

Studies in Church Leadership: Discussion II

The Qualifications of Elders Lesson 3: What He Must Be:

- I. **This lesson will** conclude our time looking at the qualifications of an Elder; In our previous two lessons we have examined what The Lord expects from those who would lead in is Church;
 - A. His family is an example of what God expects in our homes; a loving and faithful marriage that has produced godly children
 - B. We saw that in both Timothy and Titus there is a lengthy list of character traits that would prove to be disastrous in a leader of God's people
 - C. But our last lesson on the subject will include what both of these epistles say an Elder must have in his possession.
 - D. **READ I Timothy 3:7, Titus 1:8-11**

I. **An Elder Must be Hospitable (Titus 1:8, I Tim. 3:2)**

- a. **Hospitality as** used in our text is defined as “a love of strangers”, or having “a love for guests”
 - i. As we mentioned with some of the other characteristics of an Elder, particularly being free from the love of money, this is a trait that you may not always be able to observe.
 - ii. Many of the tasks that go along with hospitality might be done in private, or you may never hear about them; However, when we have men who are given to hospitality among us it will be noticed in other ways.
- b. **Let us first pause** to consider that when we think of Hospitality it is often through a very narrow lens: Has this person had me in their home for dinner... Has this person come to visit me when I was sick... Has this person helped me out in some way..
 - i. For many the determining factor in someone’s tendency toward hospitality is how much have they done for “me” lately.

ii. It is certainly possible that some of this could be a part of their being hospitable; But it isn't the whole. One thing to consider is you may not have as much of a need for hospitality to be shown to you as others in the congregation

c. ***At least one tangible*** way to observe this trait is to see how a man relates to those in the assembly:

i. Is he prone to talk to the same one or two people before and after services? Or does he spend his time greeting every one present, taking the time to be familiar with what all is going on in their lives, as well as listening for their needs.

ii. Do visitors in the assembly go ignored and un-greeted? Or is he showing a warm welcome; trying to make them feel at home and engage them in spiritual conversation?

iii. For those who are traveling and passing through, Christian and non-Christian alike, is this a man who is opening his home as a place of rest; providing a meal or even a place to stay?

iv. How is he using his home in general? Is it known as place of welcome? Is he using it to provide for those who could not repay?

d. ***In the context*** of our two texts, I would lean toward this having more of a primary application for those in the Church; That this is a man who is looking to take care of the needs and provide for his brethren;

i. The early days of the church brought with it persecution, much relocation, frequent poverty, and even famine; there would have been multiple and frequent opportunities to be hospitable to the brethren.

ii. I don't believe that it would end there:

1. Paul speaks in **Gal. 6:10** of doing good to all men as we have the opportunity

2. The writer of Hebrews says in **13:2** to not forget to show hospitality to strangers; you never know who it is that you may be helping

3. And of course the parable of the good Samaritan; Where Jesus taught that anyone who you have the chance to help is your neighbor.

e. ***Lastly we would*** do well to point out that this is not simply an action, but hospitality is an attitude that the man must possess:

- i. Peter would instruct Christians in **1 Peter 4:9** to show hospitality to another without grudging
- ii. John would commend Gaius in 3 John for this type of attitude: **3 John 5-6**
 - i. *Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.*
- iii. They don't show hospitality because they must, they do it because they love to
- f. Again, much of what a man does in this regard may be done in secret. But for one who is possesses this trait, there are many ways that it will shine through.

2. **An Elder Must Be A Lover of Good: Titus 1:8**

- a. ***This is another*** phrase that in our text is really only one word. But the word in our text is translated as one who loves good things, one who is a promotor of virtue;
 - i. Something that is mentioned several times in Titus is the idea of Good works. I think that fits in well with what this man is to be about. He is someone who loves and seeks to do good works;
- b. ***Think about the*** men who are among us; Are there those who come to mind who are motivated by service? By this we mean that they are looking for something to do not because someone has been hounding them, or there was a very stern lesson, or because they feel under compulsion;
 - i. They are seeking good works because they love to do it;
 - ii. This is a man who doesn't ask: Who was supposed to do this? Who was supposed to take care of that? Those are the questions of someone looking for a person to blame; A lover of Good sees a need that must be taken care of, and instead of asking whose responsibility this was, they just do it!
- c. ***But this is not*** something that is limited to self; As we said this is a *promotor of virtue*;
 - i. That means that this man encourages this same attitude in others. When he sees someone attempting to help out in some way, he doesn't discourage them from doing so.
 - i. If they need guidance he offers it. If they don't he supports them. His actions serve to fan the flame of that brother or sister's zeal,

2. He teaches others to do the same by his example; He brings others along when he has found work to do. He seeks to promote the good that he loves through his actions.

d. ***I think of*** Barnabas as a lover of good works:

- i. When we see him in Acts 4 he is introduced as one who saw a need and took action to solve it.
- ii. We see him encouraging and promoting the same in others when they may have become discouraged, first by speaking on behalf of the newly converted Paul in Acts 9, and again by taking John Mark under his wing in Acts 15.
- iii. This is the kind of man we are looking for.

3. **An Elder Must Be “Sensible/Sober-Minded/Temperate/Prudent” (1:8, 3:2)**

- a. This is a grouping of qualities that while there are some subtle differences, all revolve around the same core qualities: A certain seriousness of mind in the man’s approach to life
 - i. One of them is the idea of **vigilance**: This is a man who is keeping watch; He is on the lookout for potential dangers and is looking to provide a safe path for those he is keeping watch over: They are not going to be caught off guard easily
 - ii. Another aspect is that of being a **clear thinker**: This would certainly call to mind that an Elder cannot be a man whose sensibilities are hampered by strong drink; but I get the impression that it extends beyond that.
 - i. This is a man whose mind is always where it needs to be. He approaches every situation with a single-minded purpose; putting away other distractions. He is able to clearly weigh the situation at hand in order to make sound decisions.
 - iii. The idea of **prudence** carries with it a sense of **discretion**.
 - i. Not simply in the sense that he is able to keep things to himself when needed, but that he carries his duties out in a meek and quiet fashion: He isn’t boisterous and calling attention to himself in all that he does.
- b. There are a couple of passages that come to mind to help illustrate these points:
 - i. First, think of what Jesus wanted out of the disciples in the garden: In **Matthew 26:36** He requests that in this trying time they sit while he prayed: They were not

able to do so, and He found them asleep, again exhorting them to keep watch and pray to avoid entering into temptation:

1. This was an urgent time: it required focus, clear thinking, and vigilance; The disciples were not up to the task. When the challenge came, they all fled and deserted:
- ii. I'd also call to mind Peter in general as an example of the opposite of these traits:
 1. Peter was one who desperately wanted to do good works; but he had to learn and grow into the proper way of carrying them out:
 2. He was not a man of **vigilance**; being caught by surprise on more than one occasion by temptation or error that he knew was coming
 3. He was not a **clear thinker**; his rash ill thought out schemes often landing him in trouble, blurting out the first thing that came to mind
 4. He was not **prudent**; making brash claims, jumping into conflict where there was no need.
- c. An Elder must possess these qualities as displayed by men such as Daniel and Joseph. Men who approached every situation with attention, well thought out actions, and carried them out in such a way that served to stabilize their circumstances.

4. **An Elder Must Be Just (*Titus 1:8*) (*Upright ESV*)**

- a. The word in our text comes from a term that means equitable. It also means to be correct, innocent, righteous, or holy; living by divine standards:
 - i. You could make the point that this might be similar the blameless; But while a man who is considered for the position of Elder should be found innocent in his actions; I understand the use of Just in this context to extend out to the means dealings with other people:
 1. This is someone who renders to each what is due; that when they pass judgment on others it can be sure that it is a Just judgment:
 2. There are going to be conflicts; there are going to be difficult decisions. And Elder must be one that can stand under the great scrutiny that these will bring; The congregation needs to have faith in him that his is impartial.

- ii. There are various ways we could consider that a man could be guilty of rendering impartial or unfair judgment; but the point we want to see is that a congregation will suffer if the men who have oversight are unable to make fair judgments.

5. **An Elder Must Be Gentle: (1 Timothy 3:3)**

a. **Some of the terms** that are used to define the word in our text include: “appropriate, patient, willing to yield, considerate”

- i. An Elder must have a Gentle nature; when dealing with conflicts, there are going to be people who will blow up; Their way of dealing with the situation is to unload on the Elder: “They will have to eat fire!”

- i. How is a man going to react in that situation? Is he going to bow up, stand tall, and give just as good as he took? Or will he choose to be gentle?

- a. Paul would speak to Timothy about the importance of this characteristic, especially in dealing with erring brethren: *The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.* **2**

Timothy 2:24-26 (NASB)

- i. *Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, (2:25, NIV)*

- b. “A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.”

Proverbs 15:1 (NLT)

b. **This is an attitude** that carries with it a great deal of patience:

- i. Patience is a quality that all of should desire as it demonstrates growth in a mature Christian as they try to pattern themselves after Christ:
- ii. An Elder must be one that is not easily provoked, nor is he one that holds a grudge and seeks opportunity to get revenge by “putting someone in their place”
- iii. Elders must seek to imitate God in their longsuffering: Yes, they must stand up for the truth and cannot be willing to yield or bend when confronting error.

1. At the same time this must be balanced with patience towards those who might be caught in a sin. Gentleness must be exercised when helping the weak to grow.
- c. ***Gentleness is also a word*** that carries the idea of being reasonable:
 - i. See **1 Peter 2:18**: Here gentleness is contrasted with unreasonable:
 1. Do we see how one who is gentle is going to be reasonable? It has to do with not being “self-willed”. He isn’t going to be determined to stand his ground in every situation, making sure that he is getting “his way” (in matters of opinion)
 2. He listens to people, he can be approached.

6. **An Elder Must Be Self-Controlled (Titus 1:8)**

- a. ***This is a term translated*** in the KJV as Temperate, which we covered this morning, and in some other versions as disciplined, or having a disciplined life: But the word is one that means “self-mastery”
 - i. The same could be said about most any of these qualifications, but without self-discipline, there is little a man can accomplish:
 1. *In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victory they won was over themselves... self-discipline with all of them came first -Harry Truman*
 2. Paul states that self-control is absolutely vital to being a successful Christian: *Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*
1 Corinthians 9:25-27 (NASB)
 3. Paul would go on to exhort Titus in Titus 2, make sure the Older men have self control, the older women have self control, and that both of them are teaching it to the younger generations:
 4. *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city* **Proverbs 16:32, NASB**
 - a. *Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city.*
(NLT)

ii. ***Self-Control, like gentleness*** is listed as part of a mature and growing faith by Peter in 2 Peter 1.

1. So many of these qualifications involve being able to control yourself; keeping your temper in check, being a man of peace, not seeking out quarrels, etc
2. Looking at a man's family: Paul tells timothy how can a man manage God's house if he can't manage his own; we might add to that, How can a man manage his own house, if he cannot manage himself.

b. We mentioned earlier men like Joseph and Daniel; they serve as excellent examples of Self-control in difficult situations; these are the types of men we are looking for:

7. An Elder Must Be Devout/Holy (Titus 1:8)

a. We've had lessons earlier in the year on the subject of what it means to be Holy: Not just set apart, but set apart for a purpose:

- i. For God's people that is the purpose of serving Him, to be a people for His own possession.
- ii. This is referring to a man who lives Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:1-- his body is a living sacrifice to God: He no longer lets sin reign in his body; he is choosing to live holy and without blame before God in love.

b. One who is holy has made the priorities of God his own. He is seeking to have the same mind as Christ.

- i. One who has made that decision is not going to be bullied or pressured into giving up those priorities and principles.

8. An Elder Must Have a Good Reputation/Be Respectable: 1 Timothy 3:2, 7

a. ***The word reputation*** comes from a word that had to do with "evidence" particularly the evidence that would be presented as a witness or in a trial:

- i. Perhaps one good way of thinking about it would be to ask; if this man were on trial for being a Christian, or a godly man, would there be enough evidence to convict him?

- ii. If you were to ask those who a man interacted with on a daily basis; his co-workers, his neighbors, the people at the grocery store he frequents the most, his barber, etc; what would that have to say about him?
 - i. Would they be surprised to find out he was a member of the church? Or would their testimony line up with what he presents to his brethren?
 - 2. You've heard of or met men and women who you were shocked to find out that they were Christians; That shouldn't be the case with the leaders of a church!
 - a. No one should be shocked to learn that a man is serving as an Elder here:
- b. ***We are talking*** about a man who wears the same face everywhere he goes. He doesn't have one face that he puts on for his brethren, one for his co-workers, and one he wears at home:
 - i. He will not be plagued by situations where he tries to exhort men and women to behave one way only to be undermined by their knowledge of his inconsistency in the same area.
 - ii. Appointing someone who does not have a good reputation in the community that they work and interact in will bring harm to the church; both in its reputation, but also by putting in a man to serve who is not what he seems;
 - i. Eventually the stresses of the work will bring to the surface any character inconsistencies, but by then damage will have been done.

9. An Elder Must Be Able to Teach: 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9

- a. Timothy's account simply says Apt to teach; Paul's instructions in Titus give us a little more detail as to what that entails: **Read Titus 1:9-11**
 - i. I don't believe that this is implying in any way, that all Elders must be excellent public speakers. Nor does it mean that every Elder must be able to get up, and give a sermon in the format that is most common in churches today.
 - ii. One good point I've heard made is that in **1 Timothy 5**, Paul instructs that those who labor in the Word are worthy of Double honor; That if a man is an elder and also serving as an evangelist, he is worthy of double wages:

1. This says by implication that there will be some Elders who are not laboring in the Word; not that they are not teaching, but they are not serving in this specific capacity:
- b. ***This is a qualification*** that is going to have varying degrees: Not all men are going to have the same amount of knowledge, or the same amount of skill in presenting it.
 - i. Some are going to have talents in one specific area over another:
 1. It may be that when we have Elders that they may take a more active role in presenting lessons on Sundays
 2. It may be that their skills are more suited toward teaching a class, and so they focus in that area
 3. Perhaps they will choose to use their home to engage in small group studies, or even with individuals;
 - a. But they are able to teach the Gospel, and they are seeking and making opportunities to do so in whatever way they can:
- c. ***It seems that*** Paul outlines in Titus a few specific responsibilities that one who is able to teach should be capable of carrying out:
 - i. ***He must give instruction in sound teaching;***
 1. Sound doctrine is that which is healthy; it is good for the body: There is a lot of teaching floating around that *is not* good or healthy; It causes spiritual disease and decay in the body that produces division and sin. We are looking for men who will hold seek out and teach that which will build up the body:
 - a. The text says that they accomplish this because they are holding fast to the faithful word:
 - i. This means the trustworthy word: Words that had been handed down to them: For those in the 1st century they heard an inspired man of God give teaching to them, and they were to hold onto it, guard it as we've mentioned in other lessons, and hand it down to others:
 - ii. For us today that is the New Testament; the same words they heard having been recorded for us by inspired men of God
 - iii. *Illus. of Holding on for dear life...*

- b. These are men who have a deep biblical conviction; God's Word governs their lives: In every situation they turn to it to see what He has said:
 - i. They don't waver in their efforts to uphold God's Word?
 - ii. It shows in their teaching: they teach God's Word and nothing else and because of that they cannot be moved:

ii. and he must be able and willing to rebuke and correct;

- 1. Ref. Wayne's Sermon from 9-15
- 2. This implies that he is a student of the word: That he is a workman that has no need for shame and can rightly divide the scripture:
 - a. He can judge between those things that are unsound, and what is the genuine article:
 - b. But this is not just knowledge that sits in his head: he is willing to take a stand: He realizes that he has been entrusted with the Lord's sheep; and he is going to place himself between the flock and the wolves.