

Elders - Part 3

1 Tim. 3:1-7

I saw myself as a future Major League ball player. I'd be a star 3rd baseman the rival of Cletus Boyer who was in the World Series with the Yankees every year from 60-64. Reality Check - I'm a preacher. I haven't picked up a baseball in 30 years. In the 5th grade I had all the desire in the world. I was lacking just one thing ... ability! The Eldership requires that balance as well - a delicate balance between a man's heart (desire) and his qualifications (character and ability).

Both are necessary when we consider a man to be an overseer in the church. This lesson has two things. **First**, the matter of the elder's heart (that is, his desire). **Second**, the matter of the elder's qualifications. There are two New Testament texts that deal with these issues. The first is 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The second text is Titus 1:5-9.

Being an Elder Is A Matter of the Heart.

An elder is to be one with his heart set on this role. 1 Tim 3:1 says, "*It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.*" (NAS) Notice two important words: *aspires* and *desires*. Desire for the Eldership is more than a fleeting whim.

The NIV version says, "*if anyone sets his heart on being an overseer...*" You don't draft a man for this work against his will and, quite frankly, not every man is going to want to do it. It is a good thing for a Christian when he is young to set his heart on being an elder in the church. A man's desire to be an elder is essential, but it isn't enough.

Being An Elder Is Also A Matter of Qualification.

Though the word qualifications is not used in either Titus or Timothy, we know that there are qualifications because of the word "**must**." 1 Tim 3:2 says, "*An overseer, then, must be...*" Titus 1:5 says, "*The overseer must be...*" The qualifications of the elder **are not optional**. God's word says that the elder **must** meet them.

I've known churches to appoint men to the office of elder who do not meet the qualifications of scripture. It is felt, perhaps, that so few men can qualify, the church must settle for second best. This is a mistake creating all kinds of trouble. Men who are not spiritually mature cannot rule the church the way God intends.

There are several ways to group these qualifications listed in 1 Timothy and Titus. For the sake of convenience, I will merge the two lists and break them down into three areas of concern.

1. Character 2. Domestic 3. Competence

Character Qualifications

1. Above Reproach 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7 The KJV and the NIV translate this word "blameless." This is the most general of all the qualifications listed. The Greek word refers to one who "cannot be called into account, is unreprieveable, unaccused." **The word doesn't mean sinless.** Peter was an elder, yet he wasn't sinless! What it means is that there are no current unresolved grounds for specific accusations against the man. There is not a charge that can be brought that will stick to him.

2. Not self-willed Titus 1:7 Thayer's Lexicon gives the definition for the word "self-pleasing, self-willed, arrogant." It means literally, "self-desired." An elder cannot be one who always must have his own way.

3. Not quick-tempered Titus 1:7 The KJV translates this "not soon angry." An elder cannot be a hothead. He must be one with a long fuse - one who can control his temper. Sometimes the people the elder works with can be utterly exasperating. If he is one who gets angry and lashes out, or gets angry and holds a grudge, you'd better not make him an elder.

4. Not pugnacious 1 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 1:7 The KJV says, "no striker." The word has to do with one who will fight at the drop of a hat.

5. Not addicted to wine 1 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 1:7 The Greek word (paroinos) means literally "not near the wine." I think that one is obvious in meaning. The elder cannot be one who imbibes in alcohol.

6. Not fond of sordid gain Titus 1:7 and free from the love of money 1 Tim 3:3. In both cases the word (aischrokerdes) means "greedy for money." No, it doesn't say he has to be a pauper. You just must ask yourself what issue is number one in his life. Greed and the desire to get rich can be a life dominating pursuit that leaves little time for the work.

7. Just Titus 1:8 The Greek word (dikios) refers to one who is equitable in character. He is fair and impartial in the eyes of men. He believes in a just balance of things. Practically, he is a man who treats everyone with the same degree of fairness. He doesn't use one standard on one person and another on someone else. The word is often translated righteous in the NT. It is used to describe God as a "righteous judge" in 2 Timothy 4:8.

8. Devout Titus 1:8 The KJV and ASV say "holy" here. The Greek word is "hosios." An elder must be one who is concerned for holiness. He is devout in his dedication to the way God sees things. He is one who desires to have the mind of Christ rather than the mind of the flesh. He is devoted.

9. Temperate 1 Timothy 3:2 Greek: (nephalios). According to Strong's it means: sober, i.e. (figuratively) circumspect.

10. Sensible Titus 1:8 and prudent 1 Timothy 3:2 The KJV says "sober minded." The word (sophrone) means "sound minded, sane, in one's senses." It comes from two words meaning "to save the mind." It simply describes one who is sane, wise and sensible about things.

11. Respectable 1 Timothy 3:2 The Greek word means orderly, well arranged. It refers to the man's life. He is a well ordered, organized person.

12. Gentle 1 Timothy 3:3 W.E. Vine says of this word (epieikes), "equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law; it expresses that considerateness that looks humanely and reasonably at the facts of a case." Such a man works patiently toward a solution to the problem rather than hastily condemning the people involved. He deals with each fairly, just as he would want to be dealt with.

13. Uncontentious 1 Timothy 3:3 The word (amachos [am'-akh-os]) means "not fighting." It refers to one who doesn't want to fight, peaceable.

14. Not a new convert 1 Timothy 3:6 Greek: neophutos. We get our English word "neophyte" from it. Literally, it means "not newly planted." How long does it take for a man to no longer be a new convert? It doesn't say. But common sense says it takes spiritual maturity to be an overseer.

15. Self-controlled Titus 1:8 This one is sufficient as it stands and needs no further explanation. The man shows self-control in his life. He is stable.

16. Loving what is good Titus 1:8 Greek word: philagathos. This man loves what the Bible says is good. He is a promoter of virtue and appreciates it when he sees it. He will be thrilled when he sees people walking in the truth of God's word. John said in 3 John 1:4, *"I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth."*

17. Must have a good reputation outside the church. 1 Tim 1:7 The Greek word here is marturia. It can be translated "witness" or "testimony." Keeping with this qualification, we would ask, "Does this man have a good witness among unbelievers? What do they say about him?"

18. Holding fast the faithful word. Titus 1:9 The Greek word for "holding" here means to hold firmly, cling to, adhere to. Does this man cling to the faithful teaching of the word of God?

19. Not accused of dissipation or rebellion. Titus 1:6 text is sufficient.

Domestic Qualifications

1. Husband of one wife. 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6 text is sufficient here.

2. One who manages his own household well. 1 Timothy 3:4. The Greek word for "manages" is proistemi. It means "to superintend, preside over." Look to see how the elder candidate manages his home affairs.

3. Having faithful children. Titus 1:6 KJV the elder-candidate's children must be in submission to their father. Does this mean that they must be Christians? Church dogma has always taught that this is the case. However, is this what the text says? I remain unconvinced that the text demands that a man's children must have obeyed the gospel. They must be faithful to the father, and not guilty of riotous living.

4. Keeping his children under control with all dignity. 1 Timothy 3:4

The word "dignity" here, according to Thayer, means, "the characteristic of a thing or person which entitles to reverence and respect, dignity, majesty, sanctity." Do the man's children respect and obey him? A man prone to yelling and screaming at his kids in a manner of exasperation certainly would not fit here.

5. Hospitable Titus 1:8 The Greek word here is philoxenos. It means "fond of guests" according to Strong's. Does this man and his wife entertain guests in their home? That is something an elder is willing to do.

Competence Qualifications

1. Able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. Titus 1:9 The elder must be able to exhort in sound doctrine. To do that he must know sound doctrine. This involves both the man's knowledge of the Bible and his ability to exhort and refute from it.

2. Able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2) The Greek word is didaktikos. It means "apt and skillful in teaching" according to Strong's. Can the man teach?

Conclusion

I began by telling you about the delicate balance required for a man to become an elder. He must have a heart for the work and the qualifications for the work. I believe that we are blessed with some men who possess both. It remains for you to decide. Please look through this list of qualifications and determine if you agree.