

Lesson 4: Elder Qualifications – No. 3

(What An Elder Must Be and Not Be)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Today I am returning to our study of the eldership and, in particular, the qualifications required for a man to be considered for the office.
2. In our last lesson, we considered how an elder must be...
 - A. **Temperate** – sober, vigilant, careful, clear-headed
 - B. **Prudent/sensible** – of sound mind, thoughtful
 - C. **Self-controlled** – masters or controls himself, disciplined
 - D. **Respectable** – orderly, living a well-ordered, honorable life
3. Today we will consider certain skills he must have, as well as certain habits and/or addiction and characteristics he must avoid. These are:
 - A. Able to teach
 - B. Not addicted to wine
 - C. Not pugnacious

BODY:

I. Able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9-14).

- A. Text: 1 Tim. 3:2 – “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**”
 1. Translations:
 - a. Able to teach – NASB, ESV, NKJV, NIV
 - b. An able teacher – HCSB, NET (this may express it better)
 2. Defined: (*didaktikos*) skilled in teaching; (2) instructive; (3) apt (suitable for, able) to teach (*Vine; Strong; Thayer; BDAG*)
 - a. Our word *didactic* is related to it and means instructive, educational, moralistic.
 - b. From the definitions we deduce that one who would be an elder must not only be *willing* to teach, but also possess the *ability*, or the *suitable skills*, needed to teach effectively.
- B. Being a *skillful teacher* does not mean an elder must be a capable *preacher*, though some are (1 Tim. 5:17).
 1. Though all biblical preaching must teach, not all teaching is preaching.
 - a. Consider the role of a godly wife (1 Pet. 3:1-2 – “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, **they may be won without a word** by the **behavior** of their wives, ² as they **observe your chaste and respectful behavior.**”).
 - i. A wife can teach *without a word* by how she conducts her life.
 - ii. The husband is instructed by what he *observes*! And, elders lead by *example*.
 - b. Col. 3:16 says all Christians are to be “teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
 - i. Every Christian, including women, are allowed to *teach* in the assemblies *in song*.
 - ii. But there is a biblical difference in teaching as one *sings* and doing so by *preaching*, seeing that 1 Cor. 14:34 says women are not permitted to *speak* to the assembly.
 - c. With this restriction in mind, when Hebrews 5:12 says, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers,” it does not mean that all believers should become preachers, or those who publicly address the assemblies, etc.
 2. The point? Since teaching is not necessarily preaching, one can be an able teacher without being a preacher.
 - a. Tricia sometimes mentions the difference in my skills as a preacher and as a teacher.
 - b. She thinks I am a better teacher than a preacher. And if that can be true of me, then one can be an elder who is a capable teacher, but not necessarily a preacher!
- C. What does **able to teach**, or being an **able teacher**, require?

1. *Able to teach* is used only one other time, where Paul instructs Timothy (2 Tim. 2:23-25 – “But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. ²⁴ The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, **able to teach**, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth”).
 - a. Paul is not talking about public preaching per-se.
 - b. Instead, Paul is instructing Timothy concerning his general work, that he avoid foolish disputes and quarrelling, and instead humbly *communicate* and *instruct* with *God’s word*, *correcting* with calmness and gentleness those who have strayed from the truth.
 - c. This would involve more than just being able to publicly present a lesson.
2. These same qualities are presented in Titus’ list as the companion quality of Timothy’s “able to teach” (**Titus 1:9-14** – “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to **exhort in sound doctrine** and to **refute** those who contradict. ¹⁰ For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ **who must be silenced** because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. ¹² One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” ¹³ This testimony is true. For this reason **reprove them severely** so that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.”).
 - a. One who would be an elder is to be a man of the word, knowing the teaching/doctrine.
 - b. He must be able to use that knowledge to...
 - i. *Exhort in sound doctrine*, or positively affect God’s people’s faithfulness by using the truth to entreat, admonish, encourage, and/or comfort them.
 - ii. *Refute/convict/correct those who contradict*, or those stand contrary to the scriptures, answering false teaching and false teachers, and doing so *firmly* at times!
 - iii. This work, of course, will often take place away from the assemblies, in people’s homes, etc. This ability would include personal teaching/correcting skills.
3. This multifaceted qualification can only be achieved and known by one’s brethren by...
 - a. A man being willing to put for the effort to teach classes, whether publicly and privately.
 - b. A man being ready and willing to address the various problems that arise within a congregation by personally engaging with those in error to help them return to God!
 - c. So, one that is not confident in or is fearful of using his ability to handle God’s word to deal with conflict and opposition should not seek to be an elder.

II. Not addicted to wine (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7):

A. Texts:

1. 1 Tim. 3:3 – “**not addicted to wine** or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.”
2. Titus 1:7 – “For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, **not addicted to wine**, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain”
3. Translations:
 - a. Not addicted to wine – NASB, HCSB
 - b. Not given to wine – NKJV
 - c. Not a drunkard – ESV, NET
 - d. Not given to drunkenness – NIV
 - e. Although some, if not all, are possible translations, I do not really like them because they seem to weaken the qualification and open the door to more than the text allows.

B. Defined:

1. “Wine” (Gk. oinos) is a generic term for grape juice, whether fermented or not, as well as (Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon) drinks made of the juice of other succulent fruits.

- a. What is often called *wine* in the Bible is what we would call *water*, seeing it was generally 3-4 times water to one part wine, which was used to purify the water as well as likely to flavor it.
 - b. It was a vice of the day drink in excess, or gluttonous drinking, whether the wine or drink was fermented or not.
 - i. This included the practice of drinking parties where contests were held to see how much drink, which was often heavily diluted wine, one could drink.
 - ii. The prevalence of this vice could explain Timothy's aversion to the consumption of any sort of wine (1 Tim. 5:23 – "No longer drink water exclusively, but **use a little wine** for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.").
 - iii. These facts indicate that **not addicted to wine** does not have to refer to *alcoholic* wine, but to the juice of the grape whether unfermented or not.
2. Gk: (*mē paroinon*):
- a. *Me* – the negative particle, meaning "**not**"
 - b. *Paroinon* – a compound word:
 - i. *Par* – by, near, with, together, next to
 - ii. *Oinos* – wine
 - c. Literally, it means "not at, by, near, or with wine," which needs to be remembered even when considering the following definition.
3. **Not addicted to wine:** *Vine* – not to "tarry at wine," not "given to wine," probably has the secondary sense of the effect of wine-bibbing—abusive brawler; (2) **Strong, Mounce** – [not] staying near wine, [not] tippling; (3) **Thayer** – [not] one who sits long at his wine, [not] given to wine, [not] drunken; secondary sense, [not] quarrelsome over wine; [not] abusive, brawler; (5) **BDAG** – [not] addicted to wine.
- C. Possible meanings:
1. An elder *cannot get drunk* or be a *drunkard*.
 2. An elder must avoid the *effects of wine* (*Vine/Thayer*), or not be a *brawler* (ASV).
 - a. So, some would say he can socially drink as long as he is not adversely affected by it.
 3. An elder must not be *addicted to wine*.
 - a. Some would argue this allows drinking...if he avoids alcoholism.
 4. An elder must not *drink wine/alcohol*.
- D. Examining the possibilities:
1. We can eliminate "a"—cannot get drunk or be a drunkard—because:
 - a. One cannot be a Christian and get drunk or be a drunkard (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 5:11).
 - b. This is like saying he must not be a murderer, immoral, idolator, etc.
 2. We can eliminate "b"—must avoid the effects of wine—because:
 - a. If the bad effects of the wine are all he must avoid, could a man who "holds his liquor well," who does not get drunk or become adversely affected by much wine, be an elder?
 - b. It creates confusion concerning the qualification of deacons being "not addicted to much wine" (1 Tim. 3:8).
 - i. For, if an elder can drink alcohol as long as he does not become violent, etc., can a deacon be allowed to be somewhat affected by wine? Not get too drunk?
 - ii. Once you step on this path, you open a "can of worms" that is difficult to close!
 3. Possible to accept "c" – not addicted to wine.
 - a. This seems to be an acceptable translation of the Greek, although not the best.
 - b. *Not be addicted to wine* does not indicate that drinking alcohol in moderation is acceptable.
 - i. "Don't be enslaved to sin" does not give approval for sinning in moderation.
 - c. Addiction to any "thing" is wrong, which would especially be true of an addiction to "wine," whether fermented or not, in N.T. times! (1 Cor. 6:12 – "All things are lawful for

me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”).

4. Possible to accept “d” – cannot drink wine/alcohol.
 - a. Some would say this means that any form of alcohol could not touch his lips!
 - b. There is a difference in “drinking wine/alcohol” and using it medicinally (1 Tim. 5:23 – “No longer drink water exclusively, but **use a little wine** for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”).
 - c. Though I believe it correct to say an elder cannot drink alcohol, not a drinker, it would not be wrong for him to use some medicinally, like taking Nyquil, etc., for a cold.
5. So, the only proper conclusion is that if a man wants to be an elder, he cannot be a drinker!

III. Not pugnacious (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).

A. Text:

1. 1 Tim. 3:3 – “**not** addicted to wine or **pugnacious**, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.”
2. Titus 1:7 – “For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, **not pugnacious**, not fond of sordid gain”

B. Translations:

1. Not pugnacious – NASB
2. Not violent – ESV, NET, NIV, NKJV
3. Not a bully – HCSB

C. Defined: (*mē plēktēs*) **Vine** – not a striker, a brawler; (2) **Strong** – not pugnacious (quarrelsome);

(3) **Thayer** – not contentious, not a bruiser, not ready with a blow; (4) **BDAG** – not a bully

1. This is a prohibition against a man being a fighter, one who is quick tempered, carrying a chip on his shoulder, with the desire to settle things with force.
 - a. This, like not a drunkard, would be a perplexing qualification if it means “not a fighter,” seeing such a spirit is completely alien to the nature of a Christian.
 - b. But, when you add the idea of a *bully*, you can perceive how a bully might hold enough sway over fearful members, like Diotrephes did, to possibly become an elder.
2. This flaw could be exhibited...
 - a. In his relationship with brethren:
 - i. Is he drawn to much disputing? Does strife seem to follow him? (2 Tim. 2:22-23 – “Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³ But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.”).
 - ii. Is he always pressing to get his way...“for the good of the brethren, of course”? (Phil. 2:3-4 – “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”)
 - b. In how he deals with his family.
 - i. 1 Pet. 3:7 – “You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.”
 - ii. Eph. 6:4 – “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”).
3. Such a man as this will not promote growth and will cause resentment and even division.

CONCLUSION:

1. So, one who desires to be an elder must...
 - A. Be a skillful teacher, being able to communicate God’s word and use it to correct and direct the erring toward the truth and repentance.
 - B. Not drink alcohol. For, it has no place in the life of one who would be a sober leader the church.

- C. Be one who understands that problems are not settled by his fists or by bullying the brethren, but by a firm but loving and gentle approach governed by the spirit of Christ.
 - D. These are characteristics that all Christians should seek for as mature children of God.
2. If you are not a Christian, I hope you will consider the life the gospel brings, one that is raised far above the average, that aspires to heights of purity, holiness, and true glory few understand.
 3. Will you come today in F-R-C-Bp?