

God's Leaders: Qualifications for Elders

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Course description: Part 6

This course explores an introduction into God's plan for the leaders of the church and a discussion of qualifications given Titus. This course will fall into three sections. First, the context behind the qualifications given in the book of Titus will be discussed. Second, there will be a discussion of the qualifications given (vv. 6-9). Third, there will be a discussion on the reasons and importance for these qualifications (vv. 10-16).

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 the book of Titus.
- B. An understanding of importance of establishing elders "in every city."
- C. Knowledge of the various qualifications listed.

Outline of the class:

- A. Review the Context Behind the Qualifications
 - 1. There is a crucial need to establish quality leadership on the island.
 - 2. Review the relationship of 1:10-16, and common to the Epistles to Timothy, is the problem with false teachers (3:9-11).
 - 3. Review **1:5** as a key verse and why
 - 4. Paul begins by saying for this reason Titus was left in Crete. What were the primary tasks set before Titus in going to Crete?
 - 5. The word "appoint" (καταστήσεις).
- B. Review the Qualifications Given
 - 1. General Breakdown:
 - 1. Personal Expectations**
 - A. Above reproach
 - B. Not self-willed
 - C. Not quick tempered
 - D. Not addicted to wine
 - E. Not fond of sordid gain
 - F. Loves what is good
 - G. Sensible
 - H. Just
 - I. Devout

J. Self-controlled

2. Domestic Expectations

- A. Husband of one wife
- B. Children who believe
 - 1) Not accused of dissipation
 - 2) Not accused of rebellion

3. Relational Expectations

- A. Not pugnacious
- B. Hospitable

4. Intellectual Expectations

- A. Holds fast the faithful word
- B. Able to exhort in sound doctrine
- C. Able to refute those who contradict

C. The reasons and importance for these qualifications (vv. 10-16).

In this section Paul details why these qualifications are non-negotiables. His breakdown of the enemies of the truth are as follows:

Know Your Enemy

A Description of the False Teachers (1:10-16)

The Enemy

1) General Description

- A) There are “many” (10)
- B) They are (or were) Christians (probably Jewish Christians) (10)

2) Their Mode of Operation

- A) Rebellious (10)
- B) Empty Talkers (10)
- C) Deceivers (10)
- D) Attack families (11)
- E) Work for money (11)
- F) Teach error (11)

3) Their Moral Character

- A) Are defiled
- B) Are unbelieving
- C) To them “nothing is pure”
- D) Detestable (16)
- E) Disobedient (16)
- F) Worthless for any good deed (16)

The Response

- 1) They Must Be Silenced (11)**
- 2) They Must Be Understood (12-13a)**
- 3) They Must Be Rebuked (13b)**

The Goal

- 1) That they may be sound in the faith (13b)**

1. 1:10-11 – Having discussed the qualifications of God’s “law-keeper,” Paul begins the next section with **for** (γὰρ). This shows why these qualifications are non-negotiable. The leader of God’s people has a tough job to do, and he won’t be successful without having the right kind of character. Sadly, there are **many** men that the elder is going to have to fight. There are the **rebellious** (fighting against the truth of the gospel – v. 16), **empty talkers** (discuss matters of no spiritual value or consequence) and **deceivers** (actions have malicious intent to pull one away by deception). Paul gives an indication of the background of the opponents, saying **especially of the circumcision**. The word **especially** (μάλιστα), most likely means “that is, specifically” indicating that the false teachers were Jews. These men **must be silenced** by **severely rebuking** them (v. 13). The danger posed by these false teachers is clear: they are **upsetting whole families**, thus attacking the church by hitting at its very core – the family unit. Their success in dismantling families comes from **teaching** that which is untrue, unhealthy and unnecessary. Why would they do this? **For the sake of sordid gain**. Perhaps they were paid for their tutoring; perhaps they were able to seize the family wealth through deceit. Either way, their motives were evil.
2. **1:12-13** - Paul here probably quotes Epimenides, a Cretan poet of the 6th century B.C. This general assessment of Cretans, to which Paul affirms that **this testimony is true** serves as a valuable warning to Titus. He needs to know what he is dealing with. Cretans made lying and deceit an art form, becoming so good at it that the verb κρητίζειν (*kretizein*) came to mean “to lie.” The only proper response, and the only hope of reform is through firm and decisive action. Paul says that Titus needed to **reprove them severely**. The word **reprove** (ελεγγε) is the same word describing the activity of the elders in verse 9. Therefore, it is logical that Titus, with or through the elders, would deal with the false teachers. Paul demonstrates that there is hope for these men; hope that they **may be sound in the faith**.
3. **1:14** – The reason these men are not spiritually **sound** is because they are giving far too much attention to **myths** (legends and half-truths wrapped up in a secret knowledge) and **commandments of men** (Mt. 15:9).
4. **1:15-16** – **Purity** is brought up because the false teachers. The idea is that to the ritually pure (those who have followed God’s plan for forgiveness) **all things are pure** (morally; they have complete forgiveness). But those who do not **believe** see everything as defiling, even when God’s word said otherwise. The lives (**deeds**) of these men prove that they do not **know God** and are thereby **worthless** to all.

D. Questions for further consideration:

1. Why do you think elders need to have these qualifications?
2. While all the qualifications are essential, which ones would you consider especially important for the small villages on the island?

3. What, if anything, is significant about the differences between the list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?
4. There is much said about the elders being able to deal with false teachers. Are we dealing with such today? And, if so, how are elders dealing with them?

Conclusion:

- A. These last two qualifications are, in the opinion of this writer, those that are most lacking in elders today. Many are not able to boldly defend the truth and many are not able to show the false teacher how he has erred. The Lord requires His elders to be ones who can refute false teachers and exhort in sound doctrine. If one cannot do this, then he must not serve, even if he meets all the other qualifications.
- B. We must remember that good men do not equal qualified leaders. God has these qualifications for a reason.
- C. It is frequently observed that the church as a whole lacks leaders. In addition, those who do have leaders sometimes have those who are not qualified to lead. It is not possible to be the church of Christ without having good, sound, qualified leaders. In order for this to happen, these texts need to be taught and emphasized. Equally, our younger men need to be encouraged to strive to be elders someday. That “seed thought” might be all it takes to set him on the course to be a good leader someday.