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# Sermons on Local Church Government



## ELDERS & DEACONS

Gene Taylor

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# Preface

This material is being presented for the purpose of helping Christians understand what the word of God reveals about local church government in general, the office of elder in particular. So many local congregations fail to reach their potential because of a lack of effective leadership. This leadership void exists, at least in part, because churches and individuals have not placed enough emphasis on developing men to be elders.

The will of God is that all local congregations be ruled by mature Christian men who have qualified themselves for such a position by growing in Christ and by being effective husbands and fathers. Such growth is to start from the time one becomes a Christian. There is no better goal a male Christian can have than to be the kind of man who will meet the Lord's qualifications to serve as a leader of His people.

Brethren, in general, have also contributed to the dearth of leadership in the churches. They have either been apathetic to becoming Scripturally organized or, in some cases, have deliberately thwarted efforts to appoint elders and deacons for selfish reasons. All Christians need to understand that being Scripturally organized when there are qualified men to serve is not only a manifestation of the wisdom of God, it is His command that must be obeyed.

All local churches, whether or not they are organized with elders and deacons, must continually emphasize this aspect of the work of the Lord in order to insure that there will be adequate, effective leadership in the future.

I pray this material might help Christians understand and obey what God has revealed about church government. I hope it will be used to the glory of God and for the betterment of His children.

I wish to acknowledge and thank George Lemasters of Winter Haven, Florida for his work on this topic. Much of the information used in this study has been gleaned from his teachings.

*Gene Taylor  
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# Table of Contents

Preface .....	1
Table of Contents .....	2
Why This Church Needs Elders .....	3
“Elders” in the Old Testament: An Historical Perspective .....	6
The New Testament Designations of Elders .....	8
Eldership Responsibilities .....	10
The Qualifications for Elders .....	11
Developing Elders .....	18
The Qualifications and Work of Deacons .....	21

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# Why This Church Needs Elders

## Text: Titus 1:5

### Introduction

1. According to the text, one of the responsibilities of an evangelist is to aid in the development and appointment of elders.
2. The local church is not all God would have it to be until it is Scripturally organized with elders and deacons as seen in Philippians 1:1. Such is God's desire for every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).
3. There are four possible conditions in which a local church can be found in relation to organization.
  - a. Unscripturally organized.
  - b. Scripturally unorganized—a temporary condition. (Eph. 4:11-16)
  - c. Scripturally organized.
  - d. Unscripturally unorganized.
4. This lesson will set forth some reasons elders are needed, reveal some factors which hinder the appointment of them, and then list some benefits derived from having them.

### I. Some Reasons Elders Are Needed

- A. It is what God wants.
  1. It is a "good work." (1 Tim. 3:1)
    - a. God shows what is good. (Micah 6:8)
    - b. That which is "good" comes from the Father. (Jas. 1:17)
  2. It is a work ordained of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
  3. God wants each "flock," local church, to be overseen. Elders are to:
    - a. Take the oversight. (1 Pet. 5:2)
    - b. Rule. (Tim. 5:17; 1 Thes. 5:12)
    - c. Be God's stewards. (Titus 1:7)
    - d. "Take care of the church of God." (1 Tim. 3:5)
    - e. "Watch" over the souls of the members. (Heb. 13:17)
- B. Each church is to have elders. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5)
  1. The apostle Paul revisited churches he had established to strengthen them and help them appoint elders.
  2. Elders are neither an option nor a luxury.
    - a. They are part of God's design for the local church.
    - b. Christians cannot have such attitudes as "We can do better without them" or "Things are running smoothly as they are, we don't need them here" because they deny the wisdom of God.
    - c. Churches cannot overlook or forever shun the responsibility to Scripturally organize and still please God.
- C. God never intended the church to have a "majority rule" form of government.
  1. One of the least efficient forms of government is government by committee such as the "business meeting."

2. It allows politics to enter the church.
  - a. A desire for power causes political power plays.
  - b. It gives the "novice" just as much say as the mature, experienced Christian.
  - c. Many have opposed the appointment of elders because they did not want to give up power.
- D. Qualified men of maturity, knowledge, and wisdom are to be respected and utilized.
  1. They are "worthy" of honor. (1 Tim. 5:17)
  2. They can be examples to the rest of the members. (1 Pet. 5:3)
- E. Something is missing when a church does not have elders.
  1. The church is not whole but "lacking." (Titus 1:5)
  2. Being an elder is a "work" (1 Tim. 3:1), thus a work is not being done if no elders are serving.
  3. The church without elders lacks leadership, protection, guidance, and care that only elders can provide.
- F. The key to real progress in the local church: godly elders. Almost all churches that are active and growing have godly elders.

## **II. Some Things That Hinder the Appointment of Elders**

- A. A short list of some common hindrances to be avoided.
  1. The idea that elders were only for the first century church.
  2. The concept that elders are not formally appointed—they become elders by growth and evident leadership.
  3. The thinking that elders rule only by example and have no decision-making power.
  4. Appointing unqualified men simply to have the church "organized."
  5. Appointing younger men who will "grow into the office."
  6. Altering the qualifications making them either too restrictive or too loose.
  7. Ulterior motives in disqualifying those who could be appointed.
- B. If these and other such hindrances are not avoided it can cause:
  1. The church to be forever without proper leadership.
  2. Unsuitable men to be elevated to the position.
  3. The church to suffer irreparable harm.
    - a. Lack of competent leadership hinders growth.
    - b. Unsuitable men, once appointed, can seldom be compelled to relinquish their post. They contribute to confusion and disunity.

## **III. Some Benefits Derived From Having Elders**

- A. No one is suggesting the church cannot function without elders, it can. But where there is work to be done, there must be leadership.
- B. From a negative standpoint, without elders, some work may go undone.
  1. The work of leading others to Christ **may** go unplanned.
  2. The weak (I Cor. 8:1-7) may be neglected and fall away.
  3. The froward, those habitually disposed to disobedience and opposition, **can** exercise themselves to have their way regardless.
  4. The untaught **can** become victims of Satan's errors.

5. The worldly **often** reproach the name of Christ and their conduct goes uncorrected.
6. The “sophisticates” continue to scoff at the principles of right.
7. The disorderly **often** go without proper corrective action.
8. Babes are **often** not fed so that they may grow.

C. Some benefits derived from having elders.

1. Having men “watching out” for the members’ souls. (Heb. 13:17)
2. Having examples to follow. (1 Pet. 5:3)
3. The opportunity to learn submission. (Heb. 13:17)
4. The opportunity to learn to honor. (1 Tim. 5:17)
5. Being properly fed the word of God. (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2)
6. The assurance that the church is doing what God wants. (1 Tim. 3:1; Acts 20:28)

## **Conclusion**

1. Without elders, the work of the church can be done by interested and concerned brethren.
  - a. They simply realize it must be done.
  - b. Yet, they do so at the risk of being viewed as “usurpers” by some.
2. The Scriptural alternative is that good men in the church can:
  - a. Develop the traits of character that demand the respect of the church.
  - b. Dedicate themselves to the work **now** knowing that they may shepherd the flock in the future.
  - c. Come to the maturity that will fit them to watch for the souls of others.
3. If qualified men are properly appointed and members submit to them as needed, there is everything to gain and nothing to lose. The church would be doing what God wants in the way He wants it done—doing what is best for every soul involved.

# “Elders” in the Old Testament: An Historical Perspective

## **Introduction**

1. Only by grasping the historical backdrop of the term “elder” to those to whom it was first used in the church, can we come to a complete understanding of and full appreciation for the term as it applies to our present time.
2. The people of the first century were familiar with the concept of having elders rule over them.

## **I. The Selection of Certain Ones by Moses to Be “Heads” (Judges) Among Israel**

- A. The idea was first enjoined by Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, prior to Mt. Sinai (Ex. 18:13-27).
  1. As to the quality of men chosen (v. 21), they were to be able, men of truth, God-fearing, and hating unjust gain.
  2. The entire suggestion was predicated upon God’s approval. (v. 23)
- B. A restatement of the incident by Moses. (Deut. 1:9-18)
  1. A further description of the character of those chosen is found in verse 13. They were to be men who were wise, understanding, and known.
  2. An injunction was given concerning their judgment. (vv. 16-17)
    - a. They were to judge righteously—not merely by appearance but by a standard (objectively). (cf. John 7:14-24)
    - b. They were to have no respect of persons. They were to treat the great and the small alike.
    - c. They were to possess no fear for any man’s presence, hence, they were to judge objectively, impartially with equality, and without intimidation.
    - d. The reason for this: “for the judgment is God’s.” (v. 17)

## **II. The Appointment of the Seventy by God After Mt. Sinai (Num. 11:16-17)**

- A. These men stood as judges among the people. (Ex. 21:6; 22:9) (Compare ASV “God” with KJV “judges.” Note also Exodus 22:28—“You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.”)
- B. Note also the language of David in Psalm 82:2,6 and the use made by Jesus in John 10:34-36—“gods, to whom the word of God came”).
- C. The word “God” (ASV) equates with “judges” (KJV) and they are spoken of as “gods” because the word of God came unto them in judgment. They stood in the place of God in the judgment of the people.

## **III. Some Observations**

- A. These incidents are the first indication of a system of “elders” as spiritual watchmen for God’s people.
- B. These men were called “elders” because they were taken from the older and venerable men and “rulers” because of their function, the work they performed.
- C. They were not chosen to serve until their character was established.

- D. The people accepted this arrangement as sanctioned by God.
- E. Any abuse of the system did not negate the arrangement itself. (Note the faulty shepherds of Ezekiel 34 and Paul's actions in the presence of the corrupt Ananias [Acts 23:1-5])

### **Conclusion**

1. This is probably the basis on which the Sanhedrin of Jesus' day rested and perhaps also the basis for the Jewish concept of the ruler of the synagogue. Thus, the Jewish mind in the church had a definite concept in principle as to the New Testament idea of elders.
2. The Gentile, or Greek, mind was accustomed to the idea of the "senate," hence, the idea of established rule by older, venerable men.

# The New Testament Designations of Elders

## **Introduction**

1. The Holy Spirit used three terms in the New Testament to designate the office of elder.
2. They have been translated in six terms in our English New Testament: "bishop," "overseer," "presbyter," "elder," "shepherd," and "pastor."
3. These terms indicate the nature of the office of elder, their tasks, and their authority.

## **I. Elder (Presbuteros)**

- A. This word is an adjective.
  1. Of comparative degree—the older of the two. (cf. Luke 15:25; Acts 2:16-17; 1 Tim. 5:1-2)
  2. Of rank or persons of responsibility—a term of rank or office.
    - a. Among Gentiles. (Gen. 50:7; Num. 22:7)
    - b. Among Jews. (Num. 1:16-17; Matt. 16:21)
  3. It came to be used of those who preside over the assemblies or churches. (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1; etc.)
- B. Inherent in the word is always the idea of age.
  1. In some instances, the age may be a relative thing (cf. Luke 15:25) which may find "elder" not necessarily an old man but older than the one to whom compared.
  2. No age can be placed as a criterion for who is and who is not to be an elder.
    - a. The general tenor of Scripture, though, indicates that God demands respect for the "hoary head" and one filling the qualifications outlined will have attained to some advancement in years.
    - b. By no stretch of the imagination can a "youth" be an "elder." (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12)
- C. This term is used at least four different ways in the New Testament.
  1. An older man. It has reference to age. (1 Tim. 5:1-2)
  2. Leaders of Israel. (Matt. 15:2)
  3. It is used most often to designate the office of elder in the local church. (Jas. 5:14)
  4. The twenty-four elders around the throne of God. (Rev. 4:9-10)
- D. Not every older man is an elder in the main New Testament usage of the term.
  1. An elder in the church is one who has been made such by appointment. (Acts 20:28; 14:23)
  2. One does not automatically qualify for the office of elder just by the passing of years.
- E. The need for age is seen in that one of the assets of the careful overseer is wisdom.
  1. Though wisdom is not found in every older man, it is not found in the young.
  2. Wisdom is knowledge plus experience.
  3. Experience by itself does not make for wisdom but it is one of the necessary factors.
- F. In summary, "elder," as used in the New Testament, is a technical term denoting an older man who holds an office in the local church.
  1. It does not describe function but rather the title of the office.
  2. It designates the type of man required to fill it—an older man.

## **II. Bishop (Episkops)**

- A. Translated "bishop" in the English from the Greek word that if more literally translated would be "overseer."

- B. Usage of the term.
  - 1. In the Septuagint it is translated “watchman.” (Ezek. 3:17)
    - a. It carries with it the idea of supervision or superintendence.
    - b. It involves taking charge and oversight of affairs including the authority to manage and direct them.
  - 2. Among the Athenians it was the title of magistrates sent out to tributary cities in order to organize and govern them.
  - 3. Among the Jews it had much the same meaning as “*overseer*” does today in the English language.
  - 4. New Testament writers used it of one who has the right to oversee and superintend the affairs of the local church—one who has the right to direct the activities of the members, to see that everything is done that should be done by the right person, at the right time, and in the right way.
- C. The term denotes the function to be accomplished. (Heb. 13:17)
- D. The one who exercises overseership would do so with whatever degree of authority was delegated to him by the one appointing him to the office. (cf. Acts 20:28—elders are of divine appointment therefore possess divine authority)
  - 1. The apostles were not legislators, *per se*, but were instruments by which God legislated in revelation. Hence, the very work to which they were raised up carried with it the authority to execute it.
  - 2. As with apostles, so it is with overseers. Hence, for one to ridicule authority given to spiritual overseers is to rebel against Him who raised them to the position.

### **III. Pastor, Shepherd (Poiman)**

- A. “Pastor” is of Latin origin from “*pasco*,” to feed.
  - 1. It corresponds with the Greek ***poiman*** and the Anglo-Saxon “soeapherd,” shepherd.
  - 2. It means to keep sheep—a shepherd. (cf. Psa. 23)
  - 3. Metaphorically it is used of Jesus, the chief Shepherd of the souls of men. (John 10:1; 1 Pet. 2:21-25; 5:1-4)
- B. It is definitive of the elders of the local church.
  - 1. The idea—elders are to shepherd and feed the flock. (1 Pet. 5:1-4)
  - 2. The shepherd is to rule the flock in such a way that he directs it to do the things which are best for all concerned.
  - 3. A good shepherd, in the Biblical sense, is one who leads his sheep (John 10:4) not drives them.
  - 4. God has limited the rule of the bishop to the local church of which he is a member and over which he has been appointed. (1 Pet. 5:2)
- C. Some considerations.
  - 1. If the shepherd leads, he has the authority to lead or exercise judgment.
  - 2. If the shepherd watches and protects, he has the authority to do whatever is necessary to protect the flock from harm.
  - 3. If the shepherd feeds, he must know what, how, when, etc.

### **Conclusion**

These various designations help us to understand the nature of the men who are to serve as elders, the nature of their office, and the nature of their work.

# Eldership Responsibilities

## **Introduction**

1. Serving as an elder in a local congregation is a task not to be taken lightly for it carries with it great responsibilities.
2. On the other hand, members have to seriously consider the attitudes and responsibilities they are to have toward those who rule over them as elders.

## **I. The Responsibilities of Elders to the Congregation**

- A. Tend the flock. (1 Pet. 5:2)
- B. Rule over the local church. (Heb. 13:17)
- C. Exercise the oversight (1 Pet. 5:2)
- D. Watch. (Heb. 13:17) The duties of a watchman are defined in Ezekiel 3:16-21.
  1. Hear the word of God.
  2. Warn those who sin.
- E. Admonish. (1 Pet. 5:1-2)
- F. Be examples. (1 Pet. 5:2)
- G. In summary. Elders are to uphold the word of God and warn those who transgress it, watch out for the souls of the members making sure they are properly fed and tended, set an example for all, and rule using the standard and love of God.

## **II. The Responsibilities of the Congregation to the Elders**

- A. Know them and esteem them. (1 Thes. 5:12-13)
- B. Obey and submit to their rule (Heb. 13:7,17), but not blindly.
- C. Not receive an accusation against an elder except if two or three bring it. (1 Tim. 5:19)
- D. Reprove them if they sin. (1 Tim. 5:20)
- E. Support them in their work. (1 Tim. 5:17)
- F. Call upon them—make good use of them. (Jas. 5:14)
- G. As much as under your control, make their task one of joy not grief. (Heb. 13:17)

## **Conclusion**

When elders and members mutually respect one another and live up to their responsibilities, the wisdom of God's plan of local church government brings not only joy, peace, and unity but also growth—both spiritually and most times numerically.

# The Qualifications for Elders

**Text: 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9**

## **Introduction**

1. Since men filling the office of elder must be appointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28), the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 must be strictly followed.
  - a. One must not, though, create an attitude of “pickiness” which causes some to believe that the qualifications are unapproachable—that no one would ever be qualified.
  - b. The qualifications do not demand a perfect man in the sense of sinlessness. He is a man and not some super-human individual.
2. The qualifications for an elder are many and are such that no man can possess them and not be a power for good wherever he is.
3. Some of the qualifications are relative.
  - a. “The husband of one wife” is not relative. He either is or is not.
  - b. “Apt to teach” is relative.
    - 1) Some are more “apt” than others.
    - 2) This is illustrated by the use of the word “tall” in regard to people. 6' 2" is tall, generally, but not in comparison to those few who are exceedingly tall.
4. All of the qualifications are a “must” for one who would serve.
  - a. They are to be a part of his life and personality prior to his appointment.
  - b. He is not to “grow into” the office.
5. In examining these qualifications, this lesson will group them under five general headings.
  - a. Character and habits.
  - b. Reputation.
  - c. Experience.
  - d. Domestic relations.
  - e. Intellectual qualifications.

## **I. Character and Habits**

- A. Blameless—without reproach. (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)
  1. It does not mean sinless or faultless since no man is without sin.
  2. 1 Timothy 3:2: “One against whom no evil charge can be sustained; one who is above an established charge of evil.” (*Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*)
  3. Titus 1:6: “Not open to accusation, unblameable.” (Thayer)
  4. A comparison of the texts.
    - a. The word in Titus is a little stronger in meaning.
    - b. In Timothy, the concept is that of a person who has lived so that men will not accuse him of evil.
    - c. In Titus, the person has so lived that men **cannot** accuse him of evil.
- B. Sober—sober-minded (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8).
  1. Definitions.
    - a. “Denotes of sound mind; hence self-controlled, sober-minded.” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of NT Words*)

- b. In Titus 2:5 in the KJV the same word is translated “discreet,” hence, discretion is involved.
  - c. The word is not limited to its relation to being drunk rather it means to be of sound mind, curbing one’s impulses.
  - d. “Exercising or manifesting the exercise of cool, dispassionate reason; not affected by passion or prejudice; well-balanced as to keep a sober head in a panic.” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*)
2. This qualification eliminates the one who:
    - a. Cannot make up his own mind or make decisions.
    - b. Goes along with whomever he is talking to.
    - c. Cannot keep his head about him.
  3. One with a sound mind will be able to make good decisions on any matter with those decisions grounded in truth and wisdom.
- C. Given to hospitality. (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)
1. “Hospitable;...in noun form, lit., loving a stranger.” (Vine)
  2. This is a trait required of all Christians.
    - a. Consider 1 Peter 4:9; Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:10; and Hebrews 13:2.
    - b. Someone has said, “The religion of Christ is a religion of an open heart, an open hand, and an open door.”
  3. The nature of the office of elder demands this ability.
    - a. The elder must possess the attitude of the good Samaritan. (Luke 10:25-37)
    - b. He must be thoughtful of others and manifest an interest in all—both strangers and members.
  4. Many congregations suffer because of a coolness toward visitors.
    - a. Elders must set the proper example and lead in deed.
    - b. In short, elders must like people.
- D. Temperate—vigilant. (1 Tim. 3:2)
1. Definitions.
    - a. “Signifies to be free from the influence of intoxicants;...used metaphorically in N.T.” (Vine)
    - b. It means to be mentally alert, perceptive, active, alive, watchful, knowing what is going on, and always working energetically for the success of the church.
  2. An elder must:
    - a. Be self-controlled, watchful, and alert.
    - b. Have the foresight to know the end of a course if it is followed.
    - c. Be one who has developed the quality of being capable to take advantage of every opportunity to promote the cause of Christ.
  3. There is to be a constant concern on the part of elders for the spiritual well-being of the local church. They must watch:
    - a. Among themselves. (Acts 20:28)
    - b. Over the souls under their charge. (Heb. 13:17)
    - c. For every opportunity to do good and to promote the kingdom of Christ.
- E. Of good behavior—orderly. (1 Tim. 3:2)
1. Definitions.
    - a. “Decent, modest, orderly.” (Vine)

- b. "Orderly, decent, grave, correct in the whole of his appearance and conduct. A clownish, rude, 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 they would most infallibly disgrace." (Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*)
- 2. The type of man described by this qualification is:
  - a. Well-arranged, dignified, courteous, and chaste in his whole manner of life.
  - b. Honest, fair, and diligent in business.
  - c. Kind, courteous, and polite in language.
  - d. Neither sour, rude, gruff, sharp, nor cutting.
  - e. Clean and moderate in his habits.
  - f. A well-behaved person in all phases of his life.

F. Gentle—patient. (1 Tim. 3:3)

- 1. "Equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing...considerateness." (Vine)
- 2. This describes the person who is:
  - a. Not easily provoked, revengeful, impetuous, harsh, stern, bitter, or unkind even to the unpleasant.
  - b. Meek and considerate.
- 3. As an elder tries to discharge his duties, unless he is patient and gentle, he may be ill-tempered and discouraged.

G. Lover of good—a lover of good men. (Titus 1:8)

- 1. The word "men" is not implied in the original text.
- 2. It means to love, to approve the things that are good. (Micah 6:8; Rom. 12:9)
- 3. An elder must:
  - a. Love Christ and those of like mind and spirit who follow Christ.
  - b. Love the good character of men who are willingly following Christ and encourage them to do greater work.
  - c. Approve the things that are excellent and encourage others to do likewise. (Phil. 1:10)

H. Just. (Titus 1:8)

- 1. Definitions.
  - a. "Righteous...a state of being right, or right conduct." (Vine)
  - b. It indicates one who is concerned with doing that which is right and with being fair and impartial—free from prejudice.
  - c. The term carries with it the idea of conforming to law, whether divine or human—that law cannot be set aside.
- 2. One who is an elder must be upright, fair, and honest in all his dealings with other people.

J. Holy. (Titus 1:8)

- 1. Definitions.
  - a. "Not from 'hagios' which means separate, consecrated, devoted, sanctified, sacred but from 'hosios' which means 'signifies religiously right...as opposed to what is unrighteous or polluted.' (Vine)
  - b. It refers to one who is undefiled by sin, free from wickedness and wrong, who religiously observes all his obligations in his relation to God and man, and who is pure in heart with the right attitudes toward God and man.
- 2. To become an elder, one must be a holy man because he is entering a holy work.

- K. Not violent—no striker. (NASV: “*not pugnacious*”) (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
1. It applies to one who strikes back at any who disagree or displease him or who persecutes those who refuse to cater to him.
  2. It refers to one who has an ungoverned temper and who is ready to resent insult or wrong, real or imaginary.
  3. To be an elder, one:
    - a. Must not be ill-tempered but patient and kind.
    - b. Cannot be ready to spring at the slightest provocation.
- L. Not greedy for money—not greedy of filthy lucre. (NASV: “*not fond of sordid gain*”) (Titus 1:7)
1. This term applies to one who attains money dishonestly or unjustly at the expense of others.
  2. There is no place in the leadership of God’s people for one who is selfish.
  3. Though elders can be supported financially (1 Cor. 9:7-11; 1 Tim. 5:17), one must not seek to serve just for financial gain.
  4. It is also a mistake to put a “tight-fisted” man in as an elder.
    - a. Many churches are held down by an eldership composed of “penny-pinchers.”
    - b. With such a man, the work of the Lord is often neglected in order to hoard funds.
  5. One who serves as an elder should lead the way in giving as he has prospered.
- M. Not quarrelsome—not a brawler. (1 Tim. 3:3)
1. Inherent within the word is the idea of abstaining from battle both physical and verbal.
  2. One who would be an elder cannot be a trouble-maker or a contentious, quarrelsome individual.
  3. Those who are contentious are not pleasing to God. (1 Cor. 1:10)
- N. Not covetous—no lover of money. (1 Tim. 3:3)
1. “Lit. ‘money-loving.’” (Vine)
  2. Covetousness is:
    - a. Condemned in many places in both Old and New Testaments.
    - b. Classed with the “works of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:19-21)
    - c. Referred to as “idolatry” in Colossians 3:5.
- O. Not given to wine—no brawler. (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
1. Note in KJV: “Not ready to quarrel, and offer wrong, as one in wine.”
  2. It means to be free from the need for and influence of intoxicants and their products.
- P. Not self-willed. (Titus 1:7)
1. “Self-pleasing...inconsiderate of others, arrogantly asserts his own will.” (Vine)
  2. It refers to the kind of man who should never be permitted to be an elder because such a one:
    - a. Is presumptuous, arrogant, and demanding for selfish reasons.
    - b. Wants and demands his own way in all matters regardless of the outcome.
  3. The elder must:
    - a. Consider others before himself.
    - b. Not be a fault-finder or chronic objector.
    - c. Be uncompromising in matters of principles but not headstrong and unyielding in matters of opinion and/or expediency.
- Q. Not quick-tempered—not soon angry. (Titus 1:7)
1. God is slow to anger and we ought to be like Him.

2. All Christians are cautioned against a quick temper (Jas. 1:19-20).
3. To serve as an elder, one must not be hot-headed or quick-tempered.

## **II. Reputation**

- A. Must have a good testimony among those who are outside—must be of good report of them which are without. (1 Tim. 3:7)
  1. Not only must members of the church look up to and have confidence in the one who would be an elder but those outside the church who know him must consider him a good, honest man.
  2. This is essential “lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”
    - a. Satan uses every sort of trick and device to destroy the work of Christ.
    - b. One of his best traps is to have a man who has a glaring reputation of wickedness and unrighteousness in the eldership.
  3. A word of caution. Outside of the church are people who despise what is good and hold in bad repute a man who acts according to the will of Christ so understand that one may not have a good report from such people.

## **III. Experience**

- A. Not a novice—not a new convert. (1 Tim. 3:6)
  1. “Lit., newly planted, denotes a new convert, neophyte,...of one who by inexperience is unfitted to act as a bishop.” (Vine)
  2. It takes time to grow to maturity as a Christian. One who is a novice will not have had sufficient time to grow to the level of maturity needed to serve as an elder.
  3. Reason: “lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.”

## **IV. Domestic Relations**

- A. The husband of one wife. (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)
  1. There is a great deal of disputation as to what is exactly intended.
  2. Four different views on the meaning of “husband of one wife.”
    - a. Stated.
      - 1) Married.
      - 2) Not a polygamist.
      - 3) Married only once.
      - 4) Husband of one wife.
    - b. Considered.
      - 1) The first does not state enough.
      - 2) The second does not state enough.
      - 3) The third contains a requirement that no translation verifies.
      - 4) The fourth is in harmony with all translations as well as the original language.
    - c. The fourth view closely examined.
      - 1) It prescribes marriage for the elder and at the same time restricts that marriage to one wife thereby forbidding polygamy.
      - 2) Both positive and negative. Positive: requires marriage. Negative: prohibits polygamous marriages.

4. There are still many problems in application.
    - a. Can one serve whose wife has died?
    - b. Can one serve if he is remarried?
- B. Rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence. (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6)
1. This qualification requires obedient children who submit to their parents.
  2. Child or children?
    - a. Argument: Greek word *tekna* plural occurs in texts regarding an elder's family so an elder must have a plurality of children (who are Christians). A man with only one child, it is said, no matter how well qualified in all other aspects nor how exemplary a Christian his one child is, is not qualified.
    - b. The words *teknon*, child, and *tekna*, children, are used interchangeably in Scripture to include one or more than one.
      - 1) Genesis 21:7; 11:30; and 16:1.
      - 2) 1 Timothy 2:15. If a woman had only one child, would she be saved?
      - 3) 1 Timothy 5:4, 10. If a widow had only one child would she be a "widow indeed?"
      - 4) Ephesians 6:1-4. If one has only one child, can he, as a father, provoke it to wrath?
  3. It is not **how many** offspring a man has that God has emphasized but **what he does** with those he does have.
- C. Having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination—having children that believe. (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6)
1. This idea has been disputed about as much as "how many children" with much of the argumentation the same.
  2. The key to understanding this qualification. *Pista* means easily persuaded, believing, confiding, trusting, one who has become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah; the followers of Christ, having Christian faith.
  3. Some problems in application.
    - a. The idea that children do not need to be Christians.
    - b. That it only applies to children who are at home and not to those in later life.
    - c. That all the children must be faithful Christians.

## V. Intellectual

- A. Apt to teach. (1 Tim. 3:2)
1. "To instruct and train." (Vine)
  2. One who would be an elder must be apt and skillful in teaching.
    - a. He must have an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the Bible and the ability to convey it.
    - b. The term "shepherd" or "pastor" indicates he is to feed the sheep by teaching the gospel.
- B. Holding fast the faithful word. (Titus 1:9)
1. An elder must use the truth to convict and convince those in error.
  2. He must be sound and able to exhort others to soundness.

## **Conclusion**

1. Basically, the one qualified to serve as elder is one who has "grown up"—come to maturity in Christ. (Heb. 5:11-14) He is one in whose life the principles of a Christian personality have become an integral part and whose daily life exhibits and demonstrates them.
2. The man who meets all of these qualifications should be respected and utilized by the local church so that they might benefit from his wisdom, knowledge, and love for the Lord and His word.

# Developing Elders

## **Introduction**

1. There is a crucial need among God's people for good, qualified men to serve as leaders.
  - a. Such leadership does not come by accident, it must be developed.
  - b. "It takes ten years to develop a leader." (Harold Comer in a sermon in Monticello, Florida, 1989)
2. This lesson will seek to answer the two-fold question:
  - a. Who is responsible for the development of elders?
  - b. What can be done to develop elders?

## **I. Who Is Responsible for the Development of Elders?**

- A. The congregation as a whole.
  1. They should "seek out" from among themselves (Acts 6:3) men with potential.
  2. They should provide the proper environment for such development to be desired and to take place.
  3. A divisive, gossipy, disrespectful group teaches young men to shun being an elder.
  4. If a congregation presently has elders it should respect them and count them worthy of honor (1 Tim. 5:18) thus encouraging young men to want to serve in that same capacity someday.
- B. Those who are presently serving as elders (if any). They ought to:
  1. Present an example to be admired and imitated by young men. They should:
    - a. Show they are happy to serve.
    - b. Not always be grumbling and complaining about how tough and thankless being an elder is because such only discourages.
  2. See that young men are being taught and trained.
- C. The evangelist. (Titus 1:5)
  1. He must be fair and even-handed in his dealings with and treatment of elders. (1 Tim. 5:19-22)
  2. He should teach, develop, and stimulate young men to be concerned with becoming elder material.
- D. Those who are not qualified to be elders themselves.
  1. Some are in this position who seek to lead the congregation anyway.
    - a. They might become an unqualified elder.
    - b. They fight to keep from having any eldership in order to maintain their power in a business meeting.
  2. Positively, they have the opportunity to:
    - a. Raise children who are qualified.
    - b. Manifest true "greatness" by submitting to those who have the qualifications and the right to have rule over them.
- E. Children.
  1. They may disqualify their father from becoming an elder by their unfaithfulness or their unruliness.

2. They may help to qualify their father by:
  - a. Being receptive to his efforts to teach them.
  - b. Being faithful.
  - c. Doing their part to have a peaceful and happy home.

F. Wives and girls who may become wives of elders.

1. A wife may disqualify her husband in many ways.
  - a. She may be gossipy, not given to hospitality, not in subjection to him, always belittling him, damage his reputation, etc.
  - b. She could be demanding so much from him, either in time or money, that he cannot devote himself to the work of the Lord.
2. She, more than anyone else, may help to qualify him.
  - a. She can encourage him to realize he has the potential to do the job.
  - b. Her knowledge of Scripture will help him grow in knowledge as well.
  - c. Her subjection will give him confidence in his ability to lead.
  - d. Her faithfulness and love will give him security and peace of mind.

G. Mothers.

1. Of sons who should be trained early.
2. Of girls who will be elders' wives.

H. Young men themselves.

1. At a young age a man needs to become aware of the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
2. At an early age good habits and attitudes must be developed.
3. He should choose a girl who as a wife will be a true "help" and not a hindrance.
4. He should begin raising his children properly while they are young.
5. Now is the time to develop a true desire. (1 Tim. 3:1)
  - a. Not "Someday I am going to be an elder!"
  - b. Rather, "I am going to be the kind of person who is qualified to serve as an elder."

## **II. What Can Be Done to Develop Elders?**

- A. An elder is one who, basically, has come to maturity in Christ.
  1. He is one in whose life the principles of a Christ-like personality can be found.
  2. He has:
    - a. Become a "partaker of the divine nature" as opposed to worldly corruption. (2 Pet. 1:2-4)
    - b. Been renewed in mind. (Eph. 4:23-24)
    - c. Been conformed to the image of the Son of God. (Rom. 8:28-29)
    - d. Christ living in him. (Gal. 2:20)
  3. He thinks, wills, and acts as did Christ.
- B. The particulars of the Christ-like personality and their relevancy to being an elder.
  1. An intellect educated in truth. (Matt. 11:28-30; Eph. 1:15-18; Col. 1:9-10)
    - a. The person enlightened in truth is a **capable** person.
    - b. Therefore, he provides leadership that is **adequate**.
  2. Emotions fixed upon God and godly things.
    - a. He loves as God loves, hates as He hates. (Matt. 22:37-39; Prov. 6:16-19)
    - b. One so possessed in his emotions is a **stable** person, therefore he provides leadership that is **objective**.

3. A will that is submitted to God's will. (Rom. 6:16-18; 2 Cor. 10:5-6; 2:9)
  - a. He has become one who is **demonstrative**.
  - b. Therefore, he provides leadership which "shows" rather than "tells."
4. A conscience void of offense. (Acts 24:16; Heb. 9:11-14; 1 Pet. 3:18-21)
  - a. When the conscience is clear, the life is one of **contentment**.
  - b. Therefore, he provides leadership **without frustration** (on the part of the one leading).
5. The appetites of the flesh are under control. (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Col. 5:16-21)
  - a. If one can control himself, he is a **confident** person.
  - b. Therefore, he provides leadership that **generates confidence** in those being led.
6. A life dedicated to service. (Matt. 4:10; 6:24; 1 Thes. 1:9)
  - a. He has a lifestyle that exhibits **commitment**.
  - b. Therefore, he provides leadership that **can be followed**. (Jesus both did and taught [Acts 1:1]).

### **Conclusion**

To develop or groom men to be elders, we need to develop in them, and in all, a Christ-like personality.

# The Qualifications and Work of Deacons

**Text: 1 Timothy 3:8-13**

## **Introduction**

1. The office of deacon is authorized by the New Testament where it is distinguished from the elders and members as an essential part of the organization of the local church. (1 Tim. 3:10, 13; Phil. 1:1)
2. One common reason congregations fail to carry out a successful program of work is the lack of deacons in their service.
  - a. It may be a failure on the part of elders to use them properly.
  - b. It may be a lack of activity on the part of the deacons themselves.
  - c. Much good can be accomplished by energetic, enthusiastic and effective deacons.
3. The word "deacon" is from a Greek word meaning waiter, attendant, servant, or minister.
  - a. The verb form means to wait upon, to serve, to minister.
  - b. Thus the idea is basically that of an active servant, one who is actively serving.
4. This lesson will consider deacons as to their qualifications and work.

## **I. The Qualifications of Deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13)**

### A. Negative qualifications.

1. Not double-tongued. (v. 8)
  - a. "1. Saying the same thing twice, repeating. 2. double in speech, saying one thing to one person another with another (with intent to deceive)." (Thayer) Hence, insincere.
  - b. There are good reasons for this qualification. Deacons:
    - 1) Know personally of the situation of some of the members.
    - 2) Discuss privileged and/or sensitive knowledge with elders.
2. Not given to much wine. (v. 8)
  - a. In the OT, the priest under penalty of death was forbidden to drink any wine or strong drink when he ministered at the tabernacle. (Lev. 10:8-11)
  - b. Drunkenness is forbidden to all Christians. (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10; Gal. 5:21)
  - c. The word used for wine is used in other places in the New Testament.
    - 1) 1 Timothy 5:23; Matthew:17; Mark 15:23; Luke 7:33,34; 10:34; John 2:3-10; 4:46; Romans 14:21; Ephesians 5:18.
    - 2) Conclusion: Intoxicating wines are not the only ones mentioned in the Bible.
  - d. Is a little alright? The answer is attitude.
    - 1) Do you do all things for the gospel's sake? (1 Cor. 9:2, 3)
    - 2) Are you determined to do all for the glory of God? (1 Cor. 10:31)
3. Not greedy for money. (KJV: filthy lucre) (v. 8)
  - a. "When lucre is sought on occasions when none is due, it is 'filthy', and when the desire of even just gains is excessive, it ceases to be clean." (*Pulpit Commentary*)

- b. Balaam, Gehazi, Achan, and Judas are examples of professed servants of God who were lovers of money.
- c. One cannot love God and mammon. (Matt. 6:24)

C. Positive qualifications.

1. Reverent—grave. (v. 8)
  - a. August, venerable, honorable, serious.
  - b. A deacon will not consider his responsibilities lightly. He is not flippant with sacred matters.
2. Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. (v. 9)
  - a. Holding suggests stability and concern.
  - b. What is he to hold? The mystery or the revealed truth of Christ.
  - c. How? Obediently with a pure conscience (unmixed, without pollution, without guilt or blemish).
  - d. “Although every Christian should develop a pure conscience, the deacon must not be a weak, or immature Christian who knows little or nothing about the faith and who is not very conscientious.” (James Bales)
3. Husband of one wife. (v. 12)
  - a. The deacon must be a married man.
  - b. He must be what God wants a husband to be.
    - 1) Neither abusive nor negligent.
    - 2) Not “hen-pecked.”
4. Ruling their children and their own houses well. (v. 12)
  - a. The deacon must be a father and what God would have a father to be.
  - b. If one is neglecting his home responsibilities, why should he be entrusted with greater, more far-reaching responsibilities in relation to the spiritual family?
5. First be tested—proved. (v. 10)
  - a. Their good character and ability should not be taken for granted or developed after they are appointed.
  - b. They should be judged fit to serve by their previous conduct.

## **II. The Work of Deacons**

A. Some misconceptions.

1. Elders are over spiritual matters, deacons over physical matters.
  - a. There are not two types of overseers in the church.
  - b. Elders are the only ones charged with the responsibility of rule and oversight.
2. Deacons are junior elders.
  - a. While serving as a deacon may help one develop himself to become an elder some day, the office of deacon is distinct from that of elder.
  - b. If you need an elder, seek an elder not a deacon.

B. Duties of deacons.

1. The Bible does not exactly specify what the duties of deacons should be.
2. One can rightly deduce that as servants of the church their duties would be such things as the church needs and the elders direct.

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3. Some suggested areas of responsibility: Benevolence, Bible classes, building and grounds maintenance, local evangelism, evangelism in other areas, finances, gospel meetings and special classes, publicity and publications, worship.

### **Conclusion**

1. A church needs both elders and deacons.
  - a. But no one should think there is nothing to do if he cannot be an elder or deacon.
  - b. There are countless ways that each can serve the Lord in His kingdom.
2. To be selected to serve as a deacon is an honor but it is not an honorary position.
  - a. Deacons must do their work.
  - b. They have a special incentive given them in 1 Timothy 3:13—“For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”



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