

God's Leaders: Qualifications for Elders

Lesson designed by: Denny Petrillo

Course description: Part 2a

This course explores an introduction into God's plan for the leaders of 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 of 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. See if there are any questions from the previous week's material and try to address those before moving into this next section.
- B. Review of 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
- C. Part Two: The First Group of Qualifications (personal spirituality, discipline and maturity)
 - 1. The first characteristic listed is that the man must be **above reproach** (*ανεπίλημpton*; *anepilempton*).

2. The way the verse is written in Greek indicates that this word serves as a basis for the remaining qualifications. Note George Knight, pp. 155-6: "The general characteristic of the bishop is that he must be *ανεπιλημπτος*... Following this overarching characteristic, the specifics for a bishop are now delineated." (*The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 155-6).
3. This view is substantiated by the Greek, which has the verb "to be" (*ενα*) after this first qualification. This word carried the force of one who rises above criticism, not that he is without sin (which the translation "blameless" might imply).
4. Areas in which the elder must be "above reproach":
 - i. "One-woman Man"
 1. This phrase does not mean married (if this is what Paul meant he would have used the Greek word *gamos*, which means "married.")
 2. It is making a moral point not a practical one
 3. We have frequently only asked: "is he married?" If the answer was "yes," we moved on to the next qualification. But this isn't meant to be a 'check-list' qualification (a practical point), but a *moral* point.
 4. Is he a one-woman man? (what the Greek phrase literally means)
 5. His focus, attention, devotion is on one woman (his wife); he is not a womanizer (flirt)
 - ii. "Temperate"
 1. Occurs only three times in the NT (here; 3:11, and Titus 2:2).
 2. His pleasure is that of the soul. He fills it with spiritual and moral focus. That makes him well balanced, careful, and steady. It is general enough that it pertains to his physical and mental tastes and habits.
 3. It is a catch-all word that means he would not be one that would fall into the temptation of alcohol or smoking. He would not be one that would involve himself in questionable hobbies. Not only in business, but also in pleasure. It means moderate.
 4. Does he fit within the norm, or is he extravagant?
 - iii. "Prudent"
 1. Some versions have "soberminded." Greek = *sophrom*. Found also in Titus 1:8; 2:2, 5.
 2. It is talking about being balanced in his judgment, and not being carried away by every wind of doctrine. He holds deep seated convictions so that they cannot be taken away from him.
 3. Prudent thinking is not shaken by the world.

- iv. “Respectable”
 - 1. "Orderly" - 2:9 - same word about women (KOSMION). It has more than reference to appearance. An unordered sloth-like appearance is usually indicative of the mind.
 - 2. He “has his act together.” He lives in such a way that people respect who he is and how he acts. Nobility, class, admiration.
- v. “Hospitable”
 - 1. *Philoxenizo* literally means “lover of strangers”. This word is also found in Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9.
 - 2. In First Century there were no welfare checks or government programs. Those in need were at the mercy of others. This is where the church could have a great impact.
 - 3. This doesn’t demand that elders have people in their homes (although this would be one way they could fulfill this). It means they have a system in place where those strangers can find the help they need (hotel provided; restaurant ticket paid, etc.).
- vi. “Able to teach”
 - 1. *Didaktikon* (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24) does not refer to a willingness to teach, but to an ability to teach.
 - 2. In view of the advancement of false teachers, the elders need to be those who are “fit, suited, inclined, ready and prepared” to meet the challenges facing the church (cf. Titus 1:10-16).
 - 3. They must also be those who can strengthen members from God’s word (1 Tim. 5:17).
 - 4. Note: We have frequently interpreted this to mean “can teach a good Bible class.” Such is an unfortunate application of this qualification. Some elders are excellent teachers, but not in classroom settings. They can excel in personal, one-on-one settings.
- vii. “not addicted to wine”
 - 1. Titus 1:7
 - 2. He is not a drunk, nor one who is frequently “around” wine.
 - 3. Certainly, an elder who is a social drinker (or one who might be seen occasionally taking a drink) is not setting the high standard of godliness described in this book.
- viii. “not pugnacious”
 - 1. ASV = brawler; KJV = striker
 - 2. This describes one who not prone to muscle-flexing or strong-arming his way around. He is not going to get physical or verbal to get his way.
 - 3. It can also include being a loud-mouth.

- ix. “Gentle”
 - 1. His disposition in regard to speech, demeanor and conduct
 - 2. His kindness is seen in his voice and his actions.
 - 3. This word is translated “forbearance” (Phil. 4:5; Col. 3:13) and “graciousness” (Acts 24:4).
- x. “Uncontentious”
 - 1. This is an “alpha-negative” word. It is the word for “fight” or “war,” with the negative in front of it. So, he is not a fighting type of man. He is one who avoids conflict when possible.
 - 2. He is not argumentative, quarrelsome or has a mean disposition. He is not going to press his personal opinions. He is not looking for a fight.
 - 3. He is willing to contend for the one faith (Jude 3), but not for his personal viewpoints.
- xi. “Free from the love of money”
 - 1. One word in Greek (*aphilarguron*; cf. Titus 1:7).
 - 2. He is not greedy nor stingy. He recognizes that the work of the church requires faith, and that faith moves him to projects that may be costly. Yet he doesn’t love money so much that he won’t let go of it.
 - 3. Elders must have the trust of the congregation who give liberally. They need to know that their elders are going to use those monies wisely to advance the work of God. Putting it into a savings account is not responsible stewardship but is an example of being a “lover of money.”

D. Questions for further consideration:

- 1. Why do you think elders need to have these qualifications? What, for example, is the significance of his being one that is “not addicted to wine” or is “prudent”?
- 2. How can an elder who is not a good Bible class teacher, but is a good one-on-one teacher still meet the qualification “apt to teach”?

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 third installment of qualifications for elders given in the book of Timothy.