

Qualifications for Elders

Titus 1:5-9

Intro

We begin this morning by defining the word qualifications...

*Qualifications are abilities, characteristics, or experiences that make a person suitable for a particular job or activity...
[expand]*

In the context of our study this morning, we will be looking at the biblical qualifications for elders — qualifications for those who lead church fellowships...

And as we examine these qualifications, there are a few things to consider...

1) Each elder should meet each of these qualifications...

2) Though elders should meet each of these qualifications, there is always room for growth within each of the qualifications...

3) Believers who are not elders should look for these qualifications in those who lead them...

With this as our introduction, please follow along in the passage that we will be studying this morning...

Titus 1:5-9 (NKJV)

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.

Let's move into our first section...

1) The Command (vs 5)

5 For this reason I left you in Crete,

Paul and Titus conducted ministry on the island of Crete, most likely between Paul's first and second Roman imprisonments...

And Paul left Titus in Crete because there was work that Titus needed to complete...

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking,

There was still work to be done in Crete and Titus was the man to carry out the job...

And as we move through Paul's letter to Titus we will see at least three main areas where Titus was to set in order the things that were lacking...

1) There was a lack of organization that needed to be addressed...

2) There were false teachers who needed to be rebuked...

3) The believers in Crete needed further instruction in Christian doctrine and conduct...

Now, these are three areas that every fellowship must establish and maintain if the local body of believers is to be healthy...

- And the oversight of these three areas is to be the responsibility of the church elders...[expand]

Paul continues in vs 5...

that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—

appoint — *to assign someone to a position of authority...*

elders — *those to whom was committed the direction and government of individual churches — overseer, bishop, pastor...*

So, Paul had **commanded** Titus to appoint elders in every city...

- And as we put the pieces together we realize that these first century fellowships met in houses and that elders were needed to oversee the individual church gatherings...

Many commentators believe that Titus was to appoint a plurality of elders in each fellowship and this seems to be the ideal so that the work of leading does not rest on a single individual...[expand]

- [ex. I'm the senior pastor or lead elder / Rick, Sammy and Pablito are also elders / we oversee different ministries within the fellowship / we must be agreed before we move forward...]

Let's move forward to our second and final section...

2) The Qualifications (vs 6-9)

In this section, Paul lays out the qualifications for elders in a list that is very similar to what we find in 1 Timothy...

6 if a man is blameless,

Blameless does not mean *sinless* because if it did then no man could be an elder...

- Instead, the word refers to the absence of charges or accusations...

In other words, the man must be of good reputation within the community...

Next we read that the man must be...

the husband of one wife,

The literal translation of this phrase is that an elder must be a “*one-woman man*” — he must be faithful to his wife...

And the faithfulness that the Lord requires is an exceedingly high standard...

Ephesians 5:25 (NKJV)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...

An elder is to be an example to the fellowship by loving his wife in this self-sacrificing way...

- Again and again, I have failed to meet this standard of Christ’s love for the church — I have failed to love my wife in this self-sacrificing way...

But the standard remains — and as a husband and as an elder I am to make it my goal to love my wife like Christ loved the church...

*Now, before we move on we should take note of the fact that the words **man** and **husband** have been used in these qualifications...*

And as we look at the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy and study the NT, we do not see any female elders...

I realize that this is offensive to some but as I read the scriptures it is clear to me that in the church and in the home men and women have different roles...

- [ex. **complimentarian** — equal in value, different in role / **egalitarian** — equal in value, equal in role...]

Continuing on in vs 6...

having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

In other words, an elder is to lead his family well do his best to raise children who are obedient and trustworthy...

dissipation — *debauchery, incorrigibility, wild and wasteful living...*

insubordination — *rebellion, refusing to submit to authority...*

Moving on to vs...

7 For a bishop

Here Paul uses the word **bishop** (lit. overseer) interchangeably with elder — it is the same position or office...

- The word **elder** speaks of *spiritual maturity* and the word **bishop** refers of the authority of *overseeing others*...

But this oversight of others must always be performed from a servant-leadership perspective...

To remind ourselves of this truth, please turn to...

Matthew 20:25-28 (NKJV)

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.

26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Please turn back to Titus 1 as we continue on in vs 7...

For a bishop must be blameless,

Paul repeated the necessity for *elders* or *overseers* to be **blameless...**

- There must be no legitimate charge or accusation that can be brought against them...

For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God,

steward — *manager of a household or estate...*

- [expand — the elder is managing the affairs of another...]

For more on this topic of stewardship, please turn to...

1 Corinthians 4:1-5 (NKJV)

1 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

4 For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

- [expand — stewards will be held accountable for how they managed their Master's resources...]

As we turn back to Titus 1:7 we have a list of negatives — things an elder should not be...

not self-willed,

Not stubborn, arrogant, or over-bearing; does not have to have his own way...

- This relates to being a steward — an elder must want God's will to be done — not his own will to be done...

And, of course this was the example of the Lord Jesus...

In the model prayer, the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray...

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

The Lord Jesus said to the crowds in...

John 6:38 (NKJV)

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus prayed...

"O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done."

Continuing on in Titus 1:7...

not quick-tempered,

Not hot-headed — an elder is not to become angry quickly...

not given to wine,

Not addicted to wine; not engaged in drunkenness...

CWSB Dictionary

“The word does not include the responsible and temperate usage of alcohol, rather, it has in view the abuse or incessant use of it. The word-picture is that of an individual who always has a bottle (or wineskin) on the table and so signifies addiction.”

not violent,

The elder is not to be a person who is looking for a fight, whether physically or verbally; he’s not a bully...

not greedy for money,

The idea here is that an elder is not to be *shamelessly greedy for money*...

- [ex. Kenneth Copeland — richest “pastor” in the world — with an estimated worth of anywhere from \$300-750mil — bragged about having 36 Breitling watches (\$600-\$78,000)...]

For more on this topic, please turn to...

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV)

1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

3 By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

As we turn back to Titus 1, we switch back to the positives — things an elder should be...

8 but hospitable,

The Greek word for hospitable literally means “friend of strangers”...

- [ex. “Visitors are always welcomed” — that should be the attitude of every church — and it should start with the elders...]

[expand — Jesus continually extending invitations to people...]

And I love what we read in...

Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Continuing on in Titus 1:8 we read that an elders should be...

a lover of what is good,

The idea is that elders ***love that which is good*** and as a result they ***practice what is good***...

- Or put another way, ***you can't love what is good*** without ***doing what is good...***

And in order to love the good and do the good — an elder must focus on the good...

Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy— meditate on these things.

Moving on in Titus 1:8 we see that an elder is to be...

sober-minded,

Sensible, of a sound mind; self-disciplined in one's freedom, self-restrained in all passions and desires...

just,

upright, fair — elders are to treat people impartially...

holy,

Devout, pleasing to God; state of proper attitude toward God as exhibited in action and holiness...

Elders should be dedicated to God and are to be an example of what it looks like to serve God...

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV)

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

Next we read that elders are to be...

self-controlled,

Master of oneself — having one's emotions, impulses, or desires under control; self-disciplined (only time this word is used in the NT)...

9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught,

The idea is that elders must be those who have first **been taught** the word of God, found it to be trustworthy, and then choose to hold fast to the word...[expand]

This imagery reminds me of...

2 Samuel 23:10 (NKJV)

Eleazar (one of David's mighty men) arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day...

- [apply to elders — must not let go of the word — must hold fast to the end...]

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.

This gives us an indication of where Paul is going next in his letter to Titus...

Paul writes that elders must understand the word of God — they must use sound doctrine — right teaching — to **exhort** and **convict** those who contradict the truth...[expand]

exhort — *to call to one's side and make an appeal to...*

[ex. coach calling a timeout to talk to his players — telling them what they are doing wrong and how to fix it...]

convict — *to bring a person to the point of recognizing wrongdoing...*

- [expand on the importance of teaching the word of God so that wrong might be exposed and corrected...]

Please turn to one last passage before we wrap-up our time together...

2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NKJV)

1 I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

As we will see next week (Lord-willing) the task of elders is to protect the church from false teachers and this is done by faithfully teaching the word of God to those who will listen...

Conclusion

With that said, as we close our time together I will simply remind you of the three things I asked you to consider at the beginning of this message...

1) Each elder should meet each of these qualifications...

2) Though elders should meet each of these qualifications, there is always room for growth within each of the qualifications...

3) Believers who are not elders should look for these qualifications in those who lead them...