

God's Leaders: Qualifications for Elders

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Course description: Part 2b

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 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. Briefly Review 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.
- B. Briefly review the list of qualifications from last week that connected to being above reproach.
 - 1. 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.

- ii. “Temperate”
 - 1. His pleasure is that of the soul.
 - 2. It is a catch-all word that means he would not be one that would fall into the temptation of alcohol or smoking. It means moderate.
- iii. “Prudent”
 - 1. Some versions have "soberminded."
 - 2. It is talking about being balanced in his judgment, and not being carried away by every wind of doctrine, not shaken by the world.
- iv. “Respectable”
 - 1. "Orderly" - 2:9 - same word about women (KOSMION). It has more than reference to appearance.
 - 2. He “has his act together.” Nobility, class, admiration.
- v. “Hospitable”
 - 1. *Philoxenizo* literally means “lover of strangers”.
 - 2. Those in need were at the mercy of others. It means they have a system in place where those strangers can find the help they need.
- 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. 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. He is not a drunk, nor one who is frequently “around” wine.
 - 2. 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. He is not going to get physical or verbal to get his way; 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.
- 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.
 - 2. He is not argumentative, quarrelsome or has a mean disposition.
- xi. “Free from the love of money”
 - 1. One word in Greek (*aphilarguron*; cf. Titus 1:7).

2. He is not greedy nor stingy. 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.

C. Part Three: The Second Group of Qualifications (ability to work with/lead others).

1. "Manages his own household well"
 - i) This shows that he is a family man with children. It could also include adopted children and extended family. It involves all those in his "household."
 - ii) The word "manages" shows good leadership ability. Of necessity it involves spiritual direction. If a man fails in leading his household to Christ, or keeping them faithful to Christ, he cannot possibly claim to be one who "managed his household well."
 - iii) An example of good management is in the next clause: "keeping his children under control with all dignity." This means they are faithful and obedient. He doesn't lead through threats or intimidation.
 - iv) In verse 5 Paul is reasoning from the lesser (household) to the greater (church). If he cannot manage his own household, how will he be able to take upon the care of anything else? If he does not have the natural instincts to love his own flesh and blood, then what will he care about anything?
 - v) If he cannot fulfill his own responsibility in respect to his own family, then what makes us think he will be able to do it in respect to God's family? He has to be able to show an ability to lead his family to Christ, to instill in them genuine spirituality. This necessitates that his children be old enough to be Christians, otherwise on what basis can his spiritual leadership be judged?
2. "Not a new convert"
 - i) Literally means "not newly planted."
 - ii) It logically refers to one who is a new convert to Christ; a new Christian because of his obedience to the gospel.
 - iii) However, the phrase has a broader application. It would also refer to a man who has recently placed membership. The sheep need to know the shepherd, and the shepherd needs to know the sheep!
3. "Has a good reputation."
 - i) Literally, those outside "witness favorably" for him.

- ii) Far too many congregations have appointed a man without checking into his reputation in the community.
- iii) Those at work will see a different side than what the members of the church see.
- iv) If the non-Christian provides a favorable report, this will enhance the elder's ability to relate well with his brethren, will increase his opportunity to evangelize, and will give the non-Christian a favorable impression of the church.

D. Following this discussion, consider the following information.

- 1. These are the "Holy Spirit's" guidelines and are not negotiable. It is the Holy Spirit who makes men elders (Acts 20:28). It is through these qualifications that He does it.
- 2. Paul says that the man "must" have these qualities (v. 2).
 - a. Yet we must remember that no man is perfect
 - b. We also must not place unreasonable aspects to the qualifications (e.g. "I saw him get angry about 20 years ago!")
 - c. However, we also cannot be guilty of installing a man who clearly does not possess one (or more) of these qualifications (e.g. "Yes, he does have a bad temper. But look what a good business man he is!")

E. Questions for further consideration:

- 1. What are the dangers of installing men who do not have these qualifications?
- 2. What can we do to ensure men possess these qualities for the future of leadership in the church?

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 qualifications for elders given in the book of Titus.