangers”. “Such hospitality was a universal virtue, but because inns in antiquity usually functioned also as a brothels, Jewish people in Diaspora were especially willing to take in fellow Jewish travellers, as long as the travellers bore letters of recommendation certifying their trustworthiness” (Keener, p. 612). Therefore, Christians, especially Christian leaders had to have their homes open for itinerant missionaries and for the needy in their communities. The above submission does not negate the caution today's church leaders must exercise and exhibit, due to the fact that there exists contextual variations and realities between Paul's day and ours, especially now that the Nigerian nation is becoming too vulnerable in terms of security.

Another important quality of an overseer is *διδασκτικό ν* (adj. accusmasc sing no degree) “**able to teach.**” Ability to teach is one of elders' main ministries (2 Timothy 2:24). Teaching is listed as a separate gift in 1 Cor. 12:28 but linked to the gift of a Pastor in Ephesians 4:11. The ability to teach, according to Strauch (1995), entails three primary elements: knowledge of scriptures, the readiness to teach, and the ability to communicate. The overseer must not be a “dynamic speaker” so to say, however, should be able to defend the truth in the face of false teachers and immature group of believers. A Pastor must be a careful student of the word of God, who is able to rightly divide the word of truth both in public and in private. More so, he must also be “**not drunk**” “**not addicted to wine**”. According to MacArthur (1995), in Paul's time, water was impure. Hence, mixing wine and water together both diluted the alcohol content and purified the water, which is why Paul instructed Timothy in Chapter five not to drink water exclusively (p. 111). However, the water available nowadays are safe for drinking, hence, no overseer should hide under the guise of a little wine (Personal conversation, 2021). Therefore, the phrase *μηπὶ ροινον* transliterated “no drunkard” could be interpreted to mean “one who sits long at his wine, one who is a slave to drink” (Rogers JR & Rogers III, 1997, p. 492). This informed the position of most scholars that the word *νηφαλιον* (self-controlled, sober, temperate) is linked to attitude of leader(s) in church who are given to wine, especially with high alcoholic content. Rogers JR and Rogers III (1997) argue that the word in its original state means total abstinence from alcohol (p. 492). This study subscribes to their position because

anyone in leadership position and is given to alcohol may soon become drunk and will lose his balance or control. As such, his behaviour would attract a public attention to the church in a negative direction. Other qualities mention in verse 4 says, “But gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money”. Paul contrasts a man that is pugnacious and demanding to be a man that is gentle and knows when to yield his rights to others. Someone that is considerate and ready to let go his privileges for the sake of Christ and the reputation of the office he occupies. Paul further enunciates on the issue of money in 1 Timothy 3: 3 *ἀφιλάργυρον* translated “not a lover of money”. This agrees with what is captured in chapter 6:6 which says, “Godliness with contentment is a great gain.” The love of money will erode the character of gentleness, and peace loving nature, hence, the need to be content with whatever God provides legitimately for the overseer.

In the concluding part of the qualities required of the office of an overseer, Paul identified three major relationship needed for effectiveness of an overseer. First, being able to manage his household (NASB). The question Paul asked is, “for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?”(RSV).Paul recognised home as the first point for a man to practice his Christian faith, beginning with his wife, then the children. Stott (1997) posits that, “Paul draws an analogy between the pastor's family and God's church.” Hence, he uses the word *οἶκοι* (household) of both family and church (4, 5, 15) that is, the married pastor is called to leadership in two families: His own family and the family of God (church). The former is the training-ground for the latter (p. 98). De Silva's (2004) thought agrees with this assertion when he posits that “leaders are to be model heads of households, revealing an interesting assumption that leaders in the church would normally be leaders in the households as well, especially showing evidence of having brought their natural children into the faith” (Tit. 1:6). He added that the “management of the household becomes the proving ground for the management of the household of God” (p. 752-753). The second relationship according to Paul is that he must have been firmly rooted in his faith in God. The phrase “not newly converted” or “*νοτινεοτηήσῃτε*” implies that the overseer or bishop must not be a young convert who is seen to be a novice (new plant). The danger of this is that he will have exaggerated ideas of his own importance which will result in pride. The third important relationship expected of an overseer is with “outsiders.” According to Fraught (2013), the word outsider as

used by Paul is on the basis of contact and interactions. This is the “catch-all” group, anyone is a neighbour to us, whether Christian or not. In this context, “outsider” are all those who are not members of our household and church family but of the community. An overseer must not just manage his household well, or be well grounded in faith in relation to his knowledge about God and doctrine of the word of God; he must also have good reputation with outsiders.

A Study of 1 Timothy 3:8-15: Office of the Deacon

Α. Διακό νους ὡσαύτως σεμνούς, μὴ διλόγους, μὴ ὀίνῳ πολλῷ προσέχοντας, μὴ ἄισχροκερδεῖς, ἔχοντας το ἰμωστήριον τῆς πίστεως ἐν καθαροῦ συνειδήσει.

Deacon likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or found of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested, then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in the case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth (NASB).

The word *διακόνος* “*δεαχον*” is translated from a word often used with those who do menial tasks such as waiting on tables. Stott (1997) maintains that *διακονοσ* was the waiter at table and *διακονειν* means to engage in service of a social kind. Deacons therefore are to be involved and engaged in practical administration and ministry especially as depicted in Acts 6 (p. 100). The word is also used in various forms many times throughout the New Testament and simply translated “servant” (Gaebelein, p. 367). Paul gives the qualifications for those to be considered for the office of the deacon. The qualifications can be grouped into five categories as suggested by MacArthur (1995, p. 127) in his commentary on 1 Timothy.

The first quality mentioned is “respectable” (NIV). A deacon should be a

man of dignity. He must not be *μῆδιδλόγους*(that is, double-tongue, or insincere. The phrase *μῆδιδλόγους*(could mean, tale-bearer, suggesting that the person is a gossip (Rogers JR & Rogers III, 1997). One therefore needs consistency in what he/she says. That is, not saying one thing while thinking another, or not saying one thing to one man and a different thing to the next (Ibid. p. 492). This qualification according to MacArthur (1995) bothers on personal character of the would-be deacon in the church of God. God expects the same high moral standard of character from the overseer as he does from the deacon. The next three qualities listed: not double-tongued, not holding unto much wine and not greedy for money (material gain) are the answers to how the deacon will retain his reverence in the house of God and society at large.

The preceding verse has to do with an important aspect of the deacon's life: the spiritual condition. Paul says the deacon must be a man “keeping the mystery of the faith with a clean conscience.” Paul often refers to the “mystery” of the faith as revealed truth that was previously hidden, now manifested in such realities as the incarnation of Christ, the indwelling of Christ in believers, unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, and the saving Gospel (MacArthur, p. 127). Deacons must hold on to this mystery with clean and clear conscience, not just believing these to be true, but living them out in their daily lives.

Furthermore, Paul speaks of the deacon's Christian service. MacArthur, in explaining the above verse said, it would be a mistake to think that individuals within a leadership or exemplary position should be tested once. Furthermore, to be beyond reproach means living a continual lifestyle that embodies all the qualifications (MacArthur, p. 127). Being a faithful steward is a mark of a deacon. The deacon should be tested from time to time to ascertain consistency in their stewardship.

The next qualification on **“their wives are to be women worthy of respect”** left scholars with different interpretations as to who Paul was referring to here. MacArthur (1995) said the interpretations of women can be divided into four possibilities: Wives as deacons, wives of deacons, deacon assistant, and women in general or female deacon. After examining the arguments, majority favours Paul referring to the office of female as deacons or deaconess. Reason being that while 1 Timothy 2 does prohibit women from having leadership over men, deaconess is not a leadership role or body but of service. Women have part to play in the household of God, this they can be expressed through the office of

deacon in the church (p. 130).

The final condition for the office of the deacon as listed by Paul touches the family life of the deacon. Similarly with the overseer, Paul emphasises the importance of home management to the office the deacon. The phrase “husband of but one wife” prohibits all deviation from faithful monogamous marriage. Marital purity is part of the moral standard expected of the deacon in the household of God. In verse 14 and 15, concluding instruction to Timothy for the two offices of overseer and deacon, Paul revealed his plan to visit Timothy in Ephesus in no distant time; however, the instructions on leadership of the church must be carried out as directed in his absence. His desire is to regulate the affairs of the church when he comes, but the instructions are to be carried out in the interim period (Stott, 1997, p. 103). According to Paul, the church of God should be a place of uncompromising truth and centre of excellence. The household of God should be a model for the world and the society, likewise men that occupy ecclesiastical positions must be men of high moral integrity and excellence, standing on the foundation and pillar of truth.

Christian Leadership in Contemporary Nigeria

Christian leaders in Nigeria are the heads of different denominations or Para – church organisations that spread across the length and breadth of the nation. Church leaders are called by different appellations or titles ranging from General Superintendent, General Overseers, Apostle, Arch Bishop, Pastor, Evangelist etc., depending on the denominations. Generally, church leaders occupy the position of spiritual guidance and community leaders in various spheres of domain. They are well respected by their church members and community, for the fact that people see them as representatives of the Most High God. Suffice it to say that Paul's emphasis in his letter to Timothy was not focused on the organisational structure of the church, but the life of the church and the characters of its leaders. The reason is that there were a lot of false teachers who pervaded the Christian churches with persistent threat of false doctrines in his absence (Capes, Reeves, & Richards, 2007). It is pertinent to call the various leaders of the church in Nigeria to give heed to their lifestyle instead of focusing solely on organisational structure. For example, in recent times, 'the national dailies are replete with stories and news of prophets who dupe; engage in financial fraud, sexual immorality and prowl about in priestly

cassocks to rob their victims of money and household property worth of millions of naira' (Oke, 2012). This suggests that the alleged leaders do not pay much attention to their spiritual life, or in the first instance their entrance to ministry was or is on a faulty foundation. Similarly, Tanu (2012, p. 252) compared the sins of Eli with the immoral acts of some ministers of God in Nigeria. While sons of Eli defiled innocent women; today, children and women are defiled by priests who are supposed to be their guiding parents and spiritual leaders. The children are raped and illegal abortions are committed regularly by some of the so-called men of God. She concluded that the society no longer respects the pastors as shapers of conscience and communicators of moral values. Many Nigerian pastors have been involved in one scandal or the other. The most rampant is sex scandal. The latest being a rape scandal against the Senior Pastor of a well-known Pentecostal church in Abuja. Cases like this continue to expose the church of God and leaders of the church to barrage of attacks from unsaved ones, who ordinarily should see the glorious light of the gospel of Christ through the life of Church leaders. This illicit engagement and relationships pervades the spiritual landscape of the Christian circle in recent times.

Paul's Teachings as a Model for Christian Leadership in Nigeria

Paul's instructions to Timothy for leaders of the church in Ephesus as contained in I Timothy 3:1-15 is such that church leaders must possess high personal moral standard to match the nobility of their office. This text therefore reminds us that "leadership in the church requires people of noble mind, virtuous conduct and proven character so that the church and the gospel will not be disgraced (DeSilva, 2009, p. 771). Paul instructed that Christian leaders must be blameless and above reproach in all ramifications. It is expedient to mention that Jesus' expectation of his followers is vividly captured in the Gospel according to St. Matthew on the discourse, Sermon on the Mount (5:13-16). The evangelist painted the picture of the would-be follower of Christ with the metaphor of salt and light (Stott, 2006, p 83). Hence, leaders of the church should realise that their influence on the followership and the world is very critical to the life, growth and impact of the church positively on the world around her. Leadership position in the church of God should be held in the highest esteem hitherto. Also, the name of God, as well as the temple and altar of

the living God must be given the highest honour it deserves, whatever the prize or cost.

It is of paramount importance for Christians in Nigeria to strictly adhere to the requirements outlined in I Timothy 3:1-15 for selection, ordination and appointment of people into leadership positions in the church. Concerted efforts must also be made to do background checks, in order to ensure that people appointed into leadership positions in the church, either as Pastors or deacons actually match the qualifications listed in Paul's letter to Timothy.

Any intending church leader should critically examine the qualifications listed by Paul in the light of self-control and stability of character. They must be distinctive in life and character. Suffice to say that character and charisma are all needed for effective leadership. Therefore, the two must go together. Any man that cannot control his appetite and manage his life correctly cannot manage the people and church of God adequately. For instance, since the relationship a family man shares with his wife and children will affect his leadership position positively or negatively, it is expected of him to make necessary adjustments, to suit the position he occupies, or else do otherwise e.g. resigns. Christian leaders in Nigeria should adopt the instruction of Paul as divine counsel to them from God for their personal success and fulfilment in life and ministry. Hence, the need to study and re-examine their lives to see if it is in tandem with Paul's instructions, just as it was in the days of Paul and Timothy, became necessary. "Such an office needs the right kinds of people to serve" (Olaekan, 2009). Furthermore, some problems of leadership in the church today are traceable to harsh economic weather and unfavourable political atmosphere, with attendant insecurity situation. All the aforementioned factors influence the loyalty of the leaders in one way or the other. Therefore, some of them may not endure the hard times, leading to compromises of different kinds. Additionally, success in church leadership hinges on the exegetical understanding and systematic application of the word of God. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:15 to study in order to show himself approved unto God and the people of God.

Conclusion

Christian leadership is a position of honour, trust and confidence. Therefore, it should not be occupied by men that do not have the prerequisite

qualifications as detailed in the scriptures. With the attendant socio-political and economic challenges facing the Nigerian society, the church of God in Nigeria needs men of integrity, proven to be above board, leaders they can trust with their lives, to pilot the affairs of the church of God. The standard of God's word must not be lowered or compromised for leaders and potential leaders of churches in Nigeria, to maintain the integrity of God's word, and for the church to remain the pillar and foundation of truth. Paul's epistle to Timothy on church leadership was greatly inspired by God. The instructions are relevant today, especially in a post COVID-19 era just as they were in Paul's days.

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