

# CHAPTER 4

“A man lays the foundation of true greatness when he becomes more concerned with building his character than with expanding his reputation. He who would be great must be fervent in his prayers, fearless in his principles, firm in his purposes, and faithful in his promises.”

- William Arthur Ward

## 4. THE ELDER’S QUALIFICATIONS

### “THE MARKS OF A MAN OF GOD”

Character has fallen on hard times in most realms of leadership. Efficiency and success have become more important than personal holiness; pragmatism has blunted piety; ingenuity has replaced integrity; charisma has swallowed up conviction; consumerism has nullified counseling; size has become the standard; cleverness has vanquished character; humility has been surpassed by humor; and righteousness has been trampled by results. What matters today is not how godly a man is, but whether he draws crowd, evokes tears, maintains interest, lobbies for the majority, kisses babies, and slaps backs. And yet, the majority of the New Testament’s discussion about Eldership pertains not so much to what these men do, as what they are.

Character is what matters to God! Our day is reminiscent of the times about which the Psalmist lamented in **Psalm 12:1**, “**Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be, for the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.**” *In this lesson we will study the standard of God’s will for the character of God’s leader, so that we can uphold and pursue this criterion for our leaders and for ourselves.* What do the following verses teach about the importance of example in spiritual leadership?

- **Psalm 101:6-7**
- **Philippians 3:17 (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1)**
- **Hebrews 13:7 (cf. v. 8)**
- **1 Peter 5:3**

Certainly no man called into the role and work of an Elder is perfect. Each man has areas in his own life where he is vulnerable. If the standard was perfection, no man would qualify. But the Bible does not demand perfection, but rather patterns – of right thinking and right living for the church’s leadership. Paul himself knew that he was “**wretched**” when compared to the holiness of God (**Rom. 7:14-25**), and the chief of sinners (**1 Tim. 1:15**), therefore the least worthy to minister. And yet Paul knew and upheld an uncompromising standard for those who would serve Christ in ministry (**1 Cor. 9:24-27**).

*“...do not forget the culture of the inner man—I mean of the heart. How diligently the cavalry officer keeps his saber clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God’s sword, His instrument—I trust, a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God” - Robert Murray McCheyne.*

Because of the amount of New Testament material devoted to the character of the Elder, we will spend the next few weeks carefully detailing what God expects of a man who is entrusted with the care of His flock. Carefully note how the standards of God do not change or lower to accommodate mediocrity. Also, it is essential to mention that if the character of the man of God is intact, then his ministry will be what God intends. His ministry is always the overflow of his life.

## 1. 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7 – MEN WHO LEAD THE CHURCH

**<sup>1</sup>It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. <sup>2</sup>An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup>not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. <sup>4</sup>He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity <sup>5</sup>(but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), <sup>6</sup>and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. <sup>7</sup>And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”**

- A. As the apostle Paul writes to his son in the faith, Timothy, who is in Ephesus, what does **3:14-15** say is the purpose of the letter?
- B. What was happening in Ephesus that prompted Paul to make this point especially urgent (**1:3-7; 4:1-3; 6:3-5**)?
- C. How do the qualifications for Elders fit into this overall theme?
- D. Consider how these following qualifications are practically discernible in the life of a man of God:
  - 1) **“If any man”** – specifies the gender of anyone who might be considered for this **“office.”** Simply, an Elder must be male. This does not mean that God does not have significant roles in the church for women. Quite the contrary, God has perhaps even more influential roles for women than spiritual oversight in the church. In God’s design, the issue is not one of importance, superiority, or ability. The issue is role. Some people gag on the Bible’s teaching about headship and submission, but it should be noted that even God Himself, within His Triune nature, has distinctions of role and function, as He has assigned to man.

- a. The most important text on the issue of male leadership in the church is **1 Timothy 2:9-15**, “<sup>9</sup>Likewise, *I want* women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, <sup>10</sup>but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. <sup>11</sup>A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. <sup>12</sup>But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup>For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. <sup>15</sup>But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”

- Knowing that the context of this passage is public worship, how does Paul describe the *attire* of women in v. 9-10? Why is this important?
- How does he describe the *attitude* of women in v. 11?
- What is “**entire submissiveness?**”
- How does **1 Corinthians 14:34-35** answer the objection that Paul was writing to a unique situation in Ephesus?
- Does this mean a woman cannot say anything in church? Can she give a testimony? Can she ask a question in a Sunday School class? What can she do and not do?
- Who are women not allowed to “**teach**” in v. 12?
- What constitutes teaching, Biblically (see **2 Timothy 4:2-3**)?
- Who are women not allowed to “**exercise authority over**” in v. 12?

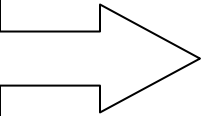
- In trying to define what it means to “**exercise authority**” what is the only office in the New Testament given to the church with any authority whatsoever (**Heb. 13:17**)?
  - Who are the only authorities mentioned in **1 Timothy** (in the immediately following context)?
  - What is the reason that **v. 13** gives for why God assigned men’s and women’s Biblical roles in the church this way?
  - How does **v. 14** strengthen Paul’s argument?
  - How does Paul’s reference to the creation and the fall decimate the cultural objection that women were oppressed by male chauvinists in the first century, or that this was only a local problem being corrected?
  - What does Paul mention instead, is the woman’s lofty, personal, intense, and effective ministry in **v. 15**?
  - What is so high about this calling?
- b. Outside of the home, what role do the following verses say a woman of God may have in ministry?<sup>1</sup>
- **1 Timothy 3:11**
  - **1 Timothy 5:9-15**
  - **Titus 2:3-5**
  - **Acts 18:24-28**

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<sup>1</sup>For further reading about the importance of women to Jesus in His life and ministry, see chapter 4 by James Borland in *Rediscovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Greudem by Crossway Books, or online at <http://www.cbmw.org/rbmw/rbmw.pdf>.

- c. What are some other possible areas of service that women, gifted of God can perform?
- Ushering?
  - Serving Communion?
  - Teaching children’s church?
  - Public reading of Scripture?
  - Sharing a testimony?
  - Directing a choir?
  - Drama?
  - Teaching women’s Bible Studies?
  - Teaching junior and senior high school?
  - Missions trips?
  - Biblical Counseling?
  - Visitation?
  - Singing a solo in church?
  - Writing Christian books?
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

What should a church do if it does not know how to decide whether a woman should serve in a particular area of ministry?



- d. What is the difference between a man who serves as an Elder, and a woman in the home and ministry in terms of impact and effectiveness?
- 2) “**aspires...**” – refers to the longing within the heart of the man who yearns for the office of Elder. The Greek word for “**aspire**” means to strive to attain, to long for, to reach out and grasp. The word has the picture of a man stretching himself out in order to take hold of something otherwise out of reach. This implies that a man understands what Eldership is, and makes it his aim to eventually be one. It becomes a driving motivation for him, wherein he cannot resist the constraint of God upon him to serve in this capacity.

NOTE: This is the same word used in **Hebrews 11:16** to describe how fervently the men of old desired heaven (which does not mean he should long for this office as much as he longs for heaven – but it simply magnifies the intensity of its passion of his heart). This is a passion like he does not have for other things.

- a. How do you see this constraint on Paul in **1 Corinthians 9:16-17**?
  - b. Does this mean that every man who **“aspires”** to the office of Elder is qualified or should be given the opportunity to serve in this way? Why or why not?
  - c. How should you respond to a person who is qualified in his character, competent in his knowledge of Scripture, and gifted for service, but who does not want to be an Elder?
  - d. Does **Acts 20:28** help identify the source of these desires?
  - e. What are some potential dangers in aspiring to spiritual leadership (cf. **Jeremiah 45:5**)?
- 3) **“...it is a fine work he desires...”** – shows that this aspiration must not be for the office only. It is a summons to work! Many men desire the position and recognition, but few desire the toil and labor of shepherding. It is easy to sit in chairs around a table and make decisions, but that is only a fraction of the real **“work”** of the ministry of oversight. A man called of God to serve as an elder must **“desire”** the **“work,”** not merely the office.
- a. What kind of work ethic does this require in a man of God? Ask your Elder what this work involves?
  - b. Compare their answers with **Colossians 1:28-29**; **2 Corinthians 1:24**; and **2 Corinthians 11:23-29**.
  - c. Who can you ask to see if a potential Elder is fit for work?
  - d. How is it harmful to the flock of God if an Elder is not willing to **“work”** in ministry?

- 4) “...above reproach...” - literally “unrebukable,” “blameless” or “unable to be laid hold of.” This does not mean that this man of God has no sin (**1 Jn.1:10**), but that there are no significant patterns of unrepentant sin, or any areas in his life where he can no longer offer himself as an example. The spiritual leader does struggle (**1 Cor. 10:13a**), but because he has diligently worked to develop consistent patterns of righteousness, he should be able to model what every Christian is called to be in terms of character. When closely inspected, he is found without significant or harbored sin. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- a. How does **Philippians 2:14-16** use the phrase “above reproach?”
  - b. What then does this mean about an Elder?
  - c. What kind of response do you think this brings out in any Elder who understands this standard? Ask him:
  - d. Have you ever known a leader that has fallen in ministry, and therefore has stepped down from spiritual leadership? What did that do to you? What did that teach you about the importance of character in leadership?
  - e. What do the following verses teach about the nature of blamelessness?
    - **Psalm 119:1-3**
    - **Proverbs 11:20**
    - **Proverbs 13:6**
  - f. While we speak about a qualified leader as someone who has nothing in his life *or in his past* that makes him unfit for spiritual service as an Elder, we must clarify that we are speaking about his life as a Christian. The character of his life before Christ is hardly something for which he can now be held accountable in the process of scrutiny. See the following verses that speak about a person’s life before Christ, as that which would disqualify every potential Elder:

- **Romans 8:7-8**
  
- **Isaiah 64:6**
  
- **Ephesians 3:7-9**
  
- **1 Timothy 1:12-17**

The implication of this phrase “**above reproach**” is that each of the following qualifications listed in v. **2b-7** are a further elaboration of what it means to be blameless, and therefore each of these must exist for a man to sustain his ministry. If the Elder fails in the areas below, he is not qualified to lead a flock of people, since he cannot lead himself. Thus, leadership is not a matter of what a person does or says, but is a matter of who he is before an omniscient and holy God. An Elder’s ministry should be an outflow of his life, because if it does not he is “...*like a stained-glass window – a religious symbol that obscures the light*” (John MacArthur, *Chapel Message*; The Master’s College).

- 5) “...**the husband of one wife...**” – literally reads, “a one-woman man.” The Elder is to be a man of only one wife. Of course this forbids polygamy and homosexuality (both of which were common in the ancient world), but the idea of ‘one-woman man’ is much more comprehensive. It certainly includes the following:
- a. He must not be unbiblically divorced. By unbiblically divorced, it seems clear that the Bible allows for divorce and the freedom to remarry in two situations, which in the case of an Elder, does not restrict him from service:
    - Sexual immorality (**Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-10**) – if his wife has committed gross sexual sin, God considers the marriage covenant to be broken, and allows him to seek a divorce. In such cases, divorce is not commanded nor encouraged, as is reconciliation and restoration, given Jesus statements on the permanency of marriage (see **Matt. 19:8; Hos. 1-3; Lk. 17:3-4**). A divorced man in this situation is free to remarry (**Matt. 19:9**). It is also important to note that God Himself wrote Israel a certificate of divorce (**Jer. 3:6-10**).
    - Abandonment by an unbeliever (**1 Cor. 7:12-16**) – if his wife is an unbeliever and she does not desire to live with him as a Christian and abandons the marriage, God commands him to

release her for the sake of peace, being no longer bound and therefore, it is concluded, free to remarry.

NOTE: The only *other* reason a marriage relationship might legitimately end before God is the death of a spouse (**Rom. 7:1-3**), in which case the believer can remarry, only in the Lord (**1 Cor. 7:39; cf. 1 Tim. 5:9-14**).

Therefore, it can be concluded with some certainty, that while God hates divorce (**Mal. 2:16**), He allows for it only in certain instances so that a man may be divorced, then remarried, and still be in His will. Nowhere in the Scripture is a Biblically divorced man specifically said to be unfit for ministry as an Elder. Furthermore, if only being married once was the qualification, then the man whose wife died would be unable to serve if he is remarried.

- b. He must be devoted to the woman he has. This is the reverse of the above, meaning that the man who is qualified to lead the church must himself be free from the stain of moral corruption to his marriage vows. Moreover, his faithfulness as a husband must be exemplary, in that he reveals a sincere commitment to the wife of his youth. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- What does **Ephesians 5:25-32** say about how a godly husband cares for his wife?
  - How does **1 Peter 3:7** add to this, and even magnify the need for signs of a Biblical marriage in an Elder?
  - What does **Proverbs 6:26-32** say is the lifelong consequence for a man who commits adultery?
  - List some ways that a man should strive to nurture his wife?
  - What are some ways that an Elder might need to guard his marriage from certain unique temptations?
  - What are some warning signs that a marriage is in trouble?
  - How can the Elder keep the church from becoming his mistress?

- c. He can be single, but he must be free from immorality. This description of an Elder as a ‘one-woman man’ does not mandate that he be married in order to serve (contrast **1 Tim. 5:9**). A single man is just as viable a candidate for Eldership as a married man. In fact, Paul makes the point in **1 Corinthians 7** that it is more advantageous to serve the Lord in ministry as a single man, and that he himself was single (**1 Cor. 7:7; 9:5**). If singleness excluded someone from Eldership, then men like Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and even Jesus (the Chief Shepherd/Elder) would not qualify. But Paul, knowing that marriage is the norm declares in effect, *if* he is married, he is to be devoted to that one woman. As a single however, he must be proven in the area of purity. His life must not be characterized by any sort of impropriety with the opposite sex, as well as demonstrating mastery over his own passions. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- What are some possible advantages and disadvantages to being a single Elder?
  - What are some possible advantages and disadvantages to being a married Elder?
- 6) “...temperate...” – refers to the inner restraint and self-control of an Elder so that he is sober. The idea is that he has not given himself over to any excess which might dull his ability to think or discern Biblically so as to have sound judgment. Instead, he has a spiritual watchfulness and alertness necessary to perform his task as a clear-headed spiritual leader. The Elder rides dominant over his passions and appetites, because he lives in moderation. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- a. What kinds of excesses can dull spiritual sensibility?
  - b. Why is this quality so important for an Elder (**Prov. 25:28**)?
  - c. How do you measure this in a potential Elder?
- 7) “...prudent...” – is similar to “temperate” in that it also carries the idea of self-control and sober-mindedness, but it also speaks of the ability to exercise Scriptural wisdom and to think practically in the face of problems and difficulties. The Elder’s mind is not to be a confused and disorganized place; rather he is to have the mental maturity needed to guide the flock. The word also seems to suggest that the Elder also needs to guard himself against attitudes

and behavior that are unnecessarily offensive, conducting himself in the propriety that each situation calls for. To sum up, he is always in control of himself. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. What kinds of problems do you think Elders face, which calls for such a high level of mental maturity?
- b. Why is such a capacity necessary in crisis situations?
- c. Why is this important in decision making?
- d. How do the following verses further stress this quality?

➤ **Proverbs 18:2**

➤ **Proverbs 18:13**

➤ **Proverbs 18:15**

➤ **Proverbs 18:17**

8) “...respectable...” – is the word *kosmios* in the Greek, from which we derive the English word “cosmos” meaning world. The term has reference to order and regulation so that his life is not a series of unfulfilled promises and unachieved accomplishments. Instead, he is a man who lives on purpose, organizes himself in order to follow through on his priorities, and lives with etiquette. In a word, he is disciplined, not lazy. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. How can you discern orderliness in an Elder’s life?
- b. What does orderliness in these things convey that makes him “respectable?”
- c. What is the difference between an Elder who lives under the control of the Spirit and an unbelieving CEO?

- d. Why is this crucial for an Elder who is called to handle significant responsibility?
  - e. Why is it important for an Elder to know when to say “no?”
- 9) “**...hospitable...**” – means literally, “a lover of strangers.” It does not mean that the Elder is an entertaining person who likes to make people feel comfortable at dinner parties. Instead it means that he extends himself to others with whom he is not acquainted in order to provide for their needs. In the ancient world like today, it was common for people to travel, but without the luxurious accommodations that we enjoy today. There were no online or telephone reservations, no hotels or motels, no rental cars, and the like, so people were forced to rely on whatever was available. For Christians, and especially in light of persecution, finding welcome in a city was not only rare, but risky. So, the early church constructed a network of contacts within a given city to allow for those traveling believers to find not only rest, care, and refreshment, but also warm and safe fellowship. This was also a risk for the host, because he is assuming a great deal about a stranger, letting him into his home and exposing him to his family, with the possibility of mistreatment, ingratitude, financial drain, or even burglary. Such a tangible display of sacrifice was to be prevalent among the Elders, as it showed that they used what had been given to them in such a way as proved only Christ was their Treasure. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- a. In what ways is a home one of the Elder’s best tools for ministry?
  - b. What are some practical ways that an Elder can show this in the church or in the community?
  - c. How should the Elder balance the hospitality command with the need to guard his family’s privacy?
  - d. How can you measure this in a potential Elder?
- 10) “**...able to teach...**” – is the first and only qualification of an Elder that speaks of the necessary ability to work in the area of teaching the Word of God. This does not mean that every Elder *must* preach from the pulpit, or that every Elder is gifted in teaching, but that he must be “**able**” to, if necessary. Further, this means that he can minister the Word of God in

counseling, discipling, small groups, etc. He can think about the Word in such a complete way that he knows God’s mind on matters that face the church, and he can communicate them to the sheep who will then follow the Great Shepherd’s Voice (**Jn. 10:1-5**). To this **Titus 1:9** adds, “**holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict**” (about which we have more to say below). His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. What does this mean about his:
  - Knowledge of the Bible?
  - Interpretive skills?
  - Grasp of Systematic Theology?
  - Defense against error or heresy?
- b. Comparing this with **1 Timothy 5:17**, how does Paul distinguish between certain kinds of Elders?
- c. What does this suggest about the diversity of gifts and influence within any given Eldership?
- d. How could you measure this in a potential Elder?

**11) “...not addicted to wine...”** – literally, “not a drunkard.” The Elder is not a person who lingers long over wine, because it is not his habit to indulge in something so frequently that it controls him or weakens his otherwise good judgment. But more than a prohibition on drunkenness, Paul has in mind a man who is careful about the use of his liberties, knowing that while is free in Christ, his freedom is not an opportunity for the flesh, but for showing love to others (**Gal. 5:13**). Because he knows that a leader’s liberty is a followers license, he guards himself from causing others to stumble (**Matt. 18:5-9**). His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. Is it a sin for an Elder to drink wine or beer? Why or why not?

**a. 1 Tim. 5:23**

**b. Ephesians 5:18**

- b. What are the principles in the following verses that govern what defines an addiction?

**a. 1 Corinthians 6:12**

**b. 2 Peter 2:19**

- c. What does the Bible say about to drunkards?

**a. 1 Corinthians 5:11**

**b. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10**

- d. To what other possible additions might a person become enslaved?

- e. What happens to a leader that is impaired by a substance according to **Proverbs 31:4-5**?

**12) “...[not] pugnacious...”** – means that the Elder does not resort to outbursts of anger nor does he resolve conflicts with his fists, because he is a peacemaker. This man of God is not given to escalating conflict but to diffusing it. To be pugnacious is to be hot-tempered, volatile, easily provoked, and irritable. Such a person intimidates to get his way and cannot maintain control over himself when he is offended. He has the proverbial chip on his shoulder and is always surrounded by futile controversy. Not God’s man – he has an approachability and reasonableness about him that manifests itself in patience and restraint, especially when people are antagonistic towards him. People do not have legitimate fear of him because he does not use his authority as an Elder to tear down, but to build up (**2 Cor. 13:10**). His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. What does the Bible say about a hot-tempered man?

➤ **Proverbs 15:18**

➤ **Proverbs 22:24**

➤ **Proverbs 29:22**

- b. What kinds of situations do you think an Elder might be in that would provoke him to anger?
- c. How does pugnacious appear in the tone and words of a person? What about non-verbally?
- d. How is a pugnacious person disillusioned about the true Christian fight?

➤ **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

➤ **Ephesians 6:10-18**

13) “...but gentle...” – is the opposite of pugnacious. “Gentle” is a Holy Spirit-produced virtue that seeks to soothe and calm a person and a situation. The qualified Elder has tact and sensitivity that allows him to be to others what lotion is to a dry and cracked skin; what a cool breeze is on a hot sunny day. Gentleness heals and restores if at all possible. It is a willingness to yield to others, even when wronged and to withhold retaliation. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. What do the following verses say about the need for gentleness, especially in light of the discussion on Eldership?

➤ **Galatians 6:1-2**

➤ **1 Thessalonians 2:7**

➤ **James 3:13-17**

- b. How does a willingness to yield affect an Elder’s relationship with another Elder?

**14) “...peaceable...”** – or uncontentious, means that the man of God must strive for unity, which is the strong bond of peace between believers because of the pursuit of truth. The opposite is a quarrelsome man, who gravitates toward conflict, who makes every issue a hill to die on, and is known by what he fights against, not what he stands for. Not the man of God – he is a man who hates division, refuses to sow discord, and who works well with others. He will subdue factions and insist on peace, but never in a way that concedes the truth. He will put others before himself and he will listen to the voice of others, never insisting on his own preferences, and yet never compromising Biblical principles. He stands firm but he is teachable. He knows the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary matters and stands accordingly, always with grace. He does not argue, manipulate, pit Elders against one another, harbor secret agendas, or tolerate such in others. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. What is the difference between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker (cp. **Matt. 5:9**)?
- b. How does **2 Timothy 2:24-25** say the spiritual leader is to pursue peace in the ministry in contrast to **1 Timothy 6:3-5**?
- c. Compare this to what the Prince of Peace said in **Matthew 10:34**. Is conflict inevitable in a ministry that stands for the truth?
- d. What possible temptations lie in wait for Elders with regard to potential division?

**15) “...free from the love of money...”** – is one quality that consistently distinguishes true servants of God from the false, men who are in the ministry for the money. But more than that, this character quality in God’s man means that he is a good and wise steward of what God has entrusted to him, monetarily. His lifestyle reflects that he is content with what God has provided so that he invests it in the most eternally profitable way for the greatest spiritual dividend. Because he is committed to God, he cannot be persuaded by money or in fear of offending those who most fully fill the offering plate, as many times he will be tempted. He does not stockpile material possessions, he does not flaunt his wealth, he does not withhold from him who has need, he is not interested in get rich quick scams, and he gives

generously to the Lord’s work. By contrast, a man who is not a faithful steward of his own earthly treasure money will hardly be a good manager of souls. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. How does the parable in **Luke 16:9-14** make this point? How did the Pharisees respond?
  
- b. Consider what the following verses have to say about the love of money:
  - **1 Timothy 6:6-11**
  
  - **Hebrews 13:5**
  
  - **Acts 20:33-34**
  
  - **Exodus 23:8**
  
- c. What does the Bible say about supporting its spiritual leaders financially in the following verses?
  - **1 Corinthians 9:3-14**
  
  - **1 Timothy 5:17**
  
- d. What do you look for in a potential Elder to see if he is **“free from the love of money?”**

16) **“...He must be one who manages his own household well keeping his children under control with all dignity...”** – speaks of the Elder as a leader, first in his own personal life with his family, and *then* to the church. Moreover, he must demonstrate this competency in his home and then prove himself able to maintain that balance throughout his ministry. His household includes his entire family, if he has one (this does not require an Elder to be married and have children), meaning his wife and children. Certainly the wife is in view (unless she is deceased and he is a single parent) because she partners with him in raising the children. We already know she is under control because of how dedicated he is called to be to her (**v. 2**), so now Paul

turns to the condition of his children. They are to be well managed, that is correctly led as he governs the home, faithfully exercising his Biblical authority to influence his family into the will of God. The word “**control**” means *submission or obedience to authority*. They are to be children whose pattern is obedience, “**with all dignity,**” meaning that while they are children, they should behave appropriately and maintain a sense of respect. In short, they walk in accordance with God’s standards as mediated through the father in the home. The qualified Elder will not allow his family to suffer because he is in the ministry. Far too many families have been sacrificed on the church altar in the name of ministry. Not the man of God. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. What is the reason Paul gives in **v. 5** for an Elder taking serious precautions before entering into the role of a spiritual leader in the church?
- b. Cross-referencing of the phrase “**take care of**” of **v. 5** with **Luke 10:34-35** tells you something of the extent to which the Elder will be tending to someone other than his own family. What is the parallel?
- c. How does the Bible say the rebellion of a child reflects on a parent?
  - **Proverbs 22:6**
  - **Proverbs 28:7**
  - **Proverbs 29:15**
- d. What should an Elder do if he feels that the ministry is forcing him to lose control of his leadership in the family?
- e. What are some things that a wife and kids should consider as their leader is shared with the rest of the church?
- f. What are some reasons why the Elder would be wise to shield his family from much of the negative side to ministry?

- g. What pressures do spiritual leadership place on the Elder and his family that are unique?
- h. How should an Elder with young children maintain this balance?
- i. What are some dangers if the Elder begins to neglect his family for the sake of ministry?

17) “...not a new convert...” – speaks of his maturity in the Lord as a Christian, not necessarily the length he has been a Christian. No length is specified here, because time is not the issue, maturity and wisdom is. The strength of the word “**not**” in the Greek is so strong it means “**never.**” Never should the church, for any reason, put a man into the position of Elder who has not had the time to grow and mature in the Lord. In fact, the word in the original is “not newly planted” implying that he needs to have time to allow his spiritual roots to sink into the ground and reach deep, so that his Christian life is well-nourished.

A “**new convert**” is someone who is a baby Christian, or who is just really beginning to grow. Usually, because of the great need, and because of the fresh zeal in a new believer, many churches put a person in positions of spiritual leadership, thinking that zeal and talent make up for character. Unfortunately there is no substitute for godliness. Someone without the wisdom and maturity to shepherd will likely fall into some reproach and bring shame on the reputation of Christ and the church.

But this standard is also good for the believer because it protects him from the fate of v. 6 – “**the same condemnation incurred by the devil.**” This seems to be a likely reference to pride, which caused Lucifer/Satan to fall (**Ezek 28:11-19; Isa. 14:12-17**) and incur such consequences as loss of position, personal shame, divine chastisement, and harm to others who follow him. God’s man is mature. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. How do the following verses differentiate between maturity and immaturity?
  - **1 Corinthians 3:1-3**
  - **Ephesians 4:14**
  - **Hebrews 5:12-14**

- b. How did Paul urge Timothy, who appeared to be in his late 30's, to handle this responsibility of spiritual leadership in **1 Timothy 4:12, 15**?

**18) “...a good reputation with those outside the church...”** – takes the list of qualifications and applies them to the Elder's dealings with unbelievers, who are **“outside the church.”** Literally, *he has an attractive witness toward outsiders.* To put it simply, his life makes the Gospel look good. His life is a faithful testimony to the transforming work of Jesus Christ in the heart of a sinner – a Savior who can accomplish that same work in the unbeliever's heart as well. And so, when a person in the community learns that a certain man is an Elder in your church, it should not surprise him – it should make perfect sense and actually bring the reputation of the church into greater esteem. If learning that he is an Elder causes the unbeliever to avoid your church means that some potentially serious introspection needs to take place. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

“In reality, the nonChristians may know more about the character and conduct of the prospective elder than the church. Quite often the prospective elder's nonChristian fellow workers or relatives actually have more daily contact with the church leader than do the people in the church. So ‘Paul is concerned’ writes George Knight, ‘that those who may judge less sympathetically, but perhaps also more realistically and knowledgably will render a good...verdict both from the perspective of their own consciences ...and also from their awareness of the particular man's commitment and consistency in terms of his Christian faith.’ ”

Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, p. 201.

- a. What are some possible ways that an Elder or potential Elder can demonstrate a **“good reputation”** (good witness) with the lost?
- b. Who are some examples of people that make up the list of **“outsiders?”**
- c. Why is it that unbelievers are so perceptive about sins in others?

- d. How is it possible to have a good reputation with outsiders, if those outsiders happen to be your persecutors? See **1 Peter 3:13-17** (cf. **1 Cor. 10:32; Phil. 2:14-15; Col. 4:5-6; 1 Thess. 4:11-12; Titus 3:1-2**).

## 2. TITUS 1:5-9 – MEN WHO ADORN THE SAVIOR

**Titus 1:5-9, “<sup>5</sup>For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, <sup>6</sup>namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. <sup>7</sup>For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, <sup>8</sup>but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, <sup>9</sup>holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”**

- A. The theme of Titus is “God as Savior,” giving it an evangelistic tone, so that everything Paul says in the epistle is aimed at the witness of the church. With that in mind, how do you think that the qualifications of Eldership fit into the overall theme of this epistle?
- B. This list is noticeably similar to Paul’s list of Elder qualifications in **1 Timothy 3** with some additions, which we will not repeat here. Yet in this case, as in Timothy, the same standard pervades: “**above reproach,**” repeated twice in **Titus 1**. Again, the Elder’s ministry is the overflow of his life.

- 1) “**...children who believe...**” – is a phrase that has caused some significant debate among Biblical scholars relative to the home life and parenting abilities of an Elder. Some take this to mean that if an Elder has children, they must all be saved in order to be qualified. Others take this to mean that the Elder’s children must be faithful to him, under his control and subject to him, not bringing reproach on him as a parent, and thus on the Lord as an Elder.

The first view is the most prevalent throughout church history and has only one significant argument to it, namely that the Greek word translated “believe” in the NASB is nowhere spoken of in reference to an unbeliever, even in its alternate rendering, “faithful.” This would limit the number of Elders who serve as those whose entire family of children is elect, making many practical issues problematic.

The second view, though held by fewer proponents has stronger arguments in its favor. The verb form of the word “**believe**” appears in **James 2:19** with reference to how demons believe and tremble, which weakens the main argument of view one. Furthermore, the reference in Titus, if taken to mean “faithful” (which is equally valid to the translation,

believe) it is important to note that the faithfulness of the child is not in reference to God, but to his father – he is to be faithful to his father who is the spiritual head of his family. In addition to that, Paul does not make believing children criteria in **1 Timothy 3**, only their proper subjection. While we should not read **1 Timothy 3** into **Titus 1**, we learn something more of what Paul seems to have meant when we cross-reference, that they are to be children who are faithful to their fathers. Therefore, view 2 seems more probable.

Elaborating on the lifestyle of these children, Paul says they are not be they are not to be “**accused of dissipation** (recklessness or wildness seen in wasteful, harmful living) **or rebellion** (out of control, undisciplined, unwilling to submit).” The Elder has faithfully trained and disciplined his son(s) and/or daughter(s) so diligently, that they are under his control and authority.

- a. Given the historical context of the letter of Titus, the children of the Cretans and the children of the believing parents should be remarkably different if the Gospel makes a difference in the life of a family. What does **Titus 1:12** say of the Cretan lifestyle?
  - b. How does the Old Testament speak about the Cretan lifestyle among the people of God in **Deuteronomy 21:18-21**?
  - c. How does **1 Corinthians 7:14** speak to the preserving effect of the Gospel in the home of saved parents?
  - d. What kinds of pressures do children of Elders face as such?
  - e. How should an Elder broach this subject with his children, knowing that they could completely take him out of ministry?
- 2) “**...God’s steward...**” – literally means “house manager,” which makes sense because an Elder is called to care for God’s household (**1 Tim. 3:15; cf. Eph. 2:19**). The word itself calls for a person to demonstrate care and responsibility of something that belongs to another, being accountable for how he has handled what he has been entrusted. Thus, the Elder sees himself as the caretaker and servant of the church, not the lord and master – a role and distinction that belongs to Jesus alone (**Col. 1:18; Matt. 16:18**). The man who is qualified to serve the church as an Elder must show forth a “provenness” in his life and stewardships. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

a. What other stewardships does the Bible speak about, which belong to the Lord, but which are meant to be used for His glory?

➤ **1 Peter 4:10-11**

➤ **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

➤ **Ephesians 5:15-16**

➤ **Luke 16:10-11**

➤ **Ezekiel 16:20-21**

3) “**...not self-willed...**” – refers to a self-pleasing stubbornness that appears in an arrogant person who becomes overbearing to get his way. It is a person who looks down on others, who has a high view of himself, is headstrong, independent, self-assertive, and ungrateful. He is a person who generally lacks feeling for others. Peter uses this word to describe false teachers in **2 Peter 2:10**, a quality which has no place in the church of God. An Elder must have the necessary consideration, concern, and regard for others, not an agenda for his own will. If indeed he views himself as God’s steward, then self must die a daily death (**Luke 9:23**). His ministry is the overflow of his life.

a. What needs to happen in order for an Elder team to pursue God’s agenda, not their own?

b. How is this quality reflected by Diotrophies in **3 John 9-10**? Why is this damaging in a spiritual leader?

4) “**...loving what is good...**” – describes the Elder’s desire to provide overwhelming care for those he serves; to show kindness out of self-denial and with eagerness. David, the man after God’s own heart displayed this to Saul when he could have killed him (**1 Sam. 24:18-19**), as did Jesus according to **Acts 10:38**. He is a merciful and compassionate man who cares for the needs of Christ’s flock. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. What are the ways in which an Elder is called to care for the flock he tends which require this virtue?
  - b. How does **Galatians 6:10** apply to all Christians, and especially Elders?
- 5) “**...just...**” – is a synonym for righteousness, living with patterns that are according to God’s standards as revealed in His Word (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**). He upholds that criterion without compromise for himself and others, and can be relied upon to use that standard of measure as he makes decisions in life and can do so equitably and impartially in the church, not allowing his personal prejudices and biases to cloud his judgment. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- a. Consider how the following verses speak of this righteousness:
    - **John 7:24**
    - **1 John 3:7**
  - b. How does Job embody these qualities according to **Job 29:14**?
- 6) “**...devout...**” – means consecrated, dedicated, or holy. It is a word that is applied to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (**Heb. 7:26; Rev. 15:4; 16:5**), which means that the Elder, being set apart by God has become like God. It is obvious after spending time with this man that he has been frequently in the presence of God and radiates His holiness. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- a. What are the ways in which an Elder should cultivate this consecration to God?
  - b. What kind of response does this elicit from believers (**1 Thess. 2:10-12**) and unbelievers (**Mk. 6:20**)?
- 7) “**...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict**” – is the final qualification given by Paul to Titus for the Elders of each church in the cities on the island of Crete.

He is commanded to “hold fast” which includes *believing, keeping firmly committed to, and clinging to* the Word of God. An Elder is not to be wobbly in the area of the Scripture – he is to be an expert (bearing in mind that some Elders will work harder at this than others – cf. **1 Tim. 5:17**). This does not mean that he has memorized the Bible or completely resolved every theological question, but rather that he be a man who knows “**sound** (accurate) **doctrine**” enough to be able to “**exhort**” others. To “**exhort**” means to come alongside so as to admonish, encourage, or help another person apply the Word of God practically to his or her life. He can teach and defend the church’s statement of faith and doctrinal statement.

At the same time, he is called to “**refute** (i.e. bring to light, convict, and expose) **those who contradict [sound doctrine].**” This means that he cannot be a man who constantly doubts the Scripture, who changes his mind about its meaning, or is easily influenced to change his position, unless there is Biblical warrant (since he is still teachable). He might have some holes in his theology but he works rapidly and diligently as a student of Scripture to fill them. He must be able to refute a false teacher because he knows the truth so very well, and steer his people away from destructive error and heresy. He can do this because he is a man of the One Book. His ministry is the overflow of his life.

- a. How does Paul command Titus to do this in **2:15**?
  
- b. What should an Elder do if he does not know the answer to a difficult theological question?
  
- c. What do the following verses teach about how to “**refute those who contradict?**”
  - **Acts 18:27-28**
  
  - **1 Timothy 6:3-5**
  
  - **2 Timothy 2:16-18**
  
  - **2 Timothy 2:15**
  
  - **2 Timothy 4:14-15**

- d. What is the difference between error and heresy? What is the Elder's responsibility in both?

### 3. 1 PETER 5:1-4 – FAITHFUL UNDERSHEPHERDS

**“<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup>shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup>nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ”**

- A. Who is the first epistle of Peter written to address?
- B. How does the audience, along with the theme of **1 Peter** affect his discussion of Eldership?
- C. Peter lists some of the same qualities as Paul did to Timothy and Titus, but Peter adds a few new ones, which again reveals that the Elder serves Christ, and as an overflow, serves the church. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- 1) **“...not under compulsion, but voluntarily...”** – is how these Elders are called to exercise oversight of God's people. This speaks of the desire and longing of these men to serve, thereby showing that God is not at all interested in those who are reluctant, unwilling, or drudgerously laboring without joy in a role they don't want to be in. Alexander Strauch describes this idea of compulsory ministry to be “without God-given motivation” (p. 245). Instead, God's man has a sincere craving to be in the ministry because it is what he strongly desires – to serve God's people. This aspiration was already discussed in **1 Timothy 3**, but here it is spoken about as not being in the ministry due to other external constraints and pressures. Some men are coerced into leadership who should not be there, but are kept there because of the insistence of others. Instead the man called of God is ready and willing. His ministry is the overflow of his life.
- a. What does dutiful, drudgerous, compulsory, unmotivated service produce in any person?
- b. What should an Elder do if he ever starts to feel his desire for ministry wane?

- c. What kinds of pressures mount on an Elder that might make his ministry a hardship, which might threaten his joyful motivation to serve?
  - d. What did Paul tell Timothy about expecting hardship in the ministry, in **2 Timothy 2:3** and **4:5**?
  - e. What are some ways an Elder can refresh his motivation? Ask your Elder what makes him dry:
- 2) **“...not for sordid gain, but with eagerness...”** – reminds us of what Paul said to Timothy and Titus about the snares of money in the ministry. Truly approved servants of the church cannot have any motivation for serving that is tied to money. If that is his desire, he will forfeit eternal reward. Furthermore, any man who cannot leave his role as an Elder because of his dependence on the money is immediately disqualified from spiritual leadership. On the other hand, by way of contrast, **“eagerness”** is required – a ready and fervent zeal to serve the Lord enthusiastically and with passion.
- a. Why do you think money and zeal are chosen in this couplet as opposites? What does money do to passion?
  - b. What is the difference between a salary and remuneration?
- 3) **“...nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge but proving to be examples to the flock....”** – speaks of the servant mindset that exists in the hearts of those truly chosen by God to lead His church. They lead with a basin and towel, not with power and charm. This leadership is to be as sacrificial and humble as much as it is authoritative and decisive. To lord it over means ‘to gain mastery over others by force;’ to be authoritarian, tyrannical, dictatorial a leadership that has no place in the church of God or the habits of an Elder. Instead, he is to compel people to follow his leadership by his example of godly character.
- a. What did Jesus say to his disciples about the source of greatness in **Matthew 20:25-28**?
  - b. How did Jesus illustrate this personally in **John 13:1-17**?

- c. What is the difference between eastern and western shepherds? Which one best fits Jesus and His Elder?

## **CONCLUSION**

So the New Testament is clear about the character qualities that a man of God must possess before he is allowed to serve the church as its primary spiritual leader – twenty-eight in all. Yet, the emphasis is not so much on the ability of a person to do something, as it was to be something. Leadership then is not a matter of what a person does or says, but is a matter of who he is before an omniscient and holy God. An Elder’s life should be the basis for his ministry, because if it is not, he is “...like a stained-glass window; a religious symbol that obscures the light” (John MacArthur). To sum up, the Elder’s life is one of conviction, value, priority, commitment, and balance. His ministry is the overflow of His life.

The congregation’s response to the high calling of leadership is two-fold, knowing the standard God sets:

1. Intercession – **Hebrews 13:17-18**
  
2. Imitation – **Hebrews 13:7**