

God's Leaders: Qualifications for Elders

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Course description: Part 1

This course explores an introduction into God's plan for leaders in the church and a discussion of qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3. This course will fall into three sections. First, the context behind the qualifications given in 1 Timothy. Second, there will be a discussion of the first group of qualifications (personal spirituality). Third, there will be a discussion on the second group of qualifications (ability to work with/lead others).

Course Objectives: By the end of this class students will have:

- A. An understanding the biblical basis for the eldership, especially in the context of 1 Timothy.
- B. An understanding of the foundational qualification for all elders: blamelessness.
- C. Knowledge of the various qualifications listed.

Outline of the class:

- A. Part One: The Context Behind the Qualifications
 - 1. Paul begins the book by reminding Timothy that he was charged to deal with false teachers (1:3).
 - 2. These false teachers are creating great difficulties in the Ephesian church (1:3-4; 4:1-5). They are hindering her from achieving her primary objective: godliness (2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 5:4; 6:3, 5, 6, 11). The best definition for "godliness" is found in 1:5. A truly godly person will possess those three attributes. Discuss the meaning of those three attributes and have class discuss examples.
 - 3. In 1:4 Paul charges that these false teachers are not "furthering God's provision which is by faith" (NAS); "...which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith" (ESV). The Greek here literally reads "the house-law of God." Paul will remind them that the church is God's house (3:15). Therefore, only God can determine what goes on inside His house. These false teachers were trying to ignore or circumvent God's house rules! It is crucial that the leaders (Ephesus had elders – Acts 20:17-38), along with Timothy, confront these men.
 - 4. God's leaders cannot allow false doctrine or false teachers to have a place in the holy bride of Christ! This is why having qualified leaders is so important. Church history has hundreds of examples of churches who went astray because they were not led by qualified men. Why would we think our church would be any different?

B. Questions for further consideration:

1. The church being discussed in 1 Timothy is in the city of Ephesus. This is one of the “Seven Churches of Asia” discussed in Revelation 2. Read what Jesus had to say to this church. If 1 Timothy was written around 61-63 A.D., and Revelation written around 90 A.D., what do you think happened in those years to bring them to the point where Jesus was about to “remove their candlestick”?
2. How does this relate to the importance of specifying qualifications for elders today?

Conclusion:

- A. We must remember that we are discussing the “house-law of God” (1 Timothy 1:4; 3:15). We do not have the right or the liberty to install men who do not meet the qualifications given by the Holy Spirit. The church is God’s house and, therefore, only He can determine who can lead.
- B. We must remember that good men do not equal qualified leaders. God has these qualifications for a reason.
- C. Next week we will look specifically at the first part of the qualifications for elders given in this letter to Timothy.
- D. Think about any questions you might have regarding this lesson and we can address those next week if needed.