

Elders (Bishops): The Qualifications

INTRODUCTION.

- A. In our previous lesson, *Elders (Bishops): The Leaders of the Local Church*, we considered the descriptions and specifications of the work and rule of an eldership.
- B. There are three verses omitted from our previous study which I would like to briefly consider.
 - 1. Elders are considered stewards of God. (Titus 1:7)
 - 2. Paul refers to “pastors” (shepherds) in Ephesians 4:11. This is very likely a reference to elders or bishops.
 - 3. James tells the elders to pray for the sick. *“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”* (James 5:14, NKJV)
- C. With this lesson, we will consider the qualifications which a man must meet in order to serve as an elder (bishop). We will divide the qualifications into four categories:
 - 1. Control Over His Own Life.
 - 2. His Family Relationship.
 - 3. His Relationship with Others.
 - 4. His Ability to Teach the Word of God.
- D. Lastly, we will consider the qualifications give for the wives of the elders and deacons.

I. QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF BISHOP (ELDER).

- A. Category: Control Over His Own Life.
 - 1. An elder must be blameless. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6,7)
 - a. Timothy - **Blameless** - “anepileptos” - {an-ep-eel'-ape-tos} which means, “not apprehended, that cannot be laid hold of 2) that cannot be reprehended, not open to censure, irreproachable” (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon)
 - b. Titus - **Blameless** - “anegkletos - {an-eng'-klay-tos} which means “that cannot be called into to account, unproveable, unaccused, blameless.” (Ibid.)

- c. The man who desires to serve as an elder must be above reproach. To be blameless or above reproach would mean that no one would be able to make any specific and truthful accusations against the character or conduct of the one being considered as an elder.
2. An elder must be temperate (vigilant, KJV). (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
 - a. **Timothy - Temperate** (vigilant, KJV) - “nephaleos” {nay-fal’-eh-os} which means “sober, temperate 1a) abstaining from wine, either entirely or at least from its immoderate use 1b) of things free from all wine, as vessels, offerings” (Ibid.)
 - b. **Titus - Temperate** - “egkrates” - {eng-krat-ace’} which means “strong, robust 2) having power over, possessed of (a thing) 3) mastering, controlling, curbing, restraining.” (Ibid.)
 - c. Regarding temperate (vigilant), the Pulpit Commentary reads, “It denotes that temperate use of meat and drink which keeps the mind watchful and on the alert, and then the state of mind itself so produced.”
 - d. An elder must be strong, being in control of himself, having power over himself.
3. An elder must be sober. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
 - a. **Sober** - “sophron” {so’-frone} which means “1) of a sound mind, sane, in one’s senses 2) curbing one’s desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate” (Ibid.)
 - b. The idea expressed is one who has control over himself, being of a sound mind.
4. An elder must be of good behavior. (1 Timothy 3:2)
 - a. **Of good behavior** - “kosmios” {kos’-mee-os} which means “well arranged, seemly, modest.” (Ibid.) This is the same word used in 1 Timothy 2:9 in reference women’s apparel being modest.
 - b. It is understandable that a man who is going to share in the oversight of the church maintain a well-ordered and respectable life. He must be of good behavior.
5. An elder must be a lover of what is good. (Titus 1:8)
 - a. **Lover of what is good** - “philagathos” - { fil-ag’-ath-os} which means, “loving goodness.” (Ibid.)

- b. An elder must love that which is good.
6. An elder must not be self-willed. (Titus 1:7)
 - a. **Self-willed** - “authades” - {ow-thad’-ace} which means “self-pleasing, self-willed, arrogant.” (Ibid.)
 - b. An elder must not be self-willed. He must be willing to put others before himself. His goal should not be to please himself. Instead, the elder must see to the spiritual needs of the flock, putting God’s will first, then the needs of the flock. (Cf. Philippians 2:1-4)
7. An elder must be just. (Titus 1:8)
 - a. **Just** - “dikaios” - {dik’-ah-yos} which means “1) righteous, observing divine laws 1a) in a wide sense, upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God . . . 1b) in a narrower sense, rendering to each his due and that in a judicial sense, passing just judgment on others, whether expressed in words or shown by the manner of dealing with them.” (Ibid.)
 - b. An elder must be righteous, observing the laws of God.
 - c. At the same time, elders must be just in dealing with the members of the congregation, judging them only by the divine law of God.
8. An elder must be holy. (Titus 1:8)
 - a. **Holy** - “hosios” - { hos’-ee-os } which means “undefiled by sin, free from wickedness, religiously observing every moral obligation, pure holy, pious.” (Ibid.)
 - b. An elder must live his life in holiness. He must not be defiled by sin. He must be free from wickedness, faithfully following the Father in heaven.
9. An elder must not be greedy for money. (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
 - a. **Greedy for money** - “aischrokerdes” - {ahee-skhrok-er-dace’} which means “eager for base gain, greedy for money.” (Ibid.)
 - b. This individual is one whose sole concern is the making of money; whether it is through a good avenue or a bad avenue.
 - c. An elder must not be a lover of money. If an elder is a lover of money, then he will not give proper attention to his duties as an elder of the local congregation.
10. An elder must not be covetous. (1 Timothy 3:3)

- a. **Not covetous** - “aphilarguros” - {af-il-ar’-goo-ros} - which means “not loving money, not avaricious.” (Ibid.)
 - b. The qualification is similar to not being greedy for money.
 - c. Being covetous, however, would not only apply to money, but anything that one strongly desires; a desire that is strong enough to control his life.
 - d. An elder must not be covetous.
11. An elder must not be given to wine. (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- a. **Given to wine** - “paroinos” {par’-oy-nos} which means “given to wine, drunken.” (Ibid.)
 - b. “Paroinos” also carries the idea of one “tarrying long” at the wine.
 - c. If a man sat too long at his wine, drinking and drinking, he would eventually become drunk; drunk even to the point of fighting or brawling. (Cf. Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-7)
 - d. In order to maintain self-control, an elder must not allow himself to be “given to wine.”
- B. Category: His Family Relationship.
- 1. An elders must be the husband of one wife. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)
 - a. The husband of one wife implies a relationship acceptable unto God.
 - b. The husband and wife relationship accepted by God will continue until either one dies. If a spouse is unfaithful, then the innocent has the choice of becoming “loosed” to enter another marriage accepted by God.
 - 2. An elder must rule his own house well. (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6)
 - a. If a man rules his own house well, consider what will be accomplished:
 - (1) His children will be in subjection.
 - (2) His children will not behave in a riotous manner nor will they be unruly or insubordinate.
 - b. If a man rules his house well, then he will take good care of the church. If he has not ruled well his own house, then he will not take good care of the church.
- C. Category: His Relationship with Others.

1. An elder must be given to hospitality. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
 - a. **Given to hospitality** - “philoxenos” - {fil-ox’-en-os} which means “hospitable, generous to guests.” (Ibid.)
 - b. Vine’s Expository Dictionary defines the Greek word “philoxenia” (the noun form) as “love of strangers.”
 - c. An elder must be willing to help or show hospitality to those who might even be strangers to him. This helping or showing hospitality carries the idea of being generous to guests.

2. An elder must not be violent. (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
 - a. **Violent** - “plektes” - {plake’-tace} which means “1) bruiser, ready for a blow 2) a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person.” (Ibid.)
 - b. A striker or violent man would be the type to try to settle every argument with his fists.
 - c. An elder must not settle matters with violence, quarrels, or contentions.

3. An elder must be gentle. (1 Timothy 3:3)
 - a. **Gentle** (patient, KJV) - “epieikes” - {ep-ee-i-kace’} which means “1) seemingly, suitable 2) equitable, fair, mild, gentle.” (Ibid.)
 - b. An elder should deal with the members in a mild, gentle, and loving manner.
 - c. An elder must exercise this gentleness with self-control, without compromising the truth.
 - d. An elder will be patient (gentle) with a member’s short comings and will work with that member.

4. An elder must not be quarrelsome. (1 Timothy 3:3)
 - a. **Quarrelsome** (brawler) - “amachos” - {am’-akh-os} which means, “not to be withstood, invincible 2) not contentious 3) abstaining from fighting.” (Ibid.)
 - b. An elder must not have a quarrelsome spirit. He must not be one who looks for a fight.

5. An elder must not be quick tempered. (Titus 1:7)
 - a. **Quick tempered** - “orgilos” - {org-ee’-los} which means “prone to anger, irascible.”

- b. An elder must be able to oppose those in error without being quick tempered.
- 6. An elder must have a good report among those who are without. (1 Timothy 3:7)
 - a. Similiar to being above reproach (blameless), an elder must have a good report from those who are not Christians; i.e. in the community, with neighbors, with co-workers, etc.
 - b. If a man has oversight over a local congregation, and the he is not respected among those outside the church, then how could the local church expect those outside the church of Christ to come and learn of Christ? An elder's reputation must be good. His good influence must be established.
- D. Category: His Ability to Teach the Word of God.
 - 1. An elder must not be a novice. (1 Timothy 3:6)
 - a. **Novice** - "neophutos" - {neh-of'-oo-tos} which means "newly planted 1a) a new convert, neophyte (one who has recently become a Christian)." (Ibid.)
 - b. In the context, a man who is going to serve as an elder must not be a babe in Christ.
 - c. The danger that lies in appointing a new convert as an elder is that he may be lifted up with pride, therefore falling into the condemnation of the devil.
 - 2. An elder must be apt to teach. (1 Timothy 3:2)
 - a. **Apt to teach** - "didaktikos" - {did-ak-tik-os'} which means "apt and skilful in teaching." (Ibid.)
 - b. The idea of being apt to teach is not referring to one's ability in speech, but rather, his knowledge of God's word and how to "rightly divide the word of Truth." (Cf. 2 Timothy 2:15)
 - c. An elder must be able to teach the word of God to the congregation.
 - 3. An elder must hold fast the Word of God so that he can convict those who contradict God's word. (Titus 1:9)

II. THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE WIFE OF THE BISHOP (ELDER) AND DEACONS.

- A. An elder's wife must be reverent (grave.) (1 Timothy 3:11)

1. **Reverent** - “semnos” - {sem-nos’} which means “1) august, venerable, reverend 2) to be venerated for character, honourable.” (Ibid.)
 2. An elder’s wife must live her life in such a way so as to be above reproach. Living faithfully in all things, an elder’s wife will be honorable.
- B. An elder’s wife must not be a slanderer. (1 Timothy 3:11)
1. **Slanderer** - “diabolos” - {dee-ab’-ol-os} which means “prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely.” (Ibid.)
 2. An elder’s wife must not be a false accuser. She must not slander the character of others.
- C. An elder’s wife must be temperate. (1 Timothy 3:11)
1. Temperate (sober, KJV) - “nephaleos” - { nay-fal’-eh-os} which means “sober, temperate 1a) abstaining from wine, either entirely or at least from its immoderate use 1b) of things free from all wine, as vessels, offerings.” (Ibid.)
 2. This is the same word Paul used in 1 Timothy 3:2 regarding elders. The KJV translated the word in 1 Timothy 3:2 as “vigilant.”
- D. An elder’s wife must be faith in all things. (1 Timothy 3:11)
1. An elder’s wife must serve God faithfully in all things.
 2. The wives of the elders will be looked up to by younger women for help and guidance. The elder’s wives must set the necessary examples by living faithful lives.

CONCLUSION.

- A. The Lord’s desire is that the local congregation be lead, ruled, or directed by elders or bishops. This organization must not be avoided. Each and every congregation should be willing to submit to the oversight of elders.
- B. In order to appoint qualified men, every person should be familiar with the qualifications. Familiarity with the qualifications will help one to know whether or not a man is qualified to serve as an elder. Knowledge of the qualifications will also help the younger men to shape their lives so that they may one day serve as elders.