



Does Paul limit who can lead the church?

Yes he does! Very clearly Paul laid out the qualifications for leaders in the church. He described *episcopos* (overseers), *deaconos* (deacons), and *presbuteros* (elders). Such responsibility does not suit everyone. It requires high moral character. Let's examine the requirements found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Key Term
τις
<i>tis</i> = whoever, anyone

¹“Here is a trustworthy saying: **WHOEVER** aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. ²Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to **his** wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴**He** must manage **his** own family well and see that **his** children obey **him**, and **he** must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. ⁵(If **ANYONE** does not know how to manage **his** own family, how can **he** take care of God's church?) ⁶**He** must not be a recent convert, or **he** may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷**He** must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that **he** will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.”

TIS = WHOEVER, ANYONE (neuter gender)

Only two pronouns - *tis* and *tis*

In these seven verses, Paul uses only two pronouns for leaders, and they are both NEUTER (3:1 *tis* = whoever, and 3:5 *tis* = anyone). By using *tis*, Paul opens up leadership to both men and women. He does NOT restrict leadership to only men in this passage. If Paul had used the word *aner* (male) that would clearly indicate that he intended only men in leadership, but he used *tis* (*anyone, whoever*). Note that EVERY pronoun or possessive pronoun (12 in English) refers back to the neuter *tis*. With no neuter pronoun in English, it becomes awkward to say “that person” or “his/her” so most translations use “he, him, and his” for simplicity. Sadly, that translation decision obscures the open door Paul offers for *godly* and *gifted* male or female leaders. Whether male or female, all must have *outstanding* character.

Faithful = “one woman-man”

The phrase translated “faithful to his wife” or “husband of one wife” actually says “*mias gunaikos andra*.” That is, Paul prohibits promiscuity and requires holiness that a “one-woman man” would demonstrate. In the Ephesian culture, men had multiple options for immoral relationships. Women did not have the same options as men, and their faithfulness was expected. Let us be clear that *purity* and *faithfulness* are two main qualifiers for leadership. Requiring marriage with children is obviously not required, since neither Jesus nor Paul would qualify (as childless bachelors). Again, the main point is purity and faithfulness in sexual conduct. Perhaps today, God would disqualify leaders (either male or female) who look at pornography since that indicates an affair of the heart.

Conclusion

Paul intentionally used the neuter *tis* to open leadership in the church to qualified believers. Paul wanted MORE laborers serving in the harvest field, not fewer. Jesus said to pray for more laborers. Paul opened the door.

* Additional Leadership Notes

Paul also addressed both men and women as potential deacons in I Timothy 3:8-13. Later in Titus, when Paul listed qualifications for elders, he used the same word (*tis*), and again, all the pronouns that follow referred to the neuter *tis*.

4 Crucial Questions
1. What does this teach us about GOD ?
2. What does this teach us about PEOPLE ?
3. What command should I OBEY ?
4. With whom can I SHARE this?