

## How to Use Your Influence for Christ

### 1 Timothy 3

#### Introduction:

1. As we said last week, leaders for God are not born, they are grown.
2. You may not have leadership gifts, and you may never be a pastor of a church, but any believer can grow in Christ and influence others for Christ.
3. This is what a spiritual leader is. It is a person who has grown and matured spiritually and is now an influence and an impact on others. Your influence may be over your children, your grandchildren, your spouse, younger believers at church, co-workers, etc.
4. This chapter is all about spiritual leaders and the characteristics of a spiritual leader. After spending 14 verses describing spiritual leaders, notice what he says in verse 15: “...*that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God...*”
5. The word “*house*” here carries the idea of a family. If you are saved, you are part of the family of God. Paul calls it the church, the body of Christ. We are all part of the same body.
6. In a family, all members of the family are expected to conduct themselves in a certain way. If one member of the family gets out of sorts, it affects the entire family.
7. In the same way, Paul (referring back to the character traits in this chapter) says that every member of God’s house (family) should behave in this way.
8. Do not think that this chapter only applies to pastors and deacons. Every one of us has influence over somebody (for good or bad), but every believer must use his or her influence for Christ. How can we do that?

#### First, a leader learns from the past.

1. How many of us in here have a past? We all do, don’t we? Some of it, we would rather forget. Nevertheless, it is part of us.
2. Do you know what you can change about your past? Absolutely nothing! But you CAN learn from your past! Through Christ, you can change the meaning of your past.
3. Notice in verse 6, Paul states that a pastor mustn’t be a “*novice*.” This literally means “newly planted; a new convert.”
4. All those who come to Christ have a past. Many times it is a tale of the good, the bad, and the ugly. It takes **time** to understand our past in the light of who we are now in Christ.
5. When people first get saved, there are old ways of thinking and behaving that have been ingrained in their minds. It takes time to change those old thinking patterns.
6. This is why we said that leaders for God are grown. But growth takes time. Romans 12:2
  - Before salvation, we were conformed to Satan’s world system. Our minds must be renewed by an understanding of God’s Word. This eventually leads to a complete transformation of the way we think and live.
  - We then begin making decisions that are good, acceptable, and spiritually mature - decisions that are in accordance with God’s revealed will.
7. God will not hold your past against you. People will, and sometimes churches will, but God will not. Paul is an example of this. He was a violent, bloody, and ruthless fellow. But he learned from his past, and was not timid about sharing that.

8. Regardless of your past, you can be a leader for God and influence others and impact others for Christ. If you are a novice (new believer), you may not be ready to pastor a church, but you can begin influencing others for Christ.

### **A leader stays humble in the present.**

1. Why does Paul teach that a novice should not be placed in a leadership position in the church?
2. Look at verse 6: “...lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”
3. When you get saved, God starts doing some wonderful things in your life. God starts rooting bad things out, and God replaces those evil things with good things. Your attitudes, actions, appearance, language, habits, etc., begin changing.
4. One of the first mistakes that a new convert makes is thinking that he or she is doing these things, when it is really God that is doing it. Philippians 4:13
  - It is easy to start getting a little puffed up about the good things that are happening.
  - **Illustration:** Peter was so proud of his resolve. “Everybody else may deny you, Jesus, but not me!” We start thinking we are a cut above others.
5. Many young believers get thrown into positions or ministries because the church has a need. But they are not ready for it, they get puffed up with pride, and it can destroy them or really set them back in their Christian walk.
6. Sometimes there is just no substitute for experience. Romans 5:3-4
7. The longer you are saved, the more problems you have to work through. And do you know what happens? You begin to see more and more your utter helplessness and your total need of God’s strength and God’s sufficiency. 2 Corinthians 3:5, 9:8, 12:9
8. A leader for God sees and knows all the wonderful changes that God has done in his life, but he knows exactly where the praise should go! With humility, he or she says, “Thank you, Jesus.”

### **A leader desires impact for the future.**

1. A leader is able to see beyond today, into the future. A spiritual leader is able to see how decisions today will impact his or her future.
2. Notice verse 7 where Paul says that a spiritual leader “...must have a good report of them which are without [outside the church]; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”
  - The word “report” means “evidence given.” It is also translated “record,” “report,” “testimony,” “witness.”
3. Spiritual maturity shows up at home and at church, but also outside the church in everyday life. Those outside the church - those who are lost - see your testimony for Christ.
4. A testimony takes years to build, but seconds to lose. A spiritual leader desires future impact. He knows others are watching his life and listening to his witness, and he knows it may take several years to see the spiritual fruit of those souls coming to Christ.

5. Therefore, he is careful to live in a way that will not tarnish the name of Christ and turn people away from the truth of the gospel. He wants future impact, so he is careful to maintain a good and solid testimony.

**In Conclusion:**

1. As we said earlier, this chapter is not just a checklist for somebody wanting to be a pastor or deacon. This is what spiritual maturity looks like.
2. God's desire is that every believer at CrossRoads grow and spiritually mature in Christ so that our church can be a pillar and ground of God's truth here in this community.
3. Learn from your past, stay humble in the present, desire impact for the future!