

Scriptural Elders and Deacons

QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

Lesson Three

Qualifications Of Elders

- To become an elder in the Lord's Church, one must be selected by the Holy Spirit.
 - *Acts 20:28 - "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."*
- The selection process is done through the agency of the word.

1 Tim. 3:1-7 - "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5-9 - "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you-- 6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict."

Qualifications Of Elders

- The Holy Spirit gave the qualifications of elders - *1Tim. 3:1-9; Titus 1:5-9*
 - To ordain men according to these qualifications is the equivalent of having them appointed by the Holy Spirit.
 - There are 23 qualifications mentioned in these texts.
 - They are not 23 disqualifications.

Qualifications Of Elders

- Twenty-three qualities are needed by a man who would help lead a local congregation as an elder.
 - The need for elders does not authorize churches to dismiss or reduce any of these qualifications.
 - We must not permit self-will, stubbornness, jealousy, ignorance, or animosity to make them stricter than God stated them.
- Eighteen are qualities every Christian man should have.
 - Only five of the 23 listed are required only of elders.
 - While all Christian men should have these eighteen qualities, elders should have them to the extent they are models for others.

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **WITHOUT REPROACH** (Blameless - KJV)
 - To live in such a way that charges of wrong doing are not believable and cannot be proven.
- **TEMPERATE** (Vigilant - KJV; self-controlled - ASV)
 - Watchful over himself by restraining his appetites and passions; uses all things in moderation. He has the power to control himself in the use of what is lawful.

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **SOBER-MINDED** (Prudent - NASB)
 - Calm, even tempered, cautious, circumspect, wise; sees all sides of an issue before acting; uses good sense in all judgments. He is stable enough mentally and emotionally to make sound decisions.
- **ORDERLY** (Of good behavior - KJV; Respectable - NASB)
 - His conduct in business, home, recreation, dress, and manners demonstrates modesty and propriety.

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **HOSPITABLE** (Philoxenia - one who loves strangers; fond of guests” Strongs 5382)
 - Cordially receives guests in order to supply their needs. Devoted to hospitality and derives pleasure from it.
- **NO BRAWLER** (NASB - not addicted to wine; KJV - not given to wine)
 - One whose reputation and mind are both free from all influences of evil and intoxication, or any other thing destructive to objectivity and influence.
 - This would include social drinking, drinking in the privacy of one’s home, any abuse of drugs and the use of tobacco.

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **NO STRIKER** (Not pugnacious - NASB)
 - One who is not quarrelsome, nor disposed to lash out at opposition. Even tempered, not easily excited, angered, or provoked.
- **GENTLE** (KJV - Patient)
 - Epieikes - “Fitting, equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing” (Strong's 1933)
 - Patient and humble with those in weakness or distress, not inconsiderate, bitter or disagreeable with those in a poor station in life.

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **NOT CONTENTIOUS** (Adverse to fighting)
 - Not a nitpicker or domineering, nor one who likes to have feuds going all of the time, locally or in the brotherhood.
- **NO LOVER OF MONEY** (KJV - not covetous)
 - Grounds for discipline in *1Cor. 5*; one who loves money has the potential to be bribed or influenced by material concerns.
 - *Titus 1:7* - forbids one who obtains money in an unlawful manner.

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **ONE THAT RULES WELL HIS OWN HOUSE, HAVING HIS CHILDREN IN SUBJECTION WITH ALL GRAVITY**
 - (NASB - He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity)
 - His role as a husband and father is a basis for judging him capable of leading a local congregation.
 - A man with a domineering wife is not elder material.
 - A man with unruly children is not elder material.
 - He is only responsible for his own household, not another's. He does not rule the households of his adult children no longer in his home.

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **GOOD TESTIMONY FROM THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT**
(NASB - he must have a good reputation with those outside the church)
 - He must be known to be a moral and honest man.
 - A local church's reputation and influence often depends on the elders' good names.
- **NOT SELF-WILLED**
 - Cannot be stubborn, headstrong, or self-pleasing, and expect to get along with others in the local church.
 - Must make decisions based on what is good for all concerned, not on what he personally likes or wants - *1Peter 5:2-3.*

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **NOT SOON ANGRY** (Not quick tempered - NASB)
 - Does not allow difficulty to impact his composure; even tempered and at peace under stress.
- **LOVER OF GOOD** (Loving what is good - NASB)
 - He doesn't do well from a sense of duty, but loves goodness for its own sake. Imparts this love for goodness to others by example.
- **JUST**
 - Fair, impartial, without prejudice.

Eighteen Qualities Needed By All Christian Men

- **HOLY** (Devout - NASB)
 - One who religiously observes every obligation to God and man; spiritually minded. Continues to pray and study all of his life.
- **HOLDING FAST TO THE FAITHFUL WORD**
 - Must adhere to sound doctrine in order to:
 - Keep himself right - *Acts 20:28*
 - Teach others to be right - *Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17*

The Five Special Qualifications of Elders

Five Qualities Required In Elders

- **HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE**
 - Must be:
 - A man
 - Lawfully married
 - Both restrictive and positive:
 - Prohibits more than one wife
 - Demands one wife
 - Demonstrates:
 - That he can communicate with women
 - That he can treat them with respect
 - That he can empathize with those who are married
 - Controversies:
 - Widowed man who remarries?
 - Scripturally divorced man who has remarried?

Five Qualities Required In Elders

- **NOT A NOVICE** (Not a new convert - NASB)
 - Will draw heavily on the experience, wisdom and knowledge that years as a Christian will bring.
 - The length of time depends on the individual.
 - Paul told Timothy and Titus to ordain elders in Churches in existence for just a few years.
 - Controversies:
 - “How old does a man have to be?”
 - This qualification speaks of length of experience as a Christian, not of chronological age.
 - Age is addressed in the name “elder.”

Five Qualities Required In Elders

- **APT TO TEACH** (Able to teach - NASB)
 - Must have:
 - Comprehensive knowledge of God's will.
 - The ability to impart that knowledge to others.
 - Controversies:
 - “He must be a dynamic teacher.”
 - Teaching abilities vary; this qualification does not refer to eloquence or speaking talents, but of knowledge of truth and ability to express it.

Five Qualities Required In Elders

- **DESIRES THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP**
 - Wants to do the work, and it is work!
 - A man who does not desire the office should not be imposed upon to lead the congregation.
- However, what of the condition of a man who meets the other requirements, but is unwilling to serve? Can one refuse duty to the Lord with impunity?
 - *Rom. 12:6-8; 1Cor. 12:28-31; Eph. 4:11-12; Matt. 25:14-30*

Five Qualities Required In Elders

- **HAVING CHILDREN THAT BELIEVE; NOT ACCUSED OF RIOT OR UNRULY** (Having faithful children, not accused of rebellion)
 - An elder must be a man who has demonstrated his ability to lead and teach.
 - “Believing children” is the qualification that gives Christians more difficulty than the other 22 qualifications.
 - “Believing” or “faithful” - obviously means that they are Christians.
 - “Not accused of riot, unruliness or rebellion” is self-explanatory.

Believing Children

- The question of the number of children often arises:
 - “‘Children’ is plural, so he must have more than one.”
 - The Bible is self-consistent. One must give a reason from the text or context for interpreting the same word two different ways.

Believing Children

- Assume that when a command specifies children that it only applies when one has a plurality of children.
 - *Gen. 21:7 - “She also said, Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age.”*
 - *Matt. 22:24 - “Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.”*
 - *Acts 2:38-39 - “Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

Believing Children

- Assume that when a command specifies children that it only applies when one has a plurality of children.
 - *1Tim. 5:4 - “But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.”*
 - *v9-10 - “Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, 10 well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.”*
 - *v16 - “If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”*

Believing Children

- Assume that when a command specifies children that it only applies when one has a plurality of children.
 - *Eph. 6:4 - “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”*
 - *Col. 3:21 - “Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.”*
- How does one justify interpreting “children” as both singular and plural in all scripture passages except for Titus 1:6? He cannot have it both ways.

Believing Children

- Objection: “It takes more than one child to qualify, because he cannot get enough experience with only one child.”
 - The object is to demonstrate his ability to guide a home, not to show how prolific he can be.
 - If more than one child gives one experience, then why did God ask a man to have only one wife?
 - If a man with two children is more qualified than a man with one, then a man with ten children is more qualified than a man with two.

Believing Children

- The Bible often uses the plural for the singular.
 - *Gen. 19:29 - "...God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt."* (**Lot only lived in Sodom**)
 - *21:7 - "She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age."* (**Sarah only nursed Isaac**)
 - *46:7 - "His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt."* (**Jacob only had one daughter**)

Believing Children

- The Bible often puts the plural for the singular.
 - *Jer. 6:16* - “Thus says the LORD: Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” **(There was only one path)**
 - *Gen. 1:20* - “Then God said, Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.” **(There is only one water and heaven)**
- What justifies allowing the plural to also indicate the singular in all passages except Titus 1:6?

Qualified Men Must Be Ordained As Elders

- *Titus 1:5 - “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.”*
- *Acts 14:23 - “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”*
- By the authority of the word of the Lord, I admonish you to heed this command and to do this good work.