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**Wanted:  
A Few  
Good Men!**

**# 1221-B**

**Series: I Timothy**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# Wanted: A Few Good Men!

A few years ago that huge, familiar billboard was an imposing sight indeed. As you rounded the curve on US 281, a lifelike picture of a suntanned, rugged looking Marine sergeant was staring down at you from his somewhat condescending perch above the traffic. A hint of steel characterized his eyes. His face was taut. His close-cropped hair seemed to say *discipline*. Underneath his portrait were only five words...but they said it all. They said: "*Wanted: A Few Good Men*".

Slogans mean something if you analyze the wording. "Wanted: A Few Good Men!" So think about it for a minute.

1- "Wanted" means there is a need. It means somebody has to fill that need, not everybody could, but somebody must.

2- "Few" means this was not for everybody. This was not a general appeal. Only a few men indicated that this was a somewhat specialized opportunity.

3- "Good" means that the request was limited not only by number but by quality. Only those of a certain caliber need apply.

4- "Men" means it was limited not so much because of discrimination, as by specifics. This call was for men because this job had been assigned to men. Other jobs, just as important, had been assigned to women. But this one was for men. Now that's how you draw a crowd you know. You say not everybody can qualify but everyone can apply—a few good men.

So the call was clear. A specific need existed that could only be filled by a few special men who would have to be certain kind of men to qualify. The very exclusiveness of the appeal added to its desirability. An element of intrigue existed simply because the inference was "not everyone could qualify".

*Wanted: A Few Good Men!* I hate to break it to the Marine Corps, but they didn't originate that appeal. Some 2,000 years ago, the first real recruiter of our age, a man named Paul, wrote a letter to his able assistant, a young corporal, if you will, named Timothy. Tim was in Ephesus, trying to untangle a web of theological confusion while his mentor was composing and

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dictating this letter from far off Macedonia. And in what we have come to know as chapter three of his first letter to young Tim, you might summarize the chapter with those five immortal words: Wanted: A Few Good Men!

The chapter preceding this one was a call to pray for those whom God would choose to lead his people, both those in positions of civil authority and those in positions of spiritual leadership. Then Paul proceeded to explain the issue of prayer as it relates to the Gospel, that God has a desire and that desire is that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the Truth.<sup>1</sup>

Then the apostle moved into a somewhat dangerous war zone: the process of defining the role of the godly woman. It was a word that would, in the years to come, be misquoted, and misunderstood; but nonetheless, a word, when properly received, would crystallize like a beautiful stained glass window, a picture of Christ and the church, the role of godly women.

Okay, you men who have been reveling in the parameters placed on womanhood in the passage just concluded might well hold on to your spiritual hats. Now the apostle is going to shift the message to the role of men in the church, and the limitations and exclusions make the Marine Corps look like the kiddie corps by comparison.

God is looking for a few good men...and for good cause. He wants them to shepherd the flock that Christ has called out to Himself before His return to the Father.

Wanted: a few good men—a few spiritually-qualified men whose lives demonstrate the nature of God with such clarity that they might be like beacons set before the body of Christ to lead it through this age. And there has never been an age in history when God needed *a few good men* more than He needs them today.

I must admit two things: 1) this is tough and 2) the nature of these qualities surprised me when I began to work through them. They were not what I expected even though I've read it through many times.

As we begin our look at God's concept of the godly man, we must be reminded that His standards have not changed in the nearly 2,000 years since the words were penned. We don't alter

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<sup>1</sup> I Timothy 2:4

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absolutes, Beloved, to accommodate a deteriorating society. You might even say it with me, “The grass will wither; the flower will fade, but the Word of our God will abide forever”.<sup>2</sup> Why? Because the God, who’s Word it is, is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So Paul’s words to the men in the church are just as true today as they were then.

As a recruiter for men, Paul now begins his task to engage in the greatest conflict in history, and he makes the transition from the role of the woman to the role of the man with this simple statement that you might tend to overlook if you’re not careful.

This is a true saying. If a man desire the office of a bishop,  
he desireth a good work. (I Timothy 3:1 KJV)

Saying, “This is a true saying,” would almost seem unnecessary. But, nothing is unnecessary in Scripture. What is Paul saying? The word translated true in the King James Version is the word (*pistos*) meaning *faithful* or *trustworthy*. It literally means here is a statement you can take to the bank. It is used only one other time in the New Testament, in II Corinthians 1:18, where Paul writes, “Just as God is true...”. So here is an irrefutable truth that this isn’t just true in the sense that it’s accurate as things stand today. This word is *faithful*, meaning it will *always be true*. Just as God is true, the Bible is just as true today as when Paul wrote it.

And what is it that Paul is about to say that is of such infallible importance? He continues,

If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work.  
(I Timothy 3:1b)

There are three keys to that sentence: *desire*, *bishop*, and *good work*.

Perhaps the first enigma in the passage is that word *desire*. We are told in Scripture not to seek to be exalted. We are told that, “he who exalts himself will be humbled”<sup>3</sup>. And now Paul tells us that there is an unchanging, undeniable truth that says if a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good thing. How do we reconcile this?

That word *desire* is the key. It is the Greek word *oregatai*; a word translated *sets his heart upon*. It means to aspire to something noble and grand, something that might indeed be

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<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 40:8

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 23:12, Luke 14:11

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beyond the grasp of the average person, but something that *everyone can reach for*.

One example might be the office of President of the United States. Millions of people in this country, from the ages of six to sixty, aspire to that office. In their adult lifetime, maybe ten will have that honor. That's not very good odds. But by *aspiring* to be president, they set their sights on excellence; on the stars if you will...not out of a greed to attain, but rather out of the noble aspiration of wanting to be that quality of a man or woman.

That's what Paul is saying! He is saying that the man who aspires to be the quality of man God wants in a spiritual leader is on the way to becoming God's kind of man. And that's what God is after...a few good men. "Gentlemen," I ask you as I ask myself, "Does your heart beat faster at the very thought of the possibility that God in you could make you a man after His own heart?" A man whose very nature reflects His"? Oh, Beloved, Paul says, *aspire* to that! Pray for that. Give your life to be like that. The issue isn't whether or not you become an elder or a pastor. Not everyone does. Not everyone can. Not everyone wants to. But every man who is in the kingdom ought to want to be qualified. Every man ought to want to be suited to be. Every man ought to aspire to be that kind of man.

Paul ties in these qualities to give us a picture—that of the office of a *bishop*. The King James Bible translates it *bishop* in most places, but that is not a good word in our language. The word comes from the word *episkopeo*: *to look upon, to oversee, to care for*. There is a second word used in like context translated *elder* in most places in the Bible. That word is the word *presbyteros*. But Titus 1:6,7 seems to indicate that the two words represent one and the same office. Acts 20 seems to confirm that. In verse 17, we read that Paul sent for the *elders* (presbyterous) of the Ephesian church, but in verse 28, he calls them *overseers* (episkopous). Philippians, chapter one, further demonstrates this truth.

So we can thus conclude that the terms *elders* and *bishops* were used interchangeably and that both refer to the same office in the New Testament church. The proper word to use would be the word *overseer* and this is the word you find in most current translations. He is someone called *to oversee* the flock of God, an under shepherd, if you will, carrying out the work of the Good

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Shepherd, whose flock it is. Paul says men should aspire to be the quality of man that can be placed in that office. Men stretch after it, desire it. It is a good thing. The phrase “good thing” means it is a noble task, something worth giving your life for.

Most of us really don't have a goal for our lives if we are honest. We have some that are vague and general. If you were to ask us we would tell you, but a real goal is something you stretch for, you give your life for. Some desire to get to the top of their profession, but only a few do, and those who do often find themselves empty and unfulfilled, even at the top. Some desire to attain wealth, as though the more they get, the more fulfilled they'll be; but somehow even those who find millions within their grasp, so often find with it, loneliness, emptiness, and grief. These are not things worth giving your life to gain. As the Psalmist said you get all this stuff and then when you die, you leave it all behind—big deal.

The Bible says there is only one thing a man should give his life for and that is to become God's kind of man, or God's kind of woman. So Paul says I'd like to give you a checklist. (I don't know about you but I like checklists.) I like it because when God says here is what I want you to do: one, two, three, four...that makes it so much easier. I'm not sure you guys can figure it out and I want to make it clear so I'm going to give you a yardstick to measure with.

But the problem is for those of us who find ourselves in any form of Christian leadership; it is a difficult passage to study, because the yardstick by which we find ourselves being measured appears to be one no man can attain to. That, of course, is true apart from the grace of God. He alone gives us the capacity even to aspire to these qualities. Let us now read the first section together and humbly and yet diligently seek to uncover its meaning. Then I'm going to give you an assignment you won't like.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, apt to teach;

not given to wine, not violent, not greedy of filthy money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence

(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how

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will he take care of the church of God?);

not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.  
(I Timothy 3:2-7 NKJV)

After reading that passage (and knowing the doors are locked, men), I want you to agree with me that none of us are adequate to be a Christian leader and certainly none of us are adequate to teach this passage. But apparently I have no choice. And so with fear and trembling, and yet with a spirit of anticipation, I ask you men to swim through these swirling waters with me for the next few lessons. Our objective is to find the will of God for both choosing and becoming shepherds in the flock of God. Not necessarily for holding the office but for becoming that kind of man.

I don't know about you but whenever I see a list in Scripture the first thing that goes through my mind is that I want to break it into some kind of pattern or into topics. There are at least two ways to do that with this passage. I'm going to ask you to bear with me for a minute as I share them with you. First we are going to divide the passage into the inner qualities (what a godly man is within), then into outer qualities as they are displayed in the home, in the world and in the church. It would look like this:

### **Qualities of a Godly Man**

#### The Godly Man is...

Vigilant	Sober
Blameless	Patient
Not covetous	

#### In the Home

His children are in subjection  
He is a one-woman man

#### In the Church

He is not a novice  
He is hospitable  
He is able to teach

#### In the World

He is of good behavior	He is not a brawler
He is not given to wine	He is not greedy
He is not a striker	He has a good report

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A second way is one we will follow in this series to look at the character qualities involved and try to determine if it divides itself into any kind of pattern. I think that it gives us a four-fold definition. It looks like this:

*The godly: one who is a man of moral excellence, exercising a spirit-controlled life with consistent staying power, thus demonstrating the attributes of a leader.*

### Attributes of a Godly Leader

#### The Godly Leader is...

Hospitable Apt to teach	Ruler of own family Not a neophyte
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#### Moral Excellence

Blameless, of good behavior,  
Not covetous, of good report

#### Staying Power

Patient  
Not a new believer  
A one-woman man

#### Spirit-Controlled Life

A self-controlled man One-woman man Vigilant Not a brawler	Sober Not addicted No striker
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Just what do those words mean? Let's take a look:

<b>The Quality</b>	<b>The Root Word</b>	<b>The Definition</b>
Blameless	Anepilambano	Not open to attack
One woman man	Mias gunaikos andra	A man committed to one woman
Vigilant	Nephalion	Calm, dispassionate, circumspect
Sober	Sophruna	Self-controlled, serious, earnest
Of good behavior	Kosmion	Orderly, respectable, well-behaved
Hospitable	Philoxenon	Ministering through an open home



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<b>The Quality</b>	<b>The Root Word</b>	<b>The Definition</b>
Apt to teach	Didaktikon	Capable, qualified teacher
Not given to wine	Me paroinom	Not addicted; not tarrying in wine
No striker	Me plekten	Not violent; not quarrelsome
Patient	Epiekes	Mild, gentle, sweet reasonableness
Not a brawler	Amachon	Not combative; not contentious
Not covetous	Aphilarguron	Not driven by love of money
Ruler of family	Proi stemi idios	Substantive leadership in the home
Not a novice	Neophystos	Not newly planted; not untested
Of good report	Marturian kalen	An excellent testimony with unbelievers

For the next lesson or two, we'll take each of those qualities and examine them in the light of just what God is saying to the men of the church. We must be prepared to be convicted, encouraged, perhaps startled, and hopefully transformed by responding to God's Spirit in an attitude of honest self-evaluation.

We must be open to our wives' and colleagues' evaluations of how we measure up, and we must be constantly reminded that God is not trying to discourage us by comparing us. He is trying to draw us to godliness by calling us to become what only He in His power can enable us to become. But we must recognize the need, honestly face the issues, ask God for specific grace, and by faith, do (in His energy) what He has called us to do. *God is looking for a few good men.* And the more He can find in this fellowship, the more pleased His heart will be.

The first criterion of a godly man in the King James is the word "blameless". (That kills us right there.) It is a twofold word because not only is it the first quality but it is also an umbrella under which all the other qualities belong. In a man who is

blameless these other qualities will be resident and evident in his life.

### The Umbrella of a Blameless Life:



The word “blameless” literally means “not to be laid hold of” and indicates a life that is not open to attack, because it does not knowingly afford the adversary any weaknesses that would destroy the portrait of what he claims to be.

### Character Beyond Criticism

It does not even imply sinless perfection. It does, however, erase all of the hints of hypocrisy that characterize so many of our lives. The blameless life is what it pretends to be and what is Christ filled. That’s what it means. God has always had a heart for blameless men. In Psalm 18:25 it says that with a blameless man God will show Himself blameless. With the pure He will show Himself pure.

There are really six words or variations of words found in the New Testament that are translated “blameless”. All are related, but perhaps this one, found in I Timothy 3:2 and also in I Timothy 3:7, is the most descriptive. It describes a quality of guiltlessness so profound that even when caught up unexpectedly, there will be no sin to be laid to their charge. It is used of someone who would be attacked unexpectedly, like a wrestler caught unawares, but this one would be so well-prepared, even an unexpected attack would yield no damage.

In practical terms, it is a life that hasn’t left any loopholes for the devil to use against you. It is a man who keeps all known sin confessed, and anything that might cause another to stumble, under control. All of the other qualities mentioned in this passage are only expressions of this one...for the man who is blameless will have a good report from those without, a good report of those in the home, and a godly heritage in the church as well.

He will not stand piously in the pulpit on Sunday and be greedy for gain on Monday. He will not speak peace from the pew on Sunday and be a contentious brawler on Monday. He will be in the marketplace what he professes to be in the holy place.

The word literally means “one against whom it is impossible to bring any impartial charge of wrong doing”. It means having

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a holy sensitivity to everything he says and does and how it will affect those around him. He doesn't lose his temper on the job. He doesn't lose his temper in the home. He isn't impatient in the grocery line or on the freeway. To do so with any degree of consistency would give others a justifiable charge to make against him. He would no longer be "blameless". The goal of his life is to be "above reproach".

And the longer the blameless man walks with God, the more conscious he becomes of how the little things he says and does affect those about him and his testimony both to the world and to the church. In meetings, he is the epitome of grace and understanding. He doesn't lash out at others because they disagree with him. He listens, he prays, and he gently responds with grace and from God's perspective...never contentiously, never vindictively, and never selfishly.

Gentlemen, the question is this and it is tough. If the mirror of God's word is held up against your day-to-day behavior on the job and in the home, are you the kind of man Christ was when He walked this earth? Is Christ in you so apparent that were a tribunal of judges trying to find something in your life with which to discredit the Gospel, they would come up empty? Or do you accept the day-to-day compromises in your life as natural because "God isn't finished with you yet"? You're right. He's not. But He's not condoning the behavioral offenses as acceptable. He's told you to behave in such a way that you are blameless before men. By His grace, the man within becomes the man without. You must spend time in His Word and time in His presence for His spirit to make you into that kind of man.

Ah, but as you are becoming—behave. Behave blamelessly. At the end of every day stand before God and before your family with this check list we are about to study and see if, as much as possible, you have not knowingly given the enemy any charge to bring against you. Don't lower His standards to yours, raise your standards to His.

Your conversation must be pure. Your temper must be controlled. Your patience must be evident. Your love for your family must be secure. Your openness to share must be constant. Your generosity must be natural. Your life must be...blameless. Not perfect. You will slip and fall. But when you condone ungodly behavior, continually slipping on the same banana peel, you are

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justifying ungodliness by saying, “it’s natural”. God never called us to be natural. He called us to be supernatural. And then He gave us His Spirit to guarantee that we could be. So the power is His...but the choices are ours. And the choices are crucial if we are to be...the kind of men we were meant to be.

God is looking for a few good men. His eyes, the Scripture says, are searching to and fro throughout the whole earth. He is looking for men who are willing to pray,

*“Dear God, I want to be one of Your few good men. Amen.”*

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