

Studies in Church Leadership: *Discussion 8*

Qualifications Lesson Part 1: Introduction to Qualifications

- I. In our discussion** regarding the selection of Elders, we have slowly been working from the ground up with the intention of studying their qualifications as the end of our study:
- A.** We have seen from numerous passages in the New Testament that Elders are part of God's plan for the Church; They are not optional and no local body will grow as it should without them.
 - B.** We have seen from other passages the often tragic consequences of times when God's people had poor leadership or no leadership at all.
 - C.** Most recently we have looked at the work that Elders are to be about; Watchmen on the walls, shepherds of the Lord's flock; men who can use their influence to guide souls in paths that are pleasing to God; all the while performing this task with love, patience and humility.
 - D.** But now, as we are only around one month away from putting forward names of men, we must turn our attention to the qualifications that the Holy Spirit moved Paul to record for us in his letters.

(Read Titus 1:5-16)

II. Some opening words about the qualifications:

- A.** As I've asked for your questions (and continue to do so) so that we can take a look at those in our last two lessons; I've only received one so far; but it is a question that I wanted to deal with in this lesson:
 - 1.** *"How do we strike a balance between holding to a high standard in selecting elders without making the standard so high, that it is all but impossible to appoint a man?"*
- B.** I want to first point out, that this list of qualifications that we've just read ***is indeed a high standard***: But I would also like to show you a few other lists of qualifications or qualities:
 - 1.** Look at this list of qualifications for Kingdom citizens: **Matthew 5:2-13**
 - 2.** Look at this list of the qualities of a fruit bearing Christian: **Galatians 5:23-26**

3. Look at this list of the qualities of a Christian who is not short-sighted: **2 Peter 1:5-9**

4. Or look at the list of **Romans 12:9-20**

C. **Do you notice the extreme** similarities between all of these lists, including the list of **Titus 1**?

1. We are not saying in any way that Elders are not to be held to a high standard, because they are; but what we need to see is that as Christians we are ***all held to a high standard.***

2. There are very few qualities that are specific only to one who can serve as an Elder. Elders are not ***mythical creatures***: They are not men who only come around once or twice in a life time.

3. To put it very simply, Elders are men who have demonstrated that they are living by the standard to which all Christians have been called, and are mature enough to influence others to do the same

III. This is not a specific question that has been asked, but is rather a statement that has been made in some other conversations about Elders:

A. “The reason that Elders were appointed so quickly in the first century is because Paul was going to Synagogues and converting mostly Jewish people. These were men who had grown up faithfully keeping the old law and were eager for its fulfillment”

1. So the picture would be, there it was easier because these men had already been working their entire lives to be men of holiness.

a) I won't say that there were no men that fit that description, but consider the following:

(1) First, there were very few Jews who accepted Jesus as Lord. Many of the Jews who were converted had to be convicted of the fact that they had rejected and killed the Son of God;

(2) Second, Paul is not known for his extensive work among the Jews. While he often would find a synagogue to preach in, the most common pattern would be rejection and violence by most of the Jews, at which point he turned his attention to the gentiles: **(Such as in Acts 13)**

2. But I also want to look at the following passage: **Phillipians 1:1**

a) As far as I know this is the only Epistle that Paul wrote where he directly addresses the Elders in the greeting of the Letter:

b) Now turn to **Acts 16:9-13**

(1) Paul didn't find a Synagogue to preach at in this city. We don't read about any Jewish men; we don't read about any men at all! What Paul found was a group of women praying by the river.

(2) The first man we read about was the Phillipian Jailer, who was on the verge of committing suicide moments before the Apostle Paul stepped in to stay his hand:

(3) And yet this congregation had Elders. They appointed men to serve **not 15, 20, or 30 years later**. Paul's letter to the Phillipians was 8-10 years after his visit to Philippi.

(4) A fair estimate then would be to say that sometime in the next 5-7 years, Godly men were appointed to serve as Elders and Deacons in a congregation that began with a handful of women praying by a river.

IV. I want for us to discuss one other comment/idea that has come up in several discussion: Generally speaking it would go like this: The preparation that goes into being qualified as an Elder is a life long task.

A. This is a statement that I would generally agree with: Men of even the youngest ages should be looking at these qualities and making the determination to live their life in such a way that when they reach a mature age, their fellow Christians who have seen them live to a high standard will have the confidence and faith to appoint them as Shepherds of the flock.

B. But I think that we should be also be careful not to make this idea an extra qualification that is not in the text;

i. While it is good to encourage this sort of preparation mind-set, we don't want to inadvertently **discourage** men by making them think that it is somehow too late to begin diligently working to be the kind of man that could serve as an Elder.

- C.** Someone might look at this list, and because so many have often set it up on a high, unreachable shelf, think that there is no way I could ever meet these:
- 1.** I've struggled with a quick temper in the past and everyone knows it!
 - 2.** I'm too self-willed, will I be able to change that?
 - 3.** There have been times where I'm not peaceable, or gentle
 - 4.** I once taught something in a sermon or class that a member later had to come and correct me on! *etc etc...*
- D.** Consider this: think of the name of an Elder in the New Testament: **Peter is** probably the first name that comes to mind: He is virtually the only Elder that we are given by name:
- 1.** Did Peter struggle with being self-willed? Were there times when he was not peaceable and gentle? Did he struggle to control his tongue? Was there ever an instance where his actions led others astray? Yes, Yes, and YES!
 - 2.** And there is **nobody** who's mistakes are more well documented, discussed, and critiqued than Peter;
 - a)** And yet in spite of this, Peter was able to continue to work to become the kind of man that would one day write to encourage his fellow shepherds
- E.** If you are a young man, then Yes, make the decision to work hard to become the kind of man described in Titus 1:
- F.** If you are an older man and you look at this list and think, I just don't live up to most of this:
- 1.** First, we need to realize that its not ok: That isn't a failure to live up to the "high standard of an elder" it is first and foremost a failure to live up to the standard of a Christian.
 - 2.** Second, make the determination to change: Decide that you are going to refocus your life and determine that 5, 10, 15 years from now, however long; that you will be ready to answer the call to shepherd the flock.