

## Qualified to be an Elder

There are times when I receive an e-mail that becomes the foundation for our given study in a particular week. The following e-mail, I received several weeks ago, qualifies in this regard:

***Chuck, the congregation I attend decided to begin a study of the qualifications of elders as we prepare to consider adding to our number. The study has not gone well as we have many members who were raised in the church and they do not understand either the role of elder or the very stringent qualifications listed in scripture. The teacher is allowing discussion that borders on the unscriptural to occur and I'm afraid that our selection process will leave us with men who are not qualified. We have enough trouble in our congregation currently without adding to our problems. Would you consider doing a study on the qualifications and duties of elders? Many thanks, B.R.***

There is no more heart-wrenching note to receive than one from brethren who are struggling with a topic that is not difficult to understand. The appointment of elders in a local congregation is a matter of incredible importance. That is why God gave very specific qualifications in scripture so that we could know exactly who should be leading the congregation (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11). God's Word is the only qualifying standard we can use in selecting men to serve in this most important position. There must never be any other source for Elder's qualifications outside His Book.

However, on this, as any subject there are always two extremes. Some are too legal. They hold the qualifications for Elders so rigid, that no man on earth could possibly qualify for this good work. Elders are not super saints or sinless. They are ordinary men who are willing to allow God to qualify them and use them in His Kingdom. We must never use these qualifications to demand perfection in the Eldership. You see, God has called men, ordinary men, to be qualified to be Elders. If God had demanded perfection, He would not have looked to human males to be the leaders in His family.

Now, the other extreme is that there are some who would suggest that we should just appoint the best men available and make them Elders. ABSOLUTELY NOT!!! If a man does not meet the New Testament qualifications to be an Elder, no amount of effort, politicking, threatening or money on man's part can make him qualified. The qualifications are set forth by the Holy Spirit, not man. In selecting Elders/additional Elders, you are not searching for the most qualified men. You see, either each man is totally qualified to serve, OR, they are not qualified at all. We must never be guilty of just selecting the best available. The Lord's church DEMANDS more of its shepherds.

Please consider these thoughts:

1. Elders are to be appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).
2. Elders, when Scripturally appointed, are appointed not merely by men, but by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).
3. There is NOT a head elder. Each man has the same responsibilities and authority as the other men he serves with.
4. Elders are NOT appointed for life. They may remain an elder as long as they continue to meet the Holy Spirit given qualifications. There is NOT a practice of elder reaffirmation found in the scriptures. Such practice is sinful.

In the New Testament, elders are also called presbyters (1 Timothy 4:14); bishops (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-2); overseers (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2); pastors (Ephesians 4:11,12); and shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-4). The word “pastor” is simply another word for “shepherd.” Preachers are never called pastors in the New Testament. The elders of the local congregation are the pastors (shepherds) of each local church (1 Peter 5:1-4).

The words chosen by the Holy Spirit to describe elders and their responsibilities are words that indicate the authority God has given them:

1. *Episkopos* (and kindred forms), translated “bishop,” “overseer,” “oversight” (Acts 20:28; Phi. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1–2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2): “An overseer, a man charged with...seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent; ...specifically the superintendent, head or overseer of any Christian church.”
2. *Oikonomos*, translated “steward” (Tit. 1:7): “the manager of a household or of household affairs; especially a steward, manager, superintendent...to whom the head of the house or proprietor has entrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures,...a bishop (or overseer) is called *oikonomos theou*, of God as the head and master of the Christian theocracy.” (If elders cannot make decisions or set policy in matters of expediency, how can they be overseers, superintendents, managers, or stewards?)
3. *Poimaino* (and related noun, *poimen*), translated “feed,” “pastor” (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:2): “to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep; ...to rule, govern: of rulers, ...of the overseers (pastors) of the church, ...to furnish pasturage or food; to nourish.” When shepherds see one of the flock straying towards a precipice, have they no authority to prevent a fatal fall? When they see a wolf devouring the lambs, must they call all of the flock together before they can decide that he must be stopped and how to stop him (John 10:12)? Notice the use of *poimaino* in Rev. 2:26–27: “...to him will I give authority (*exousian*) over the nations: and he shall rule

(*poimaino*) them with a rod of iron..." Admittedly, the word includes the element of feeding and tending, but also of ruling with authority.

4. *Proistemi*, translated "over," "rule": "to set or place before; to set over; to be over, to superintend, preside over, rule: 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 The. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:4."
5. *Peithesthe*, translated "obey" (Heb. 13:17). The form in this passage is in the middle voice, meaning: "to listen to, obey, yield to; comply with...Heb. 13:17; Jam. 3:3." James 3:3 speaks of the response of the horse to the bridle, a response to authority. The church is to obey its elders.
6. *Hegeomi*, translated "rule over" (Heb. 13:17): "to lead, to go before; to be a leader; to rule, command; to have authority over: a prince, of regal power; a governor, viceroy, chief; leading as respects influence, controlling in counsel; ...the overseers or leaders of Christian churches." Admittedly, this word includes the persuasion of one's influence, but it is also translated "governor" (Mat. 27:2; Acts 7:10). It is a word of authority.
7. *Hupeiko*, translated "submit to" (Heb. 13:17): "to resist no longer, but to give way, yield; to yield to authority and admonition, to submit." This is what saints are to do in relation to their elders instead of trying to overthrow their authority.

Each of the foregoing terms is either laden with authority or shows the proper response to the authority that God has given to elders.

James A. Garfield was the twentieth president of the United States, serving less than four months before he was assassinated. He was a member of the church and served as an elder. When Garfield relinquished his role as elder, it is said that he stated, "I resign the highest office in the land to become president of the United States." Serving as an elder in Christ's church is the highest position a man can attain on this earth.

Let us consider the passages that state the Holy Spirit inspired qualifications:

1 Timothy 3:1-7 - 1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5-9 - 5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— 6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

## Elders

### 1. Qualifications

1.1.1 Timothy 3:1-7 - Paul gives the qualifications for elders who are also called bishops and pastors. They must desire the office. They must be without blame. Elders must be men and each elder must be married to one wife. They must be even-tempered, sensible, hospitable and able to teach. The elder must not be a fighter or contentious, but he must be gentle and not greedy. Elders must have children who are under control. Elders must not be new converts. They must have a good reputation among non-Christians.

#### 1.1.1. Verse 1

- 1.1.1.1. **1 - Faithful is the saying, if a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. (ASV)**
- 1.1.1.2. **This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop,<sup>[a]</sup> he desires a good work. (NKJV)**
- 1.1.1.3. **The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. (ESV)**
- 1.1.1.4. This is the second of the faithful sayings of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (1 Timothy 1:15; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8).
- 1.1.1.5. **Faithful is the saying** means this is a truth which can be trusted. The office of bishop is a work, not just an honorary position. Faithful suggests “trustworthy.” It simply means that it is something the believer can rely on with complete trust and confidence.
- 1.1.1.6. **Desire** means “to wish or long for; crave; want...to express a wish to obtain; ask for; request.” Vine lists five different Greek words where desire is used as a noun and ten different Greek words where desire is used as a verb. The central idea, especially as used here, means “to desire earnestly...stresses the inward urge rather than the object desired.
- 1.1.1.7. The church needs good men who desire to do this work for God. Paul taught that it is **a good work**.
- 1.1.1.8. The organization of the church, as outlined in the Bible and practiced in the first century, was very simple. Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:21-22). He is the only head

of the church. There is no other organization except in the local congregations. The church in Ephesus had bishops who were called elders. Each church is to have bishops who have the qualifications listed here and in Titus 1:5-11. Elders are responsible to Christ who is the head of the church. There is no ecclesiastical hierarchy between elders and Christ. There must always be a plurality of elders over each church.

- 1.1.1.9. In the Bible, the overseers of a local congregation are called by three names and each name has two translations of that name.
  - 1.1.1.9.1. They are called **bishops** as in this verse. Bishop means an **overseer** (Acts 20:28). The function of bishops is to oversee the church.
    - 1.1.1.9.1.1. In verse 2 *bishop* is from *episcopos*, from which comes *episcopal*. It occurs only five times in the N.T. In Acts 20:28 it is translated “overseers” and applied to the Ephesian elders by Paul. He refers to the “bishops and deacons” at Philippi (Phi.1:1). In Titus 1:7, and following, we again find what is required of a “bishop.” Finally, in 1 Pet. 2:3-5, Christ is called “the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls”....It literally means “one who watches over.”
    - 1.1.1.9.2. Second, bishops are called **elders** (Acts 20:17). Elder is translated “presbyter” (1 Timothy 4:14). Elder and presbyter indicate age and the wisdom that comes with age.
    - 1.1.1.9.3. Third, bishops are called **pastors**, which means shepherds (Ephesians 4:11). In the Bible, the pastors of the church were not the preachers; they were elders or bishops. The pastors are to the church what the shepherds are to a flock of sheep. They are to lead the church, teach the church, feed the church, guide the church, protect the church and take care of the church. The elders, pastors and bishops all refer to the same group of men who oversee the church and take care of it.
  - 1.1.1.10. Paul urged, “**Take heed to thyself .**”
    - 1.1.1.10.1. The word translated “heed” literally means: “to hold to, turn one’s attention to . . .” There are several reasons for elders taking heed to themselves. One reason is because elders have a soul to save, viz., their own. (**Matt. 16:26.**)
    - 1.1.1.10.2. Elders, like preachers, may become preoccupied with the spiritual needs of others to the degree that they lose sight of their own spiritual liabilities and personal needs.
    - 1.1.1.10.3. Their duty of self examination
      - 1.1.1.10.3.1. Elders are obligated to themselves, God, and the church to be qualified for their work

- 1.1.1.10.3.1.1. Men are to meet the Holy Spirit given qualifications found in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1.
- 1.1.1.10.3.1.2. They are to remain qualified. The position of elder is not necessarily a lifetime appointment. Appointed men will remain elders so long as they continue to be qualified and willing, and thus continue to be recognized as such by the Holy Spirit.
- 1.1.1.10.3.1.3. This does not mean when an elder sins, immediately call for his resignation. If one has lost or abandoned those formerly demonstrated qualities that initially brought him to the church's attention and caused him to be appointed, then it would be as wrong to "retain" such a one as to appoint a blatantly unqualified man in the first place.
- 1.1.1.10.3.1.4. To refuse to remove such a one is, on the part of the congregation or other elders, is an abandonment of, and even an insult to, Heaven's authoritative plan. It is rebellion against God
- 1.1.1.11. There is another reason elders must "turn attention" to themselves: elders lead in spiritual matters by example.
  - 1.1.1.11.1. They must be diligent in developing and maintaining a godly character. Can a spiritual pygmy successfully lead the saints of God? Elders must spiritually "stand head and shoulders" over the crowd. The concept of church edification means that God's people grow and develop spiritually. They develop Christlike characters.
  - 1.1.1.11.2. But Christ like leaders must show the spirituality and demonstrate the possibility of congregation accomplishment in this vital area of Christian living. As surely as elders must be men of great spiritual stature they must "take time to be holy." Spiritual development and maturity is a process which involves prayer, devotional Bible reading, and meditation on things of God. (**Psalms 1; Psalms 119; 2 Tim. 2:15; Phil. 4:6.**)
  - 1.1.1.11.3. Elders are not immune to temptation. They may give in to sin, succumb to subtle solicitations to violate or neglect the will of God, and they may become discouraged with their own efforts to live the Christian life and/or the efforts of others.
- 1.1.2. **2 - The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach;**
  - 1.1.2.1. The Holy Spirit clearly reveals the positive and negative qualifications of men to be appointed to serve as elders. Those

who have these qualifications and are appointed by the church are Holy Spirit-appointed elders, but those who do **not** meet these qualifications, even though appointed by the church, are **not** appointed by the Holy Spirit!

- 1.1.2.2. Paul teaches the qualifications which each bishop must have. **Must** indicates these qualifications are necessary, essential, imperative, binding and obligatory. There are two things taught. First, in order to please God an overseer must have these qualifications. Second, in order to do the job of overseeing, an overseer must have these qualifications.
- 1.1.2.3. **Without reproach** refers to the elder's reputation among members of the church. He has a good character that is not open to criticism. He is a man known for his pure life and integrity. He has a good reputation and deserves it.
  - 1.1.2.3.1. The ASV has "without reproach." Vine's says that "one who cannot be laid hold of...who gives no ground for accusation." Vine's says the bishop is one "that cannot be laid hold of, hence, not open to censure, irreproachable." If one is to be taken hold of, there must be a handle, i.e., some obvious flaw in his character upon which one can seize to bring upon him blame and reproach. The candidate for this office should be without a handle."
  - 1.1.2.3.2. It is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth that "they were both righteous before the Lord, walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). Samuel's life was such that no charge could be brought against him (1 Sam. 12:1-5).
- 1.1.2.4. **The husband of one wife** means he is a man. He is married. He is not a polygamist. He is faithful to his one and only marriage partner.
  - 1.1.2.4.1. The husband of one wife - This forbids celibacy and polygamy and clearly declares that one who serves as an elder must be married. The man who marries again after his first wife is dead is still the husband of one wife (Rom. 7:1-4). The man who is Scripturally divorced and married again is still the husband of one wife (Mat. 19:3-9). **Whether it would be wise to appoint him to serve as an elder might depend upon a number of things.** This verse also eliminates the idea of women ever serving as elders.
- 1.1.2.5. **Temperate** means he is well balanced and self controlled. He is not given to excesses. He is moderate. This refers to his physical, moral and mental tastes and habits.
  - 1.1.2.5.1. To be calm, dispassionate, and circumspect." It refers to an attitude of mind that is reflected in the life.
  - 1.1.2.5.2. It is an attitude of sober, careful judgment in all matters.

- 1.1.2.6. **Sober-minded** means he is discreet and sensible. He is a man of sound mind. He is not swayed by sudden impulses over which he exercises no mastery. The sensible person is always ready and willing to learn.
- 1.1.2.6.1. Sober - "Thayer says it means one "of sound mind, sane, in one's senses...curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate."
- 1.1.2.6.2. A man of balanced judgment is not carried away with every "wind of doctrine." He should not be given to silly, childish things-although this does not exclude wit or humor. It carries with it the idea of a man who is capable of directing and conducting himself wisely and having a good understanding.
- 1.1.2.6.3.
- 1.1.2.7. **Orderly** means well behaved, dignified. His outward life exhibits his inner thoughts. He is a man of honor.
- 1.1.2.7.1. Of good behavior - " He is a man that lives a well-ordered life. A man that is disorderly in his own life and business would allow the church to become disorderly in conduct also. "Good behavior" covers a multitude of things.
- 1.1.2.8. **Given to hospitality** means he is a "lover of strangers." He extends the hospitality of his home to others. It refers to generosity toward guests.
- 1.1.2.9. **Apt to teach** means he is capable of teaching the word of God. First, he first must have been taught the word of God. He must know the word of God. He must be living the word of God. In Christianity, a teacher must practice what he teaches. **Apt** means he is qualified to teach.
- 1.1.2.9.1. The word means apt and skilled in teaching. This characteristic does not refer to the **willingness** to teach, but to the **ability** to do so. One should have the aptitude for teaching both privately and publicly. Titus 1:9 says, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."
- 1.1.2.9.2. The word "apt" is a relative term, just as many of these others are; but every man to qualify as an elder must be able to teach to a degree that the church can be edified. Too many serving as elders never read and study the Bible much. Therefore, they do not know the Bible and cannot teach what they do not know. This situation is one of the tragedies in the church.
- 1.1.3. **3 - no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money;**
- 1.1.3.1. **No brawler** means he is not given to wine, or addicted to wine. It means one who drinks wine and is quarrelsome. He is



not a drunkard. He is not quarrelsome like one who drinks wine whether he is drunk on wine or not.

1.1.3.1.1. **Not given to wine** - The ASV and the RSV, instead of “not given to wine,” have “no brawler.” The margin in the KJV says “not ready to quarrel, and offer wrong, as one in wine.” A footnote in the ASV has “not quarrelsome over wine.” No more dangerous and hurtful practice is known to man than the use of strong drink. This word not only signifies one who is inordinately attached to wine, a winebibber or tippler, but also one who is overbearing, abusive, insolent, whether through wine or otherwise.” Using alcohol as a beverage is sinful (Pro. 23:21-35). The example of an elder is very important.

1.1.3.1.2. The phrase in verse three consists of two Greek words (*me paroinos*) and, literally translated, means “not beside, by, or at wine” (Vine, 1966, p. 146; Robertson, 1934, p. 613). The phrase is enjoining abstinence, and even the act of situating oneself in the presence of people and places where the consumption of alcoholic beverages is occurring. The ASV translated the expression “brawler” to emphasize the violent behavior that proceeds from the use of alcohol. Calling for elders to be abstinent is consistent with other terms used in the same listing: *nephalion* (1 Timothy 3:2)—“free from intoxicants” and “abstinent in respect to wine” (Perschbacher, 1990, p. 284), and *sophrona* (Titus 1:8)—“of a sound mind, temperate” (Perschbacher, p. 400), “soberminded” (Moulton and Milligan, 1930, p. 622), “self-controlled” (Arndt and Gingrich, 1957, p. 810). **Elders must refrain from the use of intoxicants, and they must not associate with places and people who do use them.**

1.1.3.2. **No striker** means he is not violent. He is not one who likes to settle things by fighting with his fists. He does not have a chip on his shoulder and is always ready to fight. He is not given to blows. This word means one “ungoverned in temper, ready to resent insult or wrong, real or imaginary. “Thayer says that a “striker” is “a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person.

1.1.3.3. **Not greedy of filthy lucre** - These words are left out of the ASV in this verse, but they are found in Titus 1:7. A bishop must not be eager for base gain. Phillips translates it “not a money grabber.” Peter says an elder’s oversight must not be motivated by money (1 Pet. 5:2). Men who desire the office as a personal means of profit or whose main interest is material things are unworthy.

1.1.3.4. **But gentle** means he is kind and considerate to others. He is the kind of person who is willing to yield when it comes to his

own rights in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 6:7. He does not demand his rights.

- 1.1.3.5. **Not contentious** means he is not quarrelsome. He is not one who is always looking for a fight. He is not always arguing.
  - 1.1.3.5.1. The contentiousness condemned here is that of a person who contends with reference to his own likes and dislikes where no principle of Truth or righteousness is involved. There are men who meet all other qualifications but they are contentious. They will not surrender to others even in matters of judgment; they want their way.
  - 1.1.3.5.2. This does not mean that one is not to stand and contend for the Truth, but many are ready to contend over unimportant matters. Such always live in torment and strife. Even truth and right should not be maintained in a contentious way.
- 1.1.3.6. **No lover of money** means he is not greedy for money. He will not get money by dishonest means. His main concern in life is not to be rich. He has principles that cannot be corrupted by money.
  - 1.1.3.6.1. Not covetous - Literally it means “not loving silver (money).” The NIV has “not a lover of money.” Elders must realize that life is more than possessions. Jesus said, “take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). Paul stated that we are to ‘put to death’ “covetousness which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). Covetous elders are holding down many congregations in their work. They will not “turn loose” of the money. They object to a building program, an adequate educational program, a mission program, to Gospel meetings, and many other things, all because it **will cost too much to do these things**. This does not mean that elders should jump at everything the preacher and the congregation suggest, but they must “drive the work of the Lord, and a covetous man will not do this.
- 1.1.4. **4 - one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;**
  - 1.1.4.1. The elder must be a man. He must be married. He must have children. He must exercise loving leadership to his wife and children. He must train his children in such a way that they are obedient children. He must teach them to be respectful. They must be respectful of God, of their parents, of other people and of the laws of the land. The training ground for an elder is in the home.
  - 1.1.4.2. **One that ruleth well his own house**

- 1.1.4.2.1. Ruleth is from proistemi, which, according to Vine, means literally “to stand before,” and thus “to attend to (indicating care and diligence) and hence “is translated to rule....” Joshua could speak for his house: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Jos. 24:15). God said, concerning Abraham: “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him.. .”(Gen. 18:19).
- 1.1.4.2.2. The man that is ruled by his wife should not be appointed as an elder. Brethren should observe the wife and children of a prospective elder. Do they respect him? Do those who know him best regard him as competent in this regard?
- 1.1.4.3. **Having his children in subjection with all gravity**
- 1.1.4.3.1. His children are to be in submission to his will. The children are to exhibit that seriousness and sobriety of conduct, which is in accordance with their father’s office.
- 1.1.4.3.2. Titus 1:6 states that he must have “faithful children not accused or riot or unruly.” The ASV states “having children that believe.” This raises several questions. How many children should a man have? Is a man with one child qualified? Should all of his children be Christians?
- 1.1.4.3.3. How many children must one have to be qualified? Some contend that the statement means there must be a plurality and that all of them must be Christians. Some contend that the qualification means one or more children with at least one being a Christian. Thayer says the Greek word teknon is sometimes used for “offspring,” sometimes for “children” (Mat. 2:18), and sometimes it is used for “child (Luke 1:7). The term means either one or more.
- 1.1.4.3.4. What is meant by “faithful children” in Titus 1:6? According to Thayer the Greek word translated “faithful” here means “one who has become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and the author of salvation.” The same word is used in Acts 2:37-41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 15:9, and in each case it describes obedient believers that are converts to the Gospel of Christ. Thus a man’s children who have reached the age of accountability **are** to be Christians, for that man to meet the eldership qualifications. It does not follow, however, that once-faithful children who fall away as adults necessarily disqualify a man.
- 1.1.4.3.4.1. Children that still live at home who bring reproach upon the church absolutely disqualify the man from being an elder.
- 1.1.4.3.4.2. However, when adult children fall away, the elder needs to examine what part he and his wife played in the sinful condition the children find themselves in.

1.1.4.3.5. A man whose wife and children are not members of the church cannot qualify as an elder of the church. More trouble arises in the church when this one qualification is ignored and men are selected whose wives cause trouble and whose children are unfaithful. When you try to lead and direct people under such conditions they mock you and resent your trying to tell them how to live when your own family is in such a horrific condition.

1.1.4.3.6.

1.1.5. **5 - (but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)**

1.1.5.1. The same qualities, needed for the proper leadership of a family, are the qualities needed for the leadership of the church. If a man cannot manage his own family, he will not be able to manage the family of God.

1.1.5.2. A man's rule or management of his own family demonstrates his ability or inability to help rule the church.

1.1.6. **6 - not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil.**

1.1.6.1. **Not a novice** - The word *neophytes* is found only here in the New Testament. "Literally it means 'newly planted' and is so used in the Septuagint. In Christian literature alone it is used figuratively in the sense of 'newly converted.'" Since one must be old enough to have believing children, having his house in subjection to himself and to God, this would certainly preclude a "youngman"-minus these qualifications - serving as an elder of the church. It would also eliminate one just recently "born into the kingdom," regardless of his age. Certainly a "novice" would not have the experience to oversee the church. The time period here is probably not as important as the progress or lack of progress of a man in growth and understanding of God's Word, There were some among the Hebrews who were still "novices" (they had not grown) after thirty years (Heb. 5:12-14). Elders were appointed in some congregations within a short period of time after the church was established (Acts 14:23). No one should remain a novice long after his conversion.

1.1.6.2. A novice would tend to be lifted up with pride at being immediately elevated to the highest office in the church. He is likely to succumb to the same condemnation into which the devil fell. Paul intimated here that pride was the cause of the devil's fall. Much of the apostasy in the church is due to this reason. Paul is simply stating that a young convert should not be elevated to such a high office. Condemnation will await one who thus falls, just as it did the devil.

1.1.7. **7 - Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.**

- 1.1.7.1. **Them that are without** are people in the community who are not Christians. The elder must have a good reputation from those who are not members of the church. The church must be a light to the world. If the church appoints a man to be an elder who the world thinks is bad, this man will not be a light to the world. He will bring reproach upon the name of Christ.
- 1.1.7.2. Christians must practice what they preach. The world must see Christians as sincere even if they do not accept the truth of the gospel. The world does not like Christians; however, they can usually tell if Christians are sincere or not. If the prospective elder does not have a good reputation among non-Christians, he may have flaws that will subject him to being overcome more easily by Satan.

1.2. Titus 1:5-9

1.2.1. **5 - For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge;**

- 1.2.1.1. Titus was to provide the spiritual leadership in the churches by **appointing elders in every city**. There were many cities on the island of Crete. How many of these cities had churches of Christ is not known. Every church was to have elders. The organization of the church was very simple. Every church was to have a plurality of elders, two or more. Paul gives the qualifications for elders in the following verses (1 Timothy 3:1-7). The elder must have these qualifications in order to do the work God wants elders to do.
- 1.2.1.2. There are three Greek words, which refer to elders. Each of these words has two translations in the New Testament. These six words are the names of elders. They are elder and presbyter, pastor and shepherd, bishop and overseer. Each pair of words means the same thing. Each congregation is to have elders and deacons (Philippians 1:1). The elders are overseers of the congregation. The deacons are helpers. There is no hierarchy for church government. Each congregation is autonomous with its elders and deacons. All congregations are responsible to Jesus Christ who is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:21-22).

1.2.2. **6 - if any man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly.**

- 1.2.2.1. **Blameless** means above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2). This refers to the elder's reputation among members of the church. He has a good character that is not open to criticism. He is a man known for his pure life and integrity. He has a good reputation and deserves it.
- 1.2.2.2. **The husband of one wife** means he is a man (1 Timothy 3:2). This means that he must be married, but not have more

than one wife either by bigamy or by unscriptural divorce and remarriage.

1.2.2.3. **Having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly** means he is old enough to have children who are Christians. He must be a man who has taught and trained his own family in the faith. There is not an age set on when one can become an elder; however, to have children who are old enough to be Christians usually means he must be in his thirties at least.

1.2.2.4. **Who are not accused of riot or unruly** means these children are good children and who are obedient to their parents. The primary training ground for an elder is in his own home. The man whose children are still pagans and behave as pagans should not be appointed an elder. The word "children" is generic and includes one or more (Ephesians 6:4).

1.2.2.4.1. His children must bear witness of his ability to properly "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). They must be **believing children**, that is, they must be faithful members of the Lord's church. They must not be **accused of riot or unruly**. This includes being reared to respect the values and property of others. Bestowing honor upon their parents, such children will not embarrass or disgrace their parents by behavior that will bring reproach upon their good name or the name of the Lord.

1.2.3. **7 - For the bishop must be blameless, as God's steward; not self-willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre;**

1.2.3.1. **Bishop** is another name for elder. Bishop means an overseer or manager. This name indicates one of the works of an elder is to oversee the church. Deacons are not overseers. Only the elders are overseers. As overseers, the elders can and must delegate work to the deacons. Many people today think that a bishop in the church is a church official who is over a number of churches. In the New Testament, there is no such office or teaching. Bishop simply means the elders are overseers of one congregation.

1.2.3.2. **Blameless, as God's steward** means that the elder must be above reproach in the manner in which he oversees the church. He must have the following qualities in this verse to be a good elder. **Steward** indicates that he will one day have to give an account to God for the way he has overseen God's church.

1.2.3.3. **Not self-willed** means he must not be stubborn. He must not be arrogant. He must not insist upon his own way. He needs to be fair-minded, but this is the man who thinks there is no way of doing anything except his way. He is not to be intolerant and contemptuous of others.

- 1.2.3.3.1. An elder must be able to work harmoniously with other elders. One of the hallmarks of God's wisdom is the requiring of a plurality of elders to carry out His will in the manner that will best benefit the congregation. Disharmony among the elders, often brought on by a demand for one's own way, defeats the purpose of God's organization.
- 1.2.3.4. **Not soon angry** means he is not easily provoked to anger. This is a long lasting anger. When a man is always angry, he cannot make clear and fair decisions. A Christian should be the happiest of all people of the world. He is one who has been saved by the blood of Jesus. He is free from the bondage of sin. He enjoys the blessings of prayer, fellowship with God, and salvation from sin!
- 1.2.3.5. **No brawler** means he is not given to wine or addicted to wine. He is not a drunkard. He is not quarrelsome like one who drinks wine.
- 1.2.3.6. **No striker** means he is not violent. He is not one who likes to settle things by fighting with his fists. He does not have a chip on his shoulder. It also means he does not browbeat his fellowman. **A striker** is one who can be frustrated to the point of contentions and brawling. Peaceableness and kindness are the more to be desired than the attitude of retaliation. In fact, one who is contentious, arrogant, and belligerent is in violation of God's prohibition of seeking vengeance (Rom. 12:19). An uncontrolled temper disqualifies one from serving in the high office of an elder.
- 1.2.3.7. **Not greedy of filthy lucre** means he is not greedy for money. He will not get money by dishonest means. His main concern in life is not to be rich. He has principles that cannot be corrupted with money.
- 1.2.4. **8 - but given to hospitality, a lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled;**
- 1.2.4.1. **Given to hospitality** means he is a "lover of strangers." He extends the hospitality of his home to others.
- 1.2.4.2. **A lover of good** means he loves goodness. He is virtuous. He is ready to do what is beneficial to others. He is a lover of good people. He is unselfish.
- 1.2.4.3. **Sober-minded** means he is discreet and sensible. He is a man of sound mind. He is not swayed by sudden impulses over which he exercises no mastery. The sensible person is always ready and willing to learn.
- 1.2.4.4. **Just** means to be fair. He must be able to see both sides of an argument. He can see the difference between right and wrong. He seeks always to do right in every circumstance.
- 1.2.4.5. **Holy** means to be different. It is not any kind of difference. It is the man who seeks to love God with all his heart and to serve

God with all his might. This man is holy. He is different from the man who does not love God and who is not seeking to please him.

1.2.4.6. **Self-controlled** means he controls his passions and desires. He exercises good judgment. He is prudent.

1.2.5. **9 - holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.**

1.2.5.1. **Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching means**, he must be sound in the word of God. He must know the word of God. He must love the word of God and he must live the word of God.

1.2.5.2. **That he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine** means the elder must have the capacity to teach sound doctrine. He must be able to encourage the members of the church.

1.2.5.3. **To convict the gainsayers** means the elder must have the ability to answer adequately those who speak against sound doctrine. He must be able to convict those who oppose sound doctrine.

1.2.5.4. **To convict** means to rebuke a man in such a way that he is compelled to see and to admit the error of his ways. The purpose of Christian rebuke is not to humiliate a man. It is to enable him to see the truth.

## 2. Other Considerations

### 2.1. Elders are to be leaders, overseers

2.1.1. In Hebrew 13:17 we are told to “**obey them which have rule over you, and submit yourselves.**” The word “rule’ in the Greek means to lead, to preside, to govern, to rule, to be chief officer. This work is one of leadership, oversight, rule, and decision making. They do have God ordained authority.

### 2.2. Elders must understand how to ascertain Bible authority and the relationship it sustains to fellowship and unity in the church.

2.2.1. There are two areas of possible misunderstanding and disagreement regarding Biblical authority: those matters of doctrine that are obligatory and those that are optional.

2.2.1.1. Matters of obligation pertain to those things God has authorized in his word that we must do or not do in order to be obedient to him. Fellowship or unity exists between God and man only when man is obedient to the obligatory matters of god’s will (Heb. 5:9). To disagree on these matters prevents fellowship and unity with God and with all those who are in fellowship with God (Heb 5:8-9; Acts 15:1-2; Gal 2:11).

2.2.1.2. Ascertaining biblical authority is a series of lessons in itself. There is a difference between obligatory and optional.

### 2.3. Elders must see what the church is



- 2.3.1. The church for which our Lord gave his blood is far superior to any or all denominations. All denominations have been started by man, not divine authority.
  - 2.3.1.1. **Luke 8:11-15 - Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.**
    - 2.3.1.2. The seed of the kingdom is the word of God
    - 2.3.1.3. When the word was planted in the first century it produced Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28) and produced **THE** church (Acts 2:47)
- 2.4. Elders must see what the gospel is
  - 2.4.1. The primary work of the church is to preach the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:18-20)
  - 2.4.2. Elders should conduct the affairs of the church in such a fashion that the greatest number of lost can be given the opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ (Luke 19:10; Rom 1:14-16)
  - 2.4.3. Elders who are concerned primarily with financial and numerical growth, without concern for spiritual development in Truth and faithfulness, will be condemned as were the irresponsible shepherds of God's sheep in Ezekial 34:1-10.
- 2.5. Elders must guard the flock against false doctrine
  - 2.5.1. Elders must **"take heed to the flock"** because they are to **"watch for souls"** as those who must **"give account."** (Heb. 13:17.) There are constant dangers facing the flock. The danger of false doctrine coming in must be met, resisted, and overcome by the truth. (1 Tim. 2:4; John 8:32.)
  - 2.5.2. When elders discharge their responsibilities to the Lord and his church they will hold to faithful teaching that they may be able to both **"exhort in the sound teaching and to convict the gainsayers"** (Titus 1:9)
  - 2.5.3. They must be aware and prepared to fight not only dangers from without but also the great dangers from within the church (Eph. 6:10-18).
  - 2.5.4. Sound doctrine is a necessity in building and maintaining a strong congregation.
  - 2.5.5. The deadly dangers of immorality and indifference must be declared and from these dangers the "flock" must be defended. This

will involve godly elders planning and promoting a strong Bible study program, a positive pulpit, and a practical program for involving God's people in activities such as personal work, visiting the sick, and helping the needy, which will keep them involved in the Lord's work.

2.5.6. Elders must rebuke those who try to state elders have no authority.  
(**Very popular falsehood going on**)

2.5.7. Elderships are God's wall of defense for His church

2.6. Elders must take a stand against sin

2.6.1. **Reprove, rebuke, exhort** (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Too long the trend has been to speak softly and tread lightly. Note the force in the meaning of these words: 1) **Reprove**: "convince, refute, confute, convict, bring to light, expose, find fault with, correct, reprehend severely, chide, admonish, to call to account, show one his fault, chasten, punish" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon on *elegcho*). 2) **Rebuke**: "To tax with fault, rate, chide, reprove, censure severely, admonish or charge sharply" (Thayer on *epitimao*). 3) **Exhort**: "To incite by words or advice; to advise or warn earnestly" (Webster). "Admonish" (Thayer on *parakaleo*). Two-thirds of this command is negative. In **Jeremiah 1:10** the prophet was similarly ordered: "**to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.**" This is not to be abused, yet when strong measures are demanded the elders should not hesitate. Let there be strong denunciation of error and sin, and strong entreaty for souls to turn from them. Jesus is our example (1 Peter 2:21), and he loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Heb. 1:8)

2.6.2. Elders should not be deceived by those who are liberal, anti, soft, or merely uninformed

2.6.3. The devil is as a roaring lion walking about to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). He uses many devices (1 Cor. 2:11). He seeks to persuade elders to compromise through misconceptions of preaching.

2.6.4. He strives to bring pressure to prevent sound gospel preaching and public exposure of error

2.7. Elder's duty of Watchfulness

2.7.1. The elders must 'feed' the flock. Elders will be careful about what is taught and preached to the "flock." They will insist that the "whole counsel" of God be clearly and convincingly declared. (Acts 20:27.)

2.7.2. The elder himself must be a diligent student of the Bible. His Bible knowledge must be beyond that of the average member of the congregation that he oversees. The elder who superficially studies the Word, and hence demonstrates such in the classes he teaches, will surely not motivate the church to know the Book.

2.7.3. The elder must inform himself of popularly circulated false religious doctrines. Far too frequently error has swept like wildfire through a congregation while the elders were totally unaware that it was in vogue. Be prepared.

The church is in need of strong leadership. God placed the welfare of the church into the hands of men. Those men, therefore, must have the quality of spiritual life and strength to maintain the identity and pattern of the church in accordance with God's design for it. In addition to the ordinary function of the church in its singularity and worship of God, there is the need to protect the integrity of the church from evil forces that threaten it either from within or without.