

ELDERS: WHO THE LORD IS SEEKING

Lesson Two: Positive Qualifications

Aaron Beard
Trussville
June 12, 2005

INTRODUCTION: (TITUS 1:5)

- A. Let's refresh our minds on what we talked about last time regarding their qualifications:**
1. Most of the qualifications should be developed in the lives of every Christian – Even those that don't apply to all, we should strive to develop if it is possible
 2. While we realize that fewer men meet the qualifications than don't, we must never compromise on them or lesser their meaning – They are the Lord's qualifications!
 3. The Lord is looking first of all for a man, a man with a desire for doing the work of a shepherd, and a man with the desire who is blameless
- B. Let's now look at the "positive qualifications" one must possess in order to serve as an elder, answering the question, "What should an elder be? What does he look like?"**

I. WHAT SHOULD AN ELDER BE? WHAT DOES HE LOOK LIKE?

- A. He must be temperate: (I Tim. 3:2)**
1. Temperance defined: "Properly, sober, abstinent, especially in respect to wine; then sober-minded, watchful, circumspect"
 - a. Translated four ways in various versions: Vigilant, temperate, sober, and reserved
 - b. In order to be an elder a man must be a man who is alert in his vision and judgments – He sees dangers before they arrive and is carefully minded
 2. Christians are to have this characteristic as we watch out for Satan (**I Peter 5:8**)
 3. Why temperance is a quality needed among elders:
 - a. Elders should be watchmen within a local congregation – The opposite is seen in the blindness and lethargy of the spiritual watchmen in Israel (**Is. 56:10**)
 - b. They should be watchful alert men who have the foresight to see the end of a course being taken → Looking ahead spiritually (**2 Peter 1:6, 9**)
 - c. Paul charged the Ephesians to be "watchful" because of false teachers coming into their midst! Took looking ahead and discerning! (**Acts 20:28-31**)
 - d. They must be able to see the dangers that lie in the paths of the lives of individual Christians in order to keep them from sin (**Heb. 13:17**)
- B. He must be sober-minded (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)**
1. This means "prudent, a man of a sound mind, clearheaded"
 - a. It has defined as "discreet, prudent, moderate, temperate, chaste, sober, of sound mind, sane, in one's senses, curbing one's desires and impulses
 - b. Other versions render this "prudent," "sensible," "reserved," and "discreet"
 - c. Paul used this in his defense when he was accused of being crazy! (**Ax 26:24-25**)
 2. This originally referred to one abstaining from alcohol, but here is used metaphorically
 - a. We say one is sober when he is out from under the influence of alcohol – When "drunk" he is not thinking clearly, not in his right state of mind
 - b. Anyone who would serve as an elder must be a man whose mind is free not only from the influence of alcohol, but anything else that would cloud his judgment
 - c. More than not being drunk – It means that quality to be calm, even tempered, cautious, circumspect, and wise in the full use of the mind and body under all circumstances to the point that good sense is shown in all judgment, reason, and understanding
 3. Considering the serious nature & impact of his work, a shepherd must be sober-minded!
 - a. When problems arise between people he makes good common sense decisions
 - b. He is level headed, not flighty or flippant, but he is serious in his consideration of things pertaining to this life and eternal life
- C. He must be of good behavior**
1. This literally means "Seemly, decent conduct"

- a. Other translations read: Orderly, respectable, well behaved, dignified”
- b. The type of man described here leads a well-arranged, dignified, courteous, and chaste life as a whole – The way he behaves himself is respectable by others
- c. **Illustration:** From Greek word “Kosmios” → Where “COSMOS” comes from
- 3. The same word is used to describe women regarding how they dress (**I Tim. 2:9**)
 - a. Their dress is supposed to be decent and with propriety – Consistent with how one would dress whose ultimate desire is to be godly
 - b. Any man who is to be an elder must have conduct that is consistent with one who professes godliness! You can say he acts decently & with a sound mind
- 4. There is a great need for men of good behavior to lead God’s people: (**Hebrews 13:7**)
 - a. “A clownish, rude, or boorish man should never have the rule of the church of God; the sour sullen, and the boisterous should never be invested with a dignity which they would most infallibly disgrace” (Clark)
 - b. Those he oversees should see a clear cut path for how to walk as a Christian! A very distinct example of what a Christian is supposed to be!

D. He must be given hospitable (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)

- 1. This literally means “A lover of strangers; one who is ready to receive into his house and relieve every necessitous stranger” (Clark)
 - a. It’s not just about enjoying opening your home – but actually loving those, including strangers, to whom you open your home to or take care of their needs
 - b. Being “given” to hospitality means he doesn’t do it out of a sense of duty but who really “loves hospitality” – Enjoys & delights in entertaining strangers
 - c. For one to be qualified to serve as an elder he must have the heart of “The Good Samaritan” who took time to help a stranger with a self-less spirit!
- 3. This is something that is required of all Christians! (**I Pet. 4:9; Gal. 6:10; Heb. 13:2**)
- 4. In order for an elder to be effective at his work it is vital that he is given to hospitality!
 - a. This is a qualification that mainly centers around an man’s home – The home of an effective shepherd is often open and the congregation knows that
 - b. He cares about people enough to arrange his life so that others are a welcomed part of it – They don’t feel like they are intruders or unwelcome there
 - c. Remember – The effectiveness of a shepherd hinges on his relationship with his sheep → Hospitality is a major way in which he achieves this!

E. He must be gentle (I Tim. 3:3)

- 1. To serve as an elder a man must be equitable, fair, mild, gentle”
 - a. Simply put, he must be a man who is gentle and patient in his dealings with others
 - b. He is kind and meek in his attitudes toward others and how he treats them rather than being bitter, unkind, stern, and disagreeable
 - c. He is not easily provoked, not revengeful, not eager or impetuous!
- 2. While an elder must be a man who is gentle, patient, and forbearing he must understand that being so does not mean being compromising!
 - a. Ignoring problems under the guise of “patience” or “longsuffering” is not what this is talking about → That is nothing more than compromise and is wrong!
 - b. There’s no room for an elder to be weak and compromising with error or sinfulness!
- 3. An elder’s effectiveness can quickly become nullified if he does not exhibit patience!
 - a. As he opposes error and sin he does so gently and with consideration for the person’s soul who is caught up in error or entangled in sin! (**Gal. 6:1**)
 - b. As he deals with those who are weaker he is patient with them as they grow and mature – Not squashing the faith in his zeal for righteousness! (**Isaiah 41:3**)
 - c. A hot-headed man has no business trying to be a shepherd! He will drive away more people from the Lord than any other problem in a congregation!

F. He must have a good testimony from those who are without: (I Tim. 3:7)

- 1. The word “testimony” literally means “record, report, testimony, witness”

- a. Other translations read “A good reputation” or “Well thought of”
- b. It is like what is said of Cornelius (**Acts 10:22**) and Demetrius (**3 John 12**)
- c. Not only should he be a man we esteem, he must be a man whose character is seen as good and honorable by those who are not Christians
- 2. It may be that not everyone speaks well of him – Some may even speak evil! (**Luke 6:26**)
 - a. When one walks in the light, those who are walking in darkness may despise him because his striving to live righteously condemns their unrighteousness!
 - b. As he stands for the truth – Those he condemns may hate him or speak evil of him!
- 3. There are several good reasons why this qualification is given:
 - a. Those that are on the outside may very well judge the strength of the entire congregation based upon what they think about its leadership
 - b. He should be known as one who deals fairly, shows respect, is morally upright and honest in every way when he is among those who are not Christians
 - c. He must be of good report lest he fall into reproach and the devil’s snare! A bad reputation among non-Christians would just be bait in Satan’s wicked hands!

G. He must be a lover of what is good: (Titus 1:8)

- 1. He must be a man who is “fond of what is good, a promoter of virtue”
 - a. He is devoted to all that is good and helpful to others and the congregation
 - b. It’s also translated as “a lover of good men, loving what is good, lover of goodness”
- 2. An elder leads and nourishes a congregation by loving good things (**Phil. 4:8-9**)
 - a. He looks for the good in other people – When he sees others taking positive steps spiritually and growing he encourages them in it
 - b. He focuses on doing good things in his own life and leads others to do the same
 - c. He is seen bringing out and polishing good characteristics in other people

H. He must be a just man: (Titus 1:8)

- 1. The type of man the Lord approves of in this role is a just man, upright, and fair
 - a. This means: “Justly, right, observant of right, righteous, just, equal, even, strict, exact, rendering to each his due, passing just judgments on others”
 - b. Generically it speaks of him: Upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping God’s commands
 - c. In a more specific sense it refers to the manner in which he deals with others
- 2. Paul encouraged all who ruled over others to rule fairly: (**Col. 4:1**)
- 3. A shepherd of the Lord’s people will lead and rule justly because they are seeking to carry out not their own will but the Lord’s will! (**John 5:30**)
 - a. He will rule and make decisions without partiality, but hears all sides equally
 - b. Congregations are destroyed when leadership make decisions that are one-sided!
 - 1) They may be inconsistent in their judgments because they do not want to upset a particular family or out of fear that some might leave!
 - 2) Sometimes people will lean more toward one side than the other because that one side is more vocal, more numerous, or where the money is at!
 - c. Because he is just he will not make a decision having only really listened to one side of the story but hears both parties out equally and fairly

I. He must be a holy man: (Titus 1:8)

- 1. Paul now focuses back on his life → His life is holy, that is set apart in and for the Lord
 - a. The word used here means “Holy, holiness, pious, devout, religious, the pious toward God, God’s pious worshippers
 - b. He does not allow sin to rule over him! When he makes a mistake, he corrects it!
 - c. His greatest desire in life is to be like Christ, to please the Lord, to live a holy life
- 2. Before we decide that this is an impossible qualification that is unreasonable to look for in any man – Let’s remember it’s for ALL Christians! (**1 Peter 2:5**)
- 3. Elders, as spiritual shepherds, must set the example of holiness for others to follow!
 - a. If you despise the idea of living in a fishbowl you have no place in a position of leadership because in order to be viable you must be visible!

- b. Being “set apart for the Lord” characterizes his relationships, his actions in the business realm, his life as he interacts with the world, and even in his family

J. He must be self-controlled: (Titus 1:8)

1. An elder must be a man who has control over his own self
 - a. It means, “Having power over; possessed of; hence controlling, keeping in hand”
 - b. It involves the idea of having control over yourself, being self-disciplined
 - c. Developing this is a need for all Christians! (2 Peter. 1:5-8; Gal. 5:21-22)
2. It’s a quality that a runner would use while training for a race (1 Cor. 9:24-27)
3. An elder must be a man who is an example to others of self-discipline: (Prov. 25:28)
 - a. He keeps his passions and desires in check so as to not exercise them improperly
 - b. He is an example of one who is not mastered and bound by habit, desire, and thinking that would negatively impact his spiritual living
 - c. He isn’t quick to fly off the handle, lose his temper, and speak without thinking first

CONCLUSION: When we consider whether or not a man is qualified we must remember its more than just if he is married, if his kids are Christians, and if he teaches occasionally! What does his life look like?