

October 5, 2025
Discussion Guide: Leadership U

SUMMARY: Jesus inevitably leads believers against the current of the world, where opposition is to be expected. From the birth of the Church, Jesus declared that His movement of called-out followers would stand victorious against the powers of darkness. The Church is not simply about programs, buildings, or budgets, but about making disciples who clear the path to Jesus. As the mission advances, opposition increases, yet the ultimate promise remains: the Church will prevail. A key aspect of this mission lies in the development of godly leadership. Drawing from 1 Timothy 3:1–13, the message outlined the qualifications of elders and deacons, the two roles entrusted with the greatest responsibility in the local church. Leadership is defined not simply by skills or influence but by character. Qualities such as being above reproach, self-controlled, sensible, hospitable, and able to teach are central, while behaviors such as quarrelsomeness, greed, and substance abuse are disqualifiers. Leadership in the church is not about privilege but responsibility, and its effectiveness must begin within the home. Ultimately, the call to leadership is a noble one, but it begins with character, not competency. The strength of the Church depends on leaders who model discipleship first in their families and then in the broader congregation. God’s “leadership university” is built on the principle that influence flows from consistent character shaped by the Holy Spirit. Every believer is invited to pursue these qualities, striving for lives marked by integrity and faithfulness so that the mission of the Church continues to move forward with resilience and power.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Opposition Can Mean Progress:** The advancement of God’s kingdom has always faced resistance, and that opposition is not a sign of failure but evidence that God is at work. When evil manifests, it reflects the enemy’s hatred of God’s movement, not his victory. The Church must not be surprised by hardship but see it as confirmation of being on mission. Jesus has already promised that His Church will prevail against the gates of hell. This gives believers confidence to remain faithful even when challenges arise.
- **The Church’s True Mission:** The Church is more than buildings, programs, or budgets; its core mission is to make disciples who grow in knowing and applying the teachings of Jesus. When believers are focused on clearing the path to Christ, the enemy takes notice. Genuine discipleship requires perseverance, courage, and faithfulness, especially when it disrupts the comfort of the world’s current. The Church exists as a called-out assembly with an eternal purpose. This mission has been inherited from the earliest followers and continues today.

- **Leadership Shaped by Character:** God prioritizes character over talent when it comes to leadership within the Church. Elders and deacons carry the greatest responsibility, and their influence must be grounded in qualities such as integrity, self-control, hospitality, and faithfulness. Skills may be important, but lasting influence comes from a consistent life of godly character. Negative traits such as greed, quarrelsomeness, or abuse of power disqualify a person from spiritual leadership. The Church flourishes when its leaders reflect the character of Christ.
- **Leadership Begins at Home:** Effective leadership in the Church begins with effective leadership in the home. Scripture emphasizes that an overseer must be able to manage their household well before taking on responsibility in the congregation. This principle highlights the overlap between family discipleship and church discipleship. Children and spouses should see faith modeled authentically in everyday life. If a leader cannot shepherd their own family, they cannot shepherd the broader church.
- **God's Leadership University:** The process of developing church leaders is not about polishing skills first but about deepening the roots of character through the Holy Spirit. Every believer should aspire to grow in the qualities outlined in 1 Timothy 3, even if not serving in an official role. Influence comes when character and competency align under God's design. Leaders are not expected to be perfect, but they must show a consistent pursuit of holiness and integrity. When rooted in character, God raises up leaders whose influence bears lasting fruit for His kingdom.

THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURAL TEXT: John 16:33; Matthew 16:17–18; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 3:9–11

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS:

1. What does Jesus declare about His Church in Matthew 16:17–18?
2. According to 1 Timothy 3:1–13, what qualities are listed for leaders in the church?
3. How does Paul describe the role of an overseer (elder) compared to a deacon?
4. What warnings does Paul give about negative qualities that disqualify someone from leadership?

INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think Jesus describes His Church as victorious over the gates of Hades?
2. What does it mean that leadership in the Church is based on character more than competency?
3. How might "above reproach" look in everyday life, and why is it important for spiritual leadership?

4. Why does Paul connect leadership in the church to leadership in the home?
5. What can the Church learn from Satan's strategy to attack leaders or distract from raising up new ones?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How can you prepare your heart to expect opposition when following Jesus instead of being discouraged by it?
2. What does discipleship look like in your own life right now? How could you grow in it?
3. Which of the leadership qualities in 1 Timothy 3 do you feel strongest in, and which one do you need God's help to grow in?
4. What does it look like for you to lead well in your home or among those closest to you?
5. How can you practice hospitality in a way that helps others see Jesus through your life?
6. What distractions or sins could potentially derail your influence for Christ, and how can you guard against them?
7. In what ways can you invest in or encourage the next generation of leaders, even if you don't hold an official title in the church?

5-DAY DEVOTIONAL:

Day 1 – Opposition Proves God Is Moving: The Church has always faced resistance, and it will until Jesus returns. Opposition does not mean that evil is winning but that God's kingdom is advancing. When the enemy works overtime, it's because he knows his future is sealed. Jesus has already promised His Church victory. Believers can face difficulties with courage, knowing that hardship confirms God is at work.

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." – Matthew 16:18 (CSB)

How can you reframe your current challenges as a sign that God is working in and through you?

Day 2 – The True Mission of the Church: The Church is not defined by programs, budgets, or buildings but by the call to make disciples. Discipleship is about learning and applying the teachings of Jesus and helping others do the same. This mission clears the path for people to encounter Christ personally. When the Church lives out this mission, the enemy resists because lives are being transformed. Our purpose is greater than activity; it is about eternal impact.

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28:19–20 (CSB)

What is one practical step you can take this week to intentionally disciple someone else?

Day 3 – Leadership Is About Character: True leadership in the Church is not about titles or talents but about character. The qualities outlined in 1 Timothy 3 focus on integrity, faithfulness, self-control, and hospitality. Influence comes when character and competency align under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Negative traits like greed, quarrelsomeness, or abuse of power destroy trust and credibility. God’s priority is that leaders reflect the character of Christ in every area of life.

“An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.” – 1 Timothy 3:2 (CSB)

Which of the character qualities in 1 Timothy 3 do you most want to develop in your own life?

Day 4 – Leadership Begins at Home: Paul emphasized that an overseer must manage his household well, showing the direct connection between family leadership and church leadership. A person’s influence begins with those closest to them. If leadership fails at home, it cannot succeed in the broader congregation. Discipleship often looks like modeling prayer, serving together, and demonstrating character in daily life. The family becomes the first place where faith is nurtured and lived out.

“He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity.” – 1 Timothy 3:4 (CSB)

How can you model discipleship more intentionally within your home or among those closest to you?

Day 5 – God’s Leadership University: God’s way of developing leaders begins with character before competency. While skills can be sharpened over time, a leader’s influence rests on living a consistent life of integrity and faith. No one is perfect, but through the Holy Spirit, believers can grow in a Christ-like character. As roots deepen in God’s Word, influence naturally expands. Leadership in God’s kingdom is about serving with humility, faithfulness, and the fruit of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.” – Galatians 5:22–23 (CSB)

Reflection Question: What step can you take this week to grow deeper in Christlike character, not just outward skill or activity?