

Lesson 7: Qualifications of Elders (No. 6)

INTRODUCTION:

1. Elders are vital to the spiritual health of a local congregation, being put in place by God to be both the spiritual leaders and the protectors of the local church (Acts 20:28-31; Hebrews 13:7).
 - A. The local church is lacking without them.
 - B. Therefore, lessons like these are important in keeping this requirement in the forefront of our minds, while also reminding us of what is required of those who would be elders.
2. Today we will conclude our study of the eldership by considering the following qualifications:
 - A. Note a new convert
 - B. Loving what is good, Devout
 - C. Good reputation without
 - D. Faithful wife
3. Some of these are implied in one list, while others correspond to a characteristic in the other list, as we have mentioned before.

BODY:

I. Not a new convert (1 Tim. 3:6).

- A. Text: 1 Tim. 3:6 – “and **not a new convert**, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”
 1. **Implied** in Titus’s list.
 2. That it is implied is easy to see considering the nature of many, if not most, of the qualifications.
- B. Translations:
 1. ESV, HCSB, NET, NIV – not a new/recent convert
 2. NKJV – Not a novice (literally correct, though the above present the idea)
- C. Defined: (*neóphutos*) **Thayer/Vine** – lit., newly-planted, (figuratively) denotes a new convert, (“neophyte”): — novice; **Strong** – a young convert; **BDAG** – newly converted
 1. Newly planted things in a garden, etc., are not expected to produce immediately.
 2. Time and effort are needed before mature fruit needed to fill this position can be expected (Heb. 5:12-14 – “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the **mature**, who **because of practice** have their senses trained to **discern good and evil.**”).
- D. Application:
 1. One who is new to the faith is not to be appointed as an elder no matter how old he might be.
 - a. **H. E. Phillips** – (*Church Officers and Organization*, p. 14) “No man can be an elder who has been in the church only a very short time. Of course, the length of time will be determined by the amount of study of the Bible, the aptness of the man to learn, the moral characteristics he already has, and the amount of talent he has for doing the work of an elder. Some men have been in the church for twenty years and do not know any more about the Bible than some who have been in the church only a few months. Such men are still a novice in the work of the church and should not be appointed to the eldership.”
 - b. It is not completely about how young he is in *years*, but also how young he is in the faith.
 - c. Some have questioned this qualification because of Acts 14:23 where Paul established elders from men who had only been Christians a short time.
 - i. These men would have been Jews who were mature in their faith in God, and would have known the Scriptures about the Christ, the church, etc.
 - ii. There is far more about Christ and the church in the O.T. than we think (Gal. 3:24), which is why honest, open-hearted Jews were converted.
 2. He is subject to blinding pride (lit. “enveloped with smoke”) resulting in him “falling into the condemnation incurred by the devil.”

- a. God knows that one tends to become arrogant when given responsibility or power beyond one's maturity.
 - b. Pride will lead him away from the Lord (1 Jn. 2:16 – “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”).
3. So, a new convert is not to be appointed to avoid damage to the man and the church.

II. Loving what is good and devout (Titus 1:8).

A. Titus 1:8 – “...hospitable, **loving what is good**, sensible, just, **devout**, self-controlled”

B. Translations:

1. ESV – “lover of good...holy”
2. NET – “devoted to what is good...devout”
3. NIV, HCSB – “loves [ing] what is good...holy”
4. NKJV – “lover of what is good...holy”

C. Defined:

1. Loving what is good – (5358 – *philagothos*) **Strong** – fond of good, that is, a promoter of virtue; **Vine, BDAG, Thayer** – loving that which is good[ness]
2. Devout – (3741, *hosios*) **BDAG** – *right*, to be devout, pious, pleasing to God, holy; **Thayer** – undefiled by sin, free from wickedness; **Strong** – right; **Vine** – religiously right, holy
3. These qualities address what motivates him, what he loves, and is dedicated to.
4. These qualifications complement each other and seem to correspond to 1 Timothy 3's “respectable.”
 - a. They complement each other because when one loves what is good, he is going to seek to please God by holy and right living, by putting sin and wickedness out of his life.
 - b. These correspond to 1 Timothy 3's *respectable/honorable* because that quality is best expressed in living holy and righteous lives.

D. Application:

1. He must have not only his **outer** but also his **inner** life in line with God's will. For, the outward is far easier to align than the inward, which was one of the reasons the Pharisees were condemned as hypocrites (Mt. 23:25-28).
2. Lack of these qualities will hinder his dealing with moral issues in the lives of others, causing him to feel conflicted and hypocritical.
3. Holiness and righteous are required of shepherds, seeing that without it the flock will not be holy and righteous, which was a major complaint of God against Israel's shepherds.

III. Must have a good reputation with those outside (1 Tim. 3:7).

A. 1 Tim. 3:7 – “And he **must have a good reputation with those outside** *the church* [italicized], so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

B. Translations:

1. ESV – “must be well thought of by outsiders”
2. HCSB – “must have a good reputation among outsiders”
3. NET – “must be well thought of by those outside the faith”
4. NIV – “must also have a good reputation with outsiders”
5. NKJV – “must have a good testimony among those who are outside”

C. Defined: Good reputation (*marturian kalēn*)

1. Reputation (*marturian*) what one testifies, testimony in court, attestation of character or behavior, testimony concerning one's character (**BDAG, Thayer**)
2. Good (*kalēn*) virtuous, honest, worthy; (2) morally good, noble, praiseworthy, excellent, beautiful (**Vine; Strong; Thayer; BDAG**)

D. Application:

1. He must be a man who has lived, at least for a notable time, a morally good, noble, and honest life before all men, as all Christians should (1 Pet. 2:11-12 – “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as

evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”).

- a. How the world sees this man live his life, whether they view him as morally good, honest, excellent in character, etc., must be taken into account.
 - b. This is important because the local church has a public presence within a community established by the conduct of the members, especially its leaders!
 - c. **Gary Henry**: “The world tends to judge the church by its leaders—the elder must not furnish ‘ammunition’ that can be used by Satan and the opponents of the faith.” (*Elders And Deacons*)
2. The Spirit says this is important “so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”
 - a. In other words, an elder with a bad reputation offers the chance for reproach to surface against him and, by his position, against the whole congregation.
 - b. Such a man will likely become a tool in the hands of Satan to use against Christ and his people.

IV. Must have faithful wives (1 Timothy 3:11):

- A. 1 Timothy 3:11 – “Likewise also their wives must be dignified, not slanderous, temperate, faithful in every respect.” – NET
- B. Why would a qualification found among those of the deacons apply to elders?
 1. This qualification is given in parenthetical style in the context of qualifications of elders and deacons.
 2. There is no qualification imposed on deacons that is not required of elders.
 3. It is incomprehensible that deacons’ wives’ character would be specified, while the wives of those who oversee, lead, and spiritually protect the church, and who must meet even more stringent qualifications concerning their children, etc., would not.
- C. Elders’ (and deacons’) wives:
 1. Must be “dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.”
 - a. Since we know what a malicious gossip is, and we have covered *temperate* and *faithful*, I will only address “dignified.”
 - b. Dignified (*semnos*) **Thayer** – venerable, honorable, grave, honest; **BDAG** – worthy of respect or honor, noble, dignified
 - c. So, his wife must be of a serious mind concerning her life and character, seeking to live honorably and respectably.
 2. Application:
 - a. An elder cannot be effective with a wife who is a constant distraction and source of criticism.
 - b. Ladies and wives, you need to be preparing, molding your life to have the character necessary to help your future husband, or husband, be qualified to be an elder.
 - c. Men need to be wise when choosing a wife, seeing it can make or break you in this pursuit.

V. Closing thoughts:

- A. Though we might be tempted to conclude that no one could ever meet these qualifications, that would be wrong.
 1. Satan would like us to believe this to squelch any efforts toward meeting this goal.
 2. Paul himself, the one through whom the Spirit gave us these qualifications, established elders in the churches (Acts 14:23) and they existed in Jerusalem, etc., as well.
- B. To appoint elders is to appoint overseers, shepherds, rulers, leaders (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-3).
 1. Elders are given authority over God’s sheep to direct and protect them.
 - a. They are not to flaunt, or “lord,” their authority over the flock, nor ignore the thoughts and wishes of the flock, both of which would indicate a lack of concern for the flock.
 - b. Yet, they do have authority given them by God to do their work.

- c. That authority to direct and oversee does not begin and end at the assemblies. Elders oversee the souls of the sheep, which includes how the sheep live their lives away from the assemblies (Heb. 13:17 – “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.”).
- d. So, elders may have to address personal matters in the life of members, and we need to be ready for that and **welcome** that! That is the main reason for elders!
2. We are to submit to the eldership’s decisions.
 - a. The elders’ decisions **may not always suit us**, or even be what we think is **best**.
 - b. But unless they have acted in an unscriptural fashion, all must submit.
3. Elders cannot lead a flock that will not follow!

CONCLUSION:

1. We as a church should not exist indefinitely without elders. That would be a problem.
 - A. For, a church without elders is especially vulnerable to Satan’s attacks on its soundness. So, I encourage all of us to pray that the Lord will help us in this endeavor.
 - B. I know certain extenuating circumstances have applied to our situation (i.e., age of initial members and converts, lack of believing children, change in membership, etc.).
 - C. Yet, to accept the idea of continuing indefinitely without elders would indicate a serious problem *and/or* that somewhere along the line we have been derelict in our duties!
2. I hope that this study will help us to be prepared to select the men the Lord desires to oversee this church and to be able to do so as soon as is reasonably possible that we might glorify Him and for the good of this church.
3. The invitation is offered. Will you come to Christ in F-R-C-Bp-LF?