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Elders and Deacons

Leadership and Service
in New Testament Congregations

www.elders-deacons.com

Gary Henry

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ELDERS IN NEW TESTAMENT CONGREGATIONS

Introduction

- A. Text: **Eph. 4:11-13**.
- B. We need to study the eldership — so we can understand and practice *scriptural teaching* on this subject.
 - 1. Congregationally, elders are an important part of what Christ has provided for the health of the local church - **Eph. 4:11-16**.
 - 2. Individually, we each need the help of those whom Christ has designated to watch for our souls - **Hb. 13:17**.
 - 3. If we would truly pattern ourselves after the NT, we must have scriptural concepts of the eldership.
- C. Two basic, foundational facts are important for us to recognize:
 - 1. The eldership *existed*.
 - 2. The eldership *was an appointed office*.

I. ELDERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD

- A. The *existence* of the eldership.
 - 1. The eldership is a divine provision for a real need - **Eph. 4:11,12**.
 - 2. Following an initial period of establishment, congregations of Christians in the NT were supplied with elders.
 - a. "So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (**Ac. 14:23**).
 - b. "Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (**Phil. 1:1**).
 - c. "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" (**Tit. 1:5**).
 - 3. The individuals appointed to this work were known as:
 - a. **ELDERS** (presbyters).
 - b. **OVERSEERS** (bishops).
 - c. **SHEPHERDS** (pastors).
 - 4. These terms are interchangeable in that they all describe the same group of men within a congregation — they describe *separate aspects of the same work* - **Ac. 20:17,28; 1 Pt. 5:1,2**.
 - 5. The eldership was related to other roles, gifts, and works - **Eph. 4:11**. The elders' oversight was distinct from:
 - a. The apostles' and prophets' revelation of truth - **Eph. 2:20**.
 - b. The evangelists' communication of truth - **2 Tim. 4:2,5**.
 - 6. It was possible for one man to serve in more than one capacity, e.g. Peter - **1 Pt. 5:1**.
- B. Four important *characteristics* of the eldership.
 - 1. *Male*. Cf. **1 Tim. 3:2**.
 - 2. *Plural*. Cf. **Phil. 1:1**.
 - 3. *Co-equal*. Cf. **Ac. 20:17**.
 - 4. *No oversight outside of the local congregation*. Cf. **1 Pt. 5:2**.

II. THE OFFICE OF AN ELDER

A. In the NT were elders merely the “older men” in a congregation?

1. Like many words, *elder* can be used either generically or specifically.
 - a. Consider the English word *auditor*.
 - 1) Generically, one who hears.
 - 2) Specifically, one authorized to “hear” and verify financial accounts.
 - b. In the NT, consider words like *apostle* (messenger), *deacon* (servant), and *church* (assembly).
 - c. With *elder*, as with other words, context determines how it is used in a given instance.
2. “Elders” (specific usage) were distinct from “older men” (generic usage) in two basic ways:
 - a. **They had met definite qualifications** - **1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9.**
 - b. **They were designated by others and recognized as a distinct group** - **Ac. 20:17;** etc.
 - 1) **Ac. 14:23:** “Appointed elders in every church.” Appoint = *cheirotoneo* = choose, elect (**2 Cor. 8:19**).
 - 2) **Tit. 1:5:** “Appoint elders in every city.” Appoint = *kathistemi* = put in charge (**Mt. 24:45**); ordain (**Hb. 5:1**). Cf. **Hb. 5:4**.
 - 3) **Ac. 20:28:** “The Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”
 - 4) However many older men there may be in a congregation, only those possessing the qualifications (stipulated by the Holy Spirit) and appointed (as required by the Holy Spirit) are elders in the specific sense.
 - c. Elders, then, were such by appointment, not by assumption — their status was assigned, rather than circumstantial.

B. If elders were not merely the older men, then did the eldership constitute an “office”?

1. To say the eldership was an office is not to say that elders were:
 - a. Clergymen or priests in the denominational sense.
 - b. Officers in the sense of elected representatives.
 - c. Officers in the sense of police-like law enforcers.
 - d. Officers in the sense of corporate executives.
2. Nevertheless, the eldership was an office.
 - a. “If a man desires the *position of a bishop*, he desires a good work” (**1 Tim. 3:1 NKJV**).
 - 1) *Episkope* = position of being an *episkopos* (overseer, guardian; superintendent, bishop).
 - a) Cf. “office of bishop/overseer” (KJV, ASV, RSV, ESV).
 - b) The expression could be literally translated “overseership” or “post of oversight.”
 - 2) The fact that the “post of oversight” is said to be a “work” does not mean it is not also an office. Indeed, most offices *are* works.
 - b. An office is “a position of authority, duty, or trust given to a person” (AHD).
 - c. An officer is one who has any work or responsibility assigned to him by a body, one charged with public duties.
 - d. Appointment implies office.
 - e. The sense of **Ac. 14:23** is incomplete until it is specified to *what* elders were appointed!

Conclusion

- A. The eldership was a vital office in congregations in the NT period, and it is no less vital today.
- B. Biblical instruction concerning the eldership is a part of the teaching that informs us about how to conduct ourselves in the church, the “pillar and ground of the truth” (**1 Tim. 3:14,15**).
- C. There is no greater work or privilege among Christians than to serve as an elder. It is an honorable “good work” (**1 Tim. 3:1**).

THE RULE OF THE ELDERSHIP

Introduction

- A. Text: **Hb. 13:7,17**.
- B. Hebrews contains the following instructions concerning the congregational relationship of Christians:
 1. "Remember those who *rule* over you" (**Hb. 13:7**).
 2. "Obey those who *rule* over you, and be submissive" (**Hb. 13:17**).
- C. The question of the *authority* of elders is very important.
- D. Historically, misconceptions at this point have often been the starting point for wholesale apostasy.
 1. *Catholicism with its papal hierarchy*. This began in the post-apostolic period with one elder assuming preeminence within a congregation.
 2. *Denominational disregard for scriptural authority*.
 - a. Misappropriation of biblical terms: bishop, pastor, elder, priest, etc.
 - b. Establishment of extra-biblical offices: pope, cardinal, president, etc.
 - c. Establishment of extra-biblical forms of government: synods, councils, conferences, etc.
 3. *"Evangelistic oversight."*
 4. *Unwarranted substitutions for scriptural elders*.
 - a. Rule by majority.
 - b. Rule by influential members or "leaders."
 - c. Rule by preacher.
 5. *Extremes of authority*.
 - a. Passive extremes: figurehead, rubber-stamp, puppet elders.
 - b. Aggressive extremes: dictatorial, domineering, self-willed elders.
 6. *Oversight of outside "missionaries" and "mission" congregations*.
 7. *Sponsoring-church arrangements and other forms of centralized oversight*.
 8. *Reduction of the eldership to "example-only" leadership*.
- E. In this lesson, we explore the scriptural rule of the eldership in NT congregations.

I. THE MEANING OF THE ELDERSHIP'S RULE

- A. The ultimate authority of Christ over His church - **Mt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22,23**.
- B. The authority of the eldership under Christ's headship.
 1. The possession of all authority by Christ does not mean that He has not conferred subordinate authority within various earthly relationships. Cf. **2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10**.
 2. Elders serve as shepherds under Christ, the "Chief Shepherd" (**1 Pt. 5:4**).
 3. That elders have some degree of authority to act as shepherds is seen in the following crucial terms that describe the elder's role:
 - a. *Over you in the Lord* - **1 Thess. 5:12**.
 - b. *Take care of* - **1 Tim. 3:5**.
 - c. *Rule (proistemi)* - **1 Tim. 5:17** (cf. **3:4,5,12**).
 - d. *Rule (hegeomai)* - **Hb. 13:7,17,24**.
 - e. *Oversight* - **Ac. 20:28; 1 Pt. 5:2**. Oversight = watchful and responsible care; supervision.
 4. Consider these important clarifications:
 - a. *The authority of elders is no violation of Gal. 3:28*.
 - 1) All Christians have equal access to God — even in relationships where one is to submit to the authority of the other.

- 2) Cf. **Eph. 5:22-25**.
 - b. *The authority of elders is no violation of **Mt. 23:8-11** and **1 Pt. 2:5,9**.*
 - 1) No "clergy system" is envisioned, with its hierarchies, titles, special garments, etc.
 - 2) All Christians alike are priests.
 - c. *The authority of elders is no violation of **Lk. 22:24-26** and **Jn. 13:13-16**.*
 - 1) No "lording it over" God's people is permitted. Cf. **Lev. 25:43,46,53**; **Ezek. 34:4**.
 - 2) Having authority in the Lord's work does not mean using it forcefully in every situation. The rightful use of any authority is for "edification" and not for "destruction." Cf. **2 Cor. 10:8**; **13:9,10**; **Philem. 8,9,14**.
 5. Elders' responsibility requires the authority to discharge it. To rob elders of the authority needed for their work is to make a seriously difficult task an impossible one.
 6. Authority resides in the eldership collectively, not in any one elder independently.
 7. Are we to believe the local congregation is the only divinely instituted functional relationship with no authoritative oversight?
 8. No, the local congregation is the divinely revealed functional unit through which Christians are to do the Lord's work, and elders are the divinely revealed overseers of it.
- C. The *source* and *nature* of the authority of the eldership.
1. *Source*. This is an important consideration - **Mt. 21:23-27**.
 - a. The authority of the eldership does *not* come from:
 - 1) *Self*. Elders are such by the appointment of others.
 - 2) *The congregation*. The eldership is more than an executive committee to do the congregation's bidding.
 - 3) *The preacher*. The evangelist does not confer authority here any more than he confers authority on the husband in a marriage ceremony.
 - b. It derives from the authority of Christ - **Mt. 28:18**; **Ac. 20:28**; **1 Pt. 5:4**.
 - 1) The authority of the eldership cannot be disregarded without disobedience to Christ.
 - 2) Paul spoke of those "over you" as occupying that position "in the Lord" (**1 Thess. 5:12**).
 2. *Nature*.
 - a. Obviously, elders have no revelatory authority in matters of faith - **Jas. 4:12**.
 - 1) Elders are constrained by the Scriptures.
 - a) They have no prerogative to add, subtract, substitute, or modify.
 - b) Like all Christians, they are bound by God's commandments.
 - 2) Elders can only communicate the authority inherent in the word. Cf. **Tit. 1:9**.
 - a) Much of the elder's work involves the act of teaching.
 - b) Elders are called "pastors and teachers" (**Eph. 4:11**).
 - b. **However, elders do have authority to provide for the implementation of Christ's will in the collective work of the local congregation.**
 - 1) They have the responsibility and authority to make whatever decisions are necessary in the congregational carrying out of scriptural teaching.
 - 2) It is helpful to distinguish between two different kinds of authority:
 - a) The authority to *legislate* — which elders do not have.
 - b) The authority to *execute* or *expedite* — which elders do have.
 - 3) The authority of elders in a congregation is analogous in many ways to the authority of the husband/father in the home.
 - 4) Obviously, it is possible for elders to abuse their authority, but *godly* elders will exercise their authority lovingly, considerately, and in consultation with their fellow Christians.
 - 5) Submission involves yielding to the judgment of the eldership.
 - 6) Elders' qualifications render them eminently capable of making judgments that are wise.

II. THE SCOPE OF THE ELDERSHIP'S RULE

- A. The eldership exercises its oversight within certain scriptural limitations.
1. The oversight of elders is limited to the time during which they independently are qualified to serve and are appointed.
 2. The oversight of elders is limited by the autonomy of the local congregation - **Ac. 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pt. 5:2,3.**
 - a. **Elders oversee all the work of the congregation of which they are members.**
 - 1) Not limited to "spiritual" work. Cf. **Ac. 11:27-30.**
 - 2) Not limited to the "assemblies" of the church.
 - 3) No other individuals or committees (*inside* the congregation) are to oversee part of the work.
 - 4) No other congregations or human institutions (*outside* the congregation) are to oversee part of the work.
 - b. **Elders oversee only the work of the congregation of which they are members.**
 - 1) No other congregation's work is to be overseen — e.g. sponsoring church arrangements.
 - 2) No human institution's work is to be overseen *as elders* — e.g. benevolent institutions.
 - 3) None but members of the local congregation are to be overseen — e.g. "withdrawing" from members outside.
 - 4) Nothing but the work of the church is to be overseen *as elders* — e.g. social/recreational activities.
- B. It is no less wrong for the oversight of elders to be *diminished* unscripturally than it is for it to be *enlarged* unscripturally.

Conclusion

- A. Neglect, failures, and disobedience in the rule of the eldership invite trouble and thwart God's intention for the churches.
- B. In the rule of the eldership, God's intention must be honored.
- C. In everything that concerns the church and the eldership, our aim ought to be to "make all things according to the pattern" (**Hb. 8:5**).

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN ELDER

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Tim. 3:1**.
- B. It is dangerous to forget that the eldership is a *work*.
- C. We need to understand not merely the *authority* of the eldership, but also the proper *usages* of that authority.
- D. Let us consider, from a scriptural standpoint, the responsibilities God has given to elders.

I. WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF AN ELDER?

- A. Elders *rule* - **1 Tim. 5:17**. Cf. **1 Tim. 3:4,5**; **Hb. 13:7,17,24**.
- B. Elders *watch* - **Hb. 13:17**. Cf. **Ezek. 3:16-21**; **33:1-11**.
- C. Elders are described in three principal ways, and each description adds to our understanding of the elder's duty.
 1. **Elder/presbyter**. This term emphasizes *who* is to do the work.
 - a. Greek words.
 - 1) "Elder" is a translation of *presbuteros* = an old(er) man - **Ac. 14:23**.
 - 2) Cf. *presbuterion* = elders as a group - **1 Tim. 4:14**.
 - b. "Elder" indicates age, experience, maturity — it connotes wisdom and dignity (Bullinger).
 2. **Overseer/bishop**. This term emphasizes *what* the work is.
 - a. Greek words.
 - 1) "Overseer" is a translation of *episkopos* = "an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent" (Thayer) - **Ac. 20:28**; **Phil. 1:1**.
 - 2) Cf. *episkopeo* = take care, see to it; oversee, care for - **1 Pt. 5:2**.
 - 3) Cf. *episkope* = position of an overseer - **1 Tim. 3:1**.
 - b. "Oversight" involves the twin aspects of *inspection* and *guardianship* (Bullinger).
 3. **Shepherd/pastor**. This term emphasizes *how* the work is to be done.
 - a. Greek words.
 - 1) "Shepherd" is a translation of *poimen* = shepherd - **Eph. 4:11**.
 - 2) Cf. *poimnion* = flock - **Ac. 20:28**; **1 Pt. 5:2,3**.
 - 3) Cf. *poimaino* = herd, tend; care for, look after - **Ac. 20:28**; **1 Pt. 5:2**.
 - b. The elders were the pastors in NT congregations, not the preacher or preachers.
 - c. "Feed" (**Ac. 20:28** and **1 Pt. 5:2** in the KJV) is more accurately translated "shepherd." A shepherd's work with a flock involves:
 - 1) **Leading, guiding, showing the way.**
 - a) *Shepherds of God's flock serve as an example.*
 - b) Cf. **1 Pt. 5:3**; etc.
 - 2) **Feeding, providing, leading to pasture.**
 - a) *Shepherds of God's flock provide spiritual nourishment.*
 - b) Cf. **Jer. 3:15**; **Hb. 13:7**.
 - c) Food must be provided that is pure and not contaminated with error. Cf. the "pure" milk of the word in **1 Pt. 2:2**.
 - 3) **Guarding from danger and predators, risking life for.**
 - a) *Shepherds of God's flock give spiritual protection.*
 - b) Cf. **Ac. 20:28-31**; **Tit. 1:9-11**.
 - c) This is not a pleasant part of shepherding, but one who is too cowardly to do so is

but a hireling. Cf. **Jn. 10:11-13**.

- 4) **Tending the flock.**
 - a) *Shepherds of God's flock seek those who stray.*
 - b) Cf. **Lk. 15:4-7**.
 - c) Some shepherds, unfortunately, are themselves the cause of the scattering. Cf. **Jer. 23:1,2**.
- 5) **Caring for the weak, sick, and injured.**
 - a) *Shepherds of God's flock help those who need help.*
 - b) Cf. **Ac. 20:34,35; Jas. 5:14,15**.
- d. Woe to "shepherds" who have neglected their duties or abused God's flock. Cf. **Ezek. 34:1-10**.

II. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ELDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

A. A *crucial* work.

1. No work is more needed in a congregation than the important work of scriptural elders.
 - a. Congregations with no elders lack one of God's major provisions for spiritual growth.
 - b. Congregations with unqualified, inactive, or inadequate elders are also greatly hindered.
2. The elder's work is positively beneficial, "a good work" (**1 Tim. 3:1**).
 - a. When done scripturally, the work contributes to the well-being of the church - **Eph. 4:11-16**.
 - b. Elders make a valuable contribution to:
 - 1) The moral and doctrinal soundness of the congregation.
 - 2) The scripturalness and effectiveness of the congregation's worship and study.
 - 3) The thrust of the congregation's evangelism.
 - 4) The motivation and zeal of the congregation.
 - 5) The peace and unity of the congregation.

B. A *challenging* work.

1. Numerous are the difficulties and discouragements of the elder's work.
2. "This is no little job and no little man can do it" (H. E. Phillips). If any work requires the "right stuff," this is it.
3. The nature of the work demands the strongest and most spiritually mature Christian men. No qualifications would be needed if just any man could do the work.

C. A *grave* work.

1. The work entails the most serious and sober responsibilities.
2. Those who accept the leadership of their fellow Christians enjoy the benefit of greater *opportunities* for service, but leadership posts also carry with them greater *temptations* and greater *consequences of failure*.
3. Elders are uniquely *accountable* to God - **Hb. 13:17**.
 - a. Cf. **Ezek. 34:10**.
 - b. Elders must labor so as to be "innocent of the blood" of their brethren. Cf. **Ac. 20:26,27**.
4. What is needed is the attitude of **Isa. 6:8**, tempered with the attitudes of **2 Cor. 5:10**. It is helpful to consider Solomon's attitude toward responsibility and accountability in **1 Kgs. 3:7-9**.

D. A *joyful* work - **Hb. 13:17**.

E. An *honorable* work - **1 Tim. 3:1**.

1. The work possesses dignity and deserves honor. It is "a noble task" (**1 Tim. 3:1 RSV**), "an honorable ambition" (**NEB**). Cf. **1 Thess. 5:12,13**.
2. In some cases, "double honor" (**1 Tim. 5:17,18**) is called for. Financial support of elders who give themselves to their work is scriptural, needed, and beneficial.

F. A work *worthy of aspiring to* - **1 Tim. 3:1**.

1. Aspire = to aim at, to strive toward an end.
2. More younger men are needed who will aspire to the work, and more younger women are needed who will prepare themselves to be suitable wives of elders.

Conclusion

A. It is the responsibility of elders to rule, watch, oversee, and shepherd Christians.

1. Nothing is more helpful to the life and work of God's people than scripturally qualified and appointed elders who understand and fulfill their responsibilities.
2. Nothing is more harmful than elders who do not.

B. The favor of God and the joy of His reward await elders who have served willingly and obediently - **1 Pt. 5:1-4**.

THE WORK OF AN ELDER

Part 1: Attitudes And Manner

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Tim. 5:17**.
- B. If the “what” of an elder’s work is important, so is the “how.”
- C. In most worthwhile endeavors, *theoretical knowledge* needs to be coupled with *practical wisdom*.
- D. The elder’s *understanding* of his work needs to be implemented within the framework of his *experience, maturity, and spirituality*.
- E. In this part of the lesson, we will consider some of the *attitudes* conducive to an elder’s work, and also look at the *manner* in which the work ought to be done.

I. ATTITUDES

- A. *Sincere and fervent love for the Lord and His church* - **1 Pt. 1:22; 1 Jn. 5:1**.
 - 1. There is a vast difference between the self-sacrificial love of a real shepherd and the self-centeredness of a hireling - **Jn. 10:11-15**.
 - 2. Congregational shepherds would do well to heed the Lord’s admonition to Peter: “‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ . . . ‘Tend My sheep’” (**Jn. 21:15-17**).
- B. *Humility* - **Rom. 12:3-5**. Cf. **Mt. 23:1-12; Gal. 6:1-5**.
- C. *Self-heed* - **Ac. 20:28**. Cf. **Gal. 6:1; 1 Tim. 4:16**.
 - 1. The elder must give constant attention to keeping his own house in order. Cf. **1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 13:5**.
 - a. The man who cannot govern himself can hardly govern others. “Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls” (**Prov. 25:28**).
 - b. *Introspection* must precede *supervision*. Cf. **Mt. 15:14**.
 - 2. The elder must acknowledge his own faults - **1 Jn. 1:8**. Honesty and objectivity are needed.
 - 3. The elder must apply to himself the same standard he hopes others will follow - **Mt. 7:1-5**.
 - 4. The elder must ever be alert to the possibility of failure in the future - **1 Cor. 10:12**.
- D. *Readiness to serve* - **1 Pt. 5:2**. Cf. **Isa. 6:8**. The Lord intends for the elder’s work to be done “with joy and not with grief” (**Hb. 13:17**).
- E. *Honorable motives* - **1 Pt. 5:2**. Cf. **3 Jn. 9**.
 - 1. The elder is to serve the interests of the flock, not just his own interests. Cf. **Phil. 2:4**.
 - 2. The elder is to serve for what he can give, and not just for what he can get - **Ac. 20:33-35**. Cf. **Jn. 13:12-17**.
- F. *Positiveness*. Cf. **Rom. 8:37**. The nature of the elder’s work demands that he rise above negativism and defeatism.

II. MANNER

- A. *Scripturally*. Cf. **Ac. 20:32**.
- B. *As a steward of that which belongs to God* - **Tit. 1:7**.
- C. *In unity* - e.g. **Ac. 15:6-29**. Divisiveness and rivalry among elders destroy the local church.
- D. *With dignity, honor, and respect* - **1 Tim. 3:1**. Cf. **1 Thess. 5:12,13**.
 - 1. An elder's bearing and demeanor ought to engender the confidence of his brethren.
 - 2. Christians can be led effectively only if they trust and admire those who lead them.
- E. *Not "lording it over" the church* - **1 Pt. 5:3**. Cf. **Lk. 22:25,26**.
- F. *With gentleness, patience, and courtesy* - **1 Tim. 3:4**. Cf. **Eph. 6:4**; **Col. 3:21**. Cf. **Ezek. 34:4**.
- G. *With knowledge of the flock and the needs of its individual members*. Cf. **Jn. 10:14**.
- H. *Showing the way, leading rather than driving*. Cf. **Mt. 23:1-4**.
- I. *Cooperatively, with consultation and feedback*.
- J. *Without partiality or favoritism*.
- K. *With alertness and a vigilant eye for danger*.
- L. *With good judgment, common sense, and wisdom*.
- M. *With diligence, hard work, and energy*. "He who leads" is to do so "with diligence" (**Rom. 12:8**).

Conclusion

- A. There is a need for elders not only to understand what their work is, but to carry out that work in ways that are suggested by wisdom and spiritual-mindedness.
- B. The overall goal of elders should be to pattern their shepherding after that of the "Chief Shepherd," knowing that by doing so they will "receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (**1 Pt. 5:4**).

Part 2: Methods

Introduction

- A. Text: **Ac. 20:28**.
- B. When we study the eldership in the NT, we often spend most of our time on the *qualifications* — we probably do not spend enough time on the *work* of elders.
- C. The work of an elder is a difficult undertaking, but one that is greatly rewarding.
- D. In this part of the lesson, we will concern ourselves with the things that a conscientious elder actually does as he carries out his responsibility to the local congregation.

I. THE WORK OF AN ELDER INVOLVES WORK

- A. The activities in which elders engage are wide-ranging and call for the expenditure of time and energy. Unfortunately, some do not recognize this.
1. "Announcement" elders.
 - a. These do little more than make announcements and preside over the services of the church.
 - b. Such do not understand that most of the elder's work is done outside of the assembly.
 2. "Business manager" elders.
 - a. These see their duty as little more than making financial decisions for the congregation.
 - b. Such do not understand that the elder's work involves far more than managing money.
 3. "Parking lot" elders.
 - a. These do little more than chat with one another about the work after services.
 - b. Such do not understand that planning the church's oversight requires more than occasional, informal conversations.
- B. What follows is a look at some of the activities of the elder: the *means* by which elders rule, watch, oversee, and shepherd.

II. THE WORK OF AN ELDER INVOLVES SEVERAL ENDEAVORS

- A. *Maintenance of exemplary character and conduct* - **Hb. 13:7; 1 Pt. 5:3.**
1. Like Paul, elders should be able to say, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (**1 Cor. 11:1**).
 2. Elders should be "patterns" worthy to be followed. Cf. **Tit. 2:7,8**.
 3. In regard to the elder's work, one implication of this is that elders need to do more than delegate work to others — leadership involves *showing* others what to do, not just *telling* them what to do.
- B. *Planning, decision-making, and direction* - **1 Tim. 3:5.**
1. In many respects, the way an elder "takes care of" the church is analogous to the way a husband and father "rules" his own house - **1 Tim. 3:5**.
 - a. "Oversight" implies supervision of congregational worship and teaching - **1 Pt. 5:2**.
 - b. Even the congregational benevolence comes under the oversight of the elders - **Ac. 11:29,30**.
 2. Decision-making is a means of "shepherding" the flock - **Ac. 20:28; 1 Pt. 5:2**.
 3. Much that elders do involves organizing and coordinating:
 - a. Leading in the formulation of common goals.
 - b. Assigning work.
 - c. Seeing that each member is doing what he can do best.
 - d. Seeing that individuals are working well together.
 4. Elders see that congregational activity is "done for edification" (**1 Cor. 14:26**) and "done decently and in order" (**1 Cor. 14:40**).
- C. *Prayer* - **Jas. 5:14-16.**
1. Nothing inherently miraculous is involved in **Jas. 5:14-16**. Oil was used medicinally - e.g. **Lk. 10:34**.
 2. If the elders are to pray for the physical needs of their brethren, how much more the spiritual?
 3. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (**Jas. 5:16**).
 4. Great good is accomplished by the prayers of godly elders!
 5. In addition to praying for the flock, wise elders will also spend significant time praying for themselves and their work.
- D. *Teaching* - **Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Tit. 1:9; Hb. 13:7.**
1. Teaching involves private teaching as well as public assemblies, classes, etc.

2. Teaching involves not only positive teaching, but also the refutation of error - **Tit. 1:9-11**. Teaching is the principal means of “watching” for souls and guarding against the dangers of moral and doctrinal apostasy.
3. Teaching involves personal teaching by the elders and also that which they provide by the use of other teachers, preachers, literature, etc.
4. The teaching of elders should, among other things, help to develop additional elders.
5. By teaching, the elder stimulates the spiritual growth of the congregation and develops the potential of each member.

E. *Advice and constructive criticism* - **Hb. 13:7,17**.

1. An important part of the elder’s work is the spiritual guidance of his brethren by means of wise counsel. As one who watches for the souls of others, the elder will often have occasion to be an advisor.
2. This may include the arbitration of disputes between brethren.
 - a. Paul wrote: “I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?” (**1 Cor. 6:5**). Cf. **1 Cor. 6:1-8**.
 - b. It is a shame when there is no one among brethren capable of wisely settling disagreements. Who should be better qualified to do this than the elders of a congregation?
3. Elders are required to be men of godliness and wisdom, so that their brethren will be inclined to seek their advice and help.

F. *Admonition, warning, rebuke, correction* - **1 Thess. 5:12-14**. Cf. **Ezek. 3:16-21**.

1. Elders who deal with problems in the church by “looking the other way” invite catastrophe.
2. In the case of incorrigible individuals, elders will oversee the exercise of scriptural discipline. Cf. **Rom. 16:17**; **1 Cor. 5:1-13**; **1 Thess. 3:6,14,15**; **Rev. 2:14-16,20-24**.

G. *Encouragement, motivation, stirring up*. Cf. **Hb. 10:23-25**.

1. One of the great responsibilities of any leader is the encouragement of those under his leadership.
2. If all Christians are to do so, surely elders especially are to “consider” their brethren “in order to stir up love and good works” (**Hb. 10:24**).

Conclusion

- A. Most elders work harder and spend more hours in their labor than their brethren know.
- B. Our appreciation needs to be expressed to hardworking elders who take their stewardship seriously.
- C. At the same time, we need to challenge our elders to continually upgrade and improve the quality of their work — the congregation can hardly improve if its leadership does not!
- D. Faithful shepherds have a glorious reward awaiting them - **1 Pt. 5:1-4**.

SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9.**
- B. The more worthy the responsibility, the more crucial the preparation.
- C. The nature of the elder's work requires him to be tempered and seasoned.
 - 1. The elder must be a man of spiritual maturity.
 - 2. According to the Scriptures, certain traits of character and competence are required before a man is qualified to serve as a shepherd.
- D. Proper *attitudes* toward the qualifications and preparation of an elder are essential.

I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- A. The *pertinence* of the subject.
 - 1. No one of any gender, age, or level of spiritual growth can afford to be uninterested in this topic.
 - a. With only a few exceptions, the elder's qualifications are required of every Christian.
 - b. Those who cannot be elders themselves are almost always in a position to help someone else's preparation or service as an elder.
 - c. The development of servants qualified to lead is a part of the work of the entire local congregation, not just a few individuals. Cf. **Eph. 4:11-13.**
 - 2. Even when scriptural elders have been appointed in a congregation, the subject cannot be forgotten. There is a continuing need for additional men to become qualified.
- B. The *meaning* of the term "qualification."
 - 1. The term comes from the Latin *qualis* = of what kind. Cf. "quality."
 - 2. *Qualification* connotes both *eligibility* and *ability*.
 - a. An item of *eligibility* would be a condition or circumstance that must be met or complied with, even if these seem to be arbitrary. Cf. prerequisite, restriction, limitation.
 - b. An item of *ability* would be a quality, accomplishment, or characteristic that suits a person to a specific position or task. Cf. competence, proficiency, suitability, aptness, etc.
- C. The *nature* of the elder's qualifications.
 - 1. *Required.* An elder *must* be blameless, etc. - **1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7.**
 - a. *Every* elder must possess *every* qualification *before* appointment.
 - b. Even if we do not understand the rationale for certain qualifications, we can rest assured that there is a rationale in the mind of God. Cf. **Isa. 55:8,9; Jer. 10:23.**
 - 2. *Relevant.* In most, if not all, cases we can see how the qualifications suit a man to the work of an elder. In several instances the reason for the qualification is stated explicitly:
 - a. "Rules his own house well" (**1 Tim. 3:4,5**).
 - b. "Not a novice" (**1 Tim. 3:6**).
 - c. "A good testimony among those who are outside" (**1 Tim. 3:7**).
 - d. "Holding fast the faithful word" (**Tit. 1:9**).
 - 3. *Attainable.* Such is implied by the presence of elders in the NT. Cf. **Ac. 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17.**
 - a. Churches obtained elders surprisingly quickly then - e.g. **Ac. 14:21-23.**
 - 1) One thing that made this possible is the fact that some God-fearing Gentiles and pious

Jews would have possessed many of the qualifications at conversion.

- 2) Consider Cornelius (**Ac. 10:1,2**), Crispus (**Ac. 18:8**), etc.
 - b. A few of the qualifications are absolute (male, married, etc.), but most are relative or comparative — these are attainable to a *degree* that is sufficient for a man to be known for their possession, while still allowing room for growth.
 4. *Observable*. Cf. **1 Tim. 3:10**. It is possible (and essential) for a man's brethren to verify whether he possesses each of the qualifications.
- D. The *shortage* of men scripturally qualified to be elders.
1. It is a sad commentary today that so many long-established congregations are without elders because they do not have even two qualified men.
 2. What shortcomings help account for the shortage of men ready and willing to serve?
 - a. Lack of emphasis in teaching.
 - b. Prevalence of unappointed *de facto* elders and other substitutes for scriptural oversight.
 - c. Widespread abuses of the eldership which have brought it into disrepute and undesirability.
 - d. Lack of spirituality, zeal, and preparation by Christian men.
 3. However, even more detrimental than the above is the frequent practice of appointing or tolerating men as elders who are not qualified.
 4. Elimination of certain misunderstandings may help solve both problems.

II. MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

A. Sources of confusion.

1. Predispositions and prejudices have caused trouble — not the alleged obscurity of the Scriptures.
2. Extreme views (ranging from the qualification of *no one* to the qualification of *any one*) have been adopted on the basis of personal preference, or even selfish motives.

B. Misconceptions.

1. *Denial of the possibility of anyone qualifying today.*
 - a. *Because in the NT elders were miraculously gifted in both their qualifications and their work.*
 - 1) However, few of the elder's qualifications fall into the category of gifts that were miraculously bestowed during the apostolic period.
 - 2) It cannot be shown that *all* elders possessed miraculous spiritual gifts in the NT.
 - 3) Nothing about the elder's qualifications or his work was inherently miraculous.
 - 4) If valid, this argument would also eliminate preachers, because they too were sometimes miraculously gifted in the NT.
 - b. *Because the qualifications require an unattainable perfection.*
 - 1) If so, what was the sense of Paul's instructions, and how did men qualify in the NT?
 - 2) Which of the qualifications is impossible?
 - 3) God's standards are indeed perfect, but the impossibility of attaining of sinless perfection does not mean there is no such thing as a righteous man. Cf. **Gen. 6:9; 7:1; Hb. 11:4,5**; etc.
 - 4) We must be careful that we do not end up denying the possibility of even being a faithful Christian. Cf. **Mt. 5:48; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2; Jas. 5:16**; etc.
 - 5) Elders who are scripturally qualified still have room to grow.
2. *Misconceptions about the two lists of qualifications in 1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1.*
 - a. *That "blamelessness" is the only qualification.*
 - 1) Blamelessness is grammatically coordinate with the other terms.
 - 2) Blamelessness would, according to this argument, be limited to the specified areas. What about others?
 - 3) This is a distinction without a difference, since anything necessary to the qualification is essential and is thereby itself a qualification.

- 4) In fact, more is required of the elder than can be comprehended under “blamelessness” — he must be male, older, experienced, married, a father, and apt to teach.
 - a) Many Christians are blameless while not possessing any of these qualities.
 - b) The lack of them is not blameworthy.
- b. *That some of the qualifications are optional, such as the family requirements.*
 - 1) In **1 Tim. 3:2**, etc., the Greek word *dei* means “must” (rather than “may”). Cf. **Lk. 2:49**; **Jn. 3:7**; **Ac. 9:6**; etc.
 - 2) Also consider **Jas. 2:10**. Arbitrary, selective commandment-keeping amounts to lawlessness.
- c. *That because many of the qualifications are relative, they are “flexible” enough to accommodate those who, strictly speaking, do not possess them.* Could God’s standards be so easily bent in areas like morals, the plan of salvation, Christian living, etc.?
- d. *That the lists of qualifications are not exhaustive, but illustrative, suggestive, etc.*
3. *Circumvention of the qualifications.*
 - a. *If one does the work of an elder, he is an elder, whether “qualified” or not.*
 - 1) However, it is doubtful that one actually could “do the work” (at least scripturally) without possessing the qualifications — these traits are those that render a man *capable* of fulfilling the responsibilities involved in the office.
 - 2) Scriptural service requires not only “qualification” (preparation), but also “authorization” (appointment). Anything less is usurpation.
 - b. *We may appoint “the best we have” — even if these are not strictly qualified.*
 - c. *The qualifications are “collective,” i.e. the elders must, as a group, possess the total of the qualifications.* But how many must an individual have in order to be admitted to the group?
 - d. *One may be appointed, and then be allowed to “grow into” the qualifications.* This involves a misunderstanding of **1 Tim. 3:10**.

Conclusion

- A. It is always sinful to modify, subtract from, or add to God’s instructions.
 1. Neither supposed difficulties nor hypothetical situations justify us in setting aside divine law.
 2. We cannot twist the Scriptures to accommodate our own predispositions.
 3. We must fit ourselves to Scripture, rather than vice versa.
- B. With regard to the qualifications for elders, how carefully we think about “what is written” (**1 Cor. 4:6**) is critically important.

SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

FOUR BASIC QUALIFICATIONS

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9.**
- B. "Maturity" is the crux of what qualifies an elder for his work.
- C. Of the four basic requirements examined here, three relate to maturity.

I. THE ELDER MUST BE A MAN

- A. **"If a MAN . . ." (1 Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:6 - KJV, NKJV, ASV). Cf. "anyone" (RSV, ESV).**
 - 1. As the RSV indicates, the expression in **1 Tim. 3:1** and **Tit. 1:6** translated by the KJV "if any *man*" would not, by itself, be enough to limit the eldership to males.
 - a. The Greek expression *ei tis* means simply "if any(one)."
 - b. Even the Greek word *anthropos* ("man") is often used to mean simply any person, without regard to gender. Cf. **Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:28; Tit. 3:10**; etc.
 - 2. However, at least four other factors confirm that a woman cannot scripturally serve as an elder:
 - a. A woman cannot meet the qualification "husband of one wife" (**1 Tim. 3:2**).
 - b. All NT instructions regarding elders assume that elders are male.
 - c. There is no evidence that any woman served as an elder in the apostolic period.
 - d. A woman as an elder would inevitably bring passages like **Hb. 13:17** into conflict with passages like **1 Tim. 2:11,12**.
- B. Two important reminders.
 - 1. The gender of elders is not a question of *ability*, but *eligibility* (authority).
 - 2. It is as wrong for a woman whose husband is an elder to rule the church through her husband as it would be for her to be appointed an elder herself.

II. THE ELDER MUST BE A MAN WHO IS OLDER

- A. **"Appoint ELDERS in every city" (Tit. 1:5). Cf. Ac. 14:23; 20:17; etc.**
 - 1. The word "elder" implies age, maturity, experience > wisdom, dignity.
 - 2. The term is relative, comparative — an elder is an "older" man, a senior rather than a junior, in comparison to others.
 - a. *Presbuteros* = the comparative form of *presbus* (an old man) > elder; as a substantive, an old(er) man, one aged.
 - b. Cf. *neaniskos* = the diminutive form of *neanias* (a young man) > a youth, a young man until forty (Bullinger). Cf. "young men (*neaniskoí*) . . . old men (*presbuteroi*)" (**Ac. 2:17**).
 - 1) Saul was a "young man" in **Ac. 7:58**, but in **Philem. 9** he has become "the aged." Philemon was probably written A.D. 60-62, hence Paul could have hardly been less than thirty years old in **Ac. 7**.
 - 2) Similarly, Timothy was still in his "youth" in **1 Tim. 4:12**, even though he was probably somewhere between thirty and forty years old. Cf. **Ac. 16:1-3**.
 - c. Although the Scriptures specify no set age, few would have much practical difficulty classifying any particular person as an "older" or "younger" man.
 - 1) Care must be taken not to stretch the term "elder" so far as to include men who are obviously still in their youth. Cf. Mormon "elders" who are sometimes still in their teens.

- 2) Care must be taken not to assume a man to be "older" merely because he has believing children.
 - d. In assessing whether a particular man is old enough to serve as an elder, it is profitable simply to ask: Do we have to do violence to the term "elder" to describe this man as such? To call this man an "elder," do we have to stretch the term unreasonably?
- B. The nature of the elder's work demands experience in living and dealing with people.
1. There are numerous problems when a young man is given the work of an elder.
 2. What is required is *experiential* wisdom in life, not merely *theoretical* knowledge.
 3. If an elder should not be immature, however, neither should he be senile.

III. THE ELDER MUST BE A MAN WHO IS NOT A NOVICE

- A. **"NOT A NOVICE, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (1 Tim. 3:6).**
1. Novice = *neophyton* = lit., newly planted > a new Christian, a recent convert, a beginner in the faith. Cf. neophyte.
 2. It is no sin to be a babe in Christ if one truly is a new convert — but the elder must have grown beyond that stage if he is to help and teach others.
 3. Spiritual growth takes time - **Mt. 13:5,6; Hb. 5:12-14; 2 Pt. 1:5-7; 3:18;** etc. Cf. **1 Tim. 4:15.**
 - a. The knowledge which in the NT was sometimes imparted miraculously (**1 Cor. 12:8; 13:2,8;** etc.) will now normally take a man a long while to acquire.
 - b. A man cannot teach what he does not know. Cf. **1 Tim. 1:7.**
 - c. An elder cannot feed others "meat" if he is still on "milk." Cf. **Hb. 5:12-14.**
 4. When we consider how quickly elders were appointed in newly planted congregations in the NT (e.g. **Ac. 14:23**), one thing to bear in mind is that it is possible to grow to spiritual maturity much faster than we typically do. Given the leisurely pace at which most of us pursue spiritual growth, there is a real danger in using ourselves as the norm for how long it takes to grow up in the Lord!
 5. Perhaps it would be helpful, in the case of a particular candidate for the eldership, to ask whether he has been a Christian long enough to be guilty of negligence if he is not able to teach others. Cf. **Hb. 5:12-14.**
- B. Pride, the temptation of the prematurely promoted.
1. The spiritual maturity factor discussed above is obviously important for the elder's work — but the pride factor is the reason explicitly stated in **1 Tim. 3:6** for not appointing a novice to the eldership.
 2. As a new and weaker Christian, the novice is more vulnerable to temptation in general, including the temptation to pride.
 3. If appointed to the eldership, a novice would be likely to be "puffed up with pride." Cf. "inflated with a sense of his own importance" (Barclay), "conceited" (Phillips).
 4. If he became entangled in the sin of pride, the elder would "fall into the same condemnation as the devil." Cf. "fall under the same judgment as the devil" (NIV). Cf. **2 Pt. 2:4.**
 5. However long we may think it takes in absolute terms for a man to outgrow the novice stage as a Christian, the pride factor in regard to the eldership has to do with how long a man has been in the faith *in comparison to his fellow Christians.*

IV. THE ELDER MUST BE A MAN WHO DESIRES THE WORK

- A. **"If a man DESIRES the position of a bishop, he DESIRES a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1).**
1. The meaning of "desire."

- a. *Orego* = to reach or stretch out; hence, to long after, try to gain with special reference to the object desired (Bullinger). Implied is not only aspiration and yearning, but also effort expended toward accomplishment of the goal. Cf. **Hb. 11:16**.
- b. *Epithumeo* = to fix the desire upon, desire earnestly, long for; denoting the inward affection of the mind rather than the external object (Bullinger). Cf. **Hb. 6:11**.
2. Willingness is needed not only before, but during the elder's work - **1 Pt. 5:2**.
 - a. "Willingly" = *ekousios* = of free will. Cf. **Philem. 14** (noun), **Hb. 10:26**.
 - b. "Eagerly" = *prothumia* = zeal, alacrity of mind. Cf. "of a ready mind" (KJV). Cf. **Ac. 17:11**; **2 Cor. 8:11,12**.

B. Some points to consider concerning desire for the work of the elder.

1. *Desire must be pure* - **1 Pt. 5:2**.
 - a. Cf. **Mt. 23:6,7**; **3 Jn. 9**.
 - b. The eldership is a *work*, not merely an honorary position — a man should desire to serve, not to be served.
2. *Desire facilitates the work*. Neither the man who stumbles into the eldership willy-nilly nor the "I'll-serve-if-you-can't-find-anyone-else" man is likely to do quality work as an elder.
3. *Desire is crucial to Christianity in general*. Cf. **2 Cor. 8:12**; **9:7**.
4. *Desire is not a loophole in the qualifications*.
 - a. This stipulation is not an "out" allowing shirkers to excuse themselves.
 - 1) Does God excuse us from teaching opportunities, opportunities to help the sick, etc. on the mere ground that we did not "desire" the work? Cf. **Jas. 4:17**.
 - 2) In all matters, we will be judged on our use of ability and opportunity - **Mt. 25:14-30**.
 - 3) Why would an otherwise qualified man dodge the eldership?
 - a) Ignorance of need and personal responsibility. Cf. **Isa. 6:8**; **Ac. 16:9,10**.
 - b) Fear of inadequacy. Cf. **2 Cor. 3:4,5**.
 - c) Misunderstandings about the degree of "perfection" required in qualifications and work. Cf. **1 Tim. 5:17**.
 - d) Mock humility. Cf. **Exo. 3:10,11**; **Jer. 1:6,7**.
 - e) Complacency or laziness. Cf. **Prov. 22:13**; **Mt. 25:26**.
 - b. No man should be "railroaded" into service as an elder. But neither should a man's brethren fail to urge upon him his responsibilities and seek to arouse within him a genuine desire to do what he ought to do. Cf. **2 Cor. 8,9** (esp. **9:5-7**).
5. *Desire is best formed early in life*. Eventually time and opportunity run out and a man finds that it is too late for him to acquire the elder's qualifications.

Conclusion

- A. These four qualifications are fundamental to the others that follow.
- B. May we appreciate the beauty of God's wisdom in providing spiritually for His people - **Eph. 4:11,12**.

SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

QUALIFICATIONS OF GODLY INTEGRITY

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9.**
- B. No man is a fit example to others (nor is he capable of the elder's work) if he himself has not developed the qualities of Christlikeness - **1 Pt. 5:3.** Cf. **1 Cor. 11:1.**
- C. In thought and deed, the elder must exemplify what it means to love and obey God.

I. CHARACTER

- A. Negative requirements — what the elder must *not* be.
1. In relation to temporal gain.
 - a. **"Not covetous" (1 Tim. 3:3 - NKJV, KJV).** Cf. no "lover of money" (ASV, RSV, ESV).
 - 1) *Aphilarguros* = not greedy, avaricious. Cf. **Hb. 13:5.**
 - 2) The elder must adhere to the principles in **Mt. 6:24,33; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:6-10;** etc.
 - 3) Cf. **Ac. 20:33-35.**
 - b. **"Not greedy for money" (Tit. 1:7 - NKJV).** Cf. "not given to filthy lucre" (KJV), "not greedy for filthy lucre" (ASV), "not greedy for gain" (RSV, ESV), not given "to questionable money-making" (Rhm). (This term is also found in some Greek texts in **1 Tim. 3:3.**)
 - 1) *Me aischrokerdes* = not greedy of base or dishonest gain. Cf. **Tit. 1:11; 1 Pt. 5:2.**
 - 2) Both inordinate desire for money and ungodliness in gaining money are excluded by this term.
 2. In relation to other persons.
 - a. **"Not self-willed" (Tit. 1:7 - NKJV, KJV, ASV).** Cf. "arrogant" (RSV, ESV), "stubborn" (Wms).
 - 1) *Me authades* = lit., not self-satisfied, self-complacent > not assuming, presumptuous, obstinate. Cf. **2 Pt. 2:10.**
 - 2) The elder cannot be overbearing, headstrong, unyielding.
 - 3) Cf. "lords" (**1 Pt. 5:3**). Cf. **Phil. 2:3,4.**
 - b. **"Not quick-tempered" (Tit. 1:7 - NKJV, RSV, ESV).** Cf. "not soon angry" (KJV, ASV), not "short-tempered" (NEB).
 - 1) *Me orgilos* = not irascible, quickly moved to wrath.
 - 2) Both anger and the desire for revenge are involved.
 - 3) The elder cannot be hot-headed, short-fused, violent in temperament. Cf. **Jas. 1:19,20.**
 - c. **"Not quarrelsome" (1 Tim. 3:3 - NKJV, RSV, ESV).** Cf. "not a brawler" (KJV), "not contentious" (ASV), "not pugnacious" (Wey).
 - 1) *Amachos* = lit., without battle > peaceable, disinclined to fight. Cf. **Tit. 3:2.**
 - 2) While some strivings are necessary, many are not and are unprofitable to all concerned. Cf. **Tit. 3:9-11; Jd. 3.**
 - 3) The elder must be conciliatory, averse to strife — and he must know how to contend without being contentious.
 - 4) The elder cannot be a belligerent controversialist, bellicose, disputatious. Cf. **Eph. 4:1-3; Jas. 3:17,18.**
 - d. **"Not violent" (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7 - NKJV, RSV, ESV).** Cf. "no striker" (KJV, ASV).
 - 1) *Me plektes* = not a bully, pugnacious, combative; not given to blows, not ready to wound.
 - 2) This characteristic may be the outward expression of the previous one.
 - 3) The elder must not have a tendency to fight, verbally or physically, at the slightest provocation, for he will be provoked in his work as an elder from time to time.

B. Positive requirements — what the elder *must* be.

1. His principles.
 - a. **"Holy" (Tit. 1:8 - NKJV, KJV, ASV, RSV, ESV).**
 - 1) *Hosios* = careful to do what is religiously right, devout, pleasing to God, scrupulously religious; "the condition of one who has committed no crime, but religiously observes every duty and fulfills every obligation" (Bullinger). Cf. "holy hands" (1 Tim. 2:8).
 - 2) The elder must be spiritual, rather than worldly, but he must not show off his spirituality. Cf. Mt. 23:5.
 - b. **"A lover of what is good" (Tit. 1:8 - NKJV).** Cf. "a lover of good men" (KJV), "a lover of good" (ASV, ESV), "a lover of goodness" (RSV).
 - 1) *Philagathos* = loving good things and/or people. Cf. 2 Tim. 3:3.
 - 2) What people, deeds, etc. a man delights in says much about his character. Cf. Phil. 4:8.
 - 3) The elder "must be ready to welcome goodness wherever he sees it" (Barclay).
 - c. **"Just" (Tit. 1:8 - NKJV, KJV, ASV).** Cf. "upright" (RSV, ESV).
 - 1) *Dikaios* = fair, impartial; "fulfilling all claims which are right and becoming" (Bullinger). Cf. Mt. 20:4; 27:24.
 - 2) The elder, like the evangelist (1 Tim. 5:21), must not act prejudicially or with favoritism, but on the basis of what is right.
2. His temperament.
 - a. **"Self-controlled" (Tit. 1:8 - NKJV, ASV, RSV).** Cf. "temperate" (KJV), "disciplined" (ESV).
 - 1) *Egkrates* = lit., in strength, mastery; with a firm hold > being master of one's self; disciplined.
 - 2) The elder must be level-headed, self-restrained — not rash, impulsive. Cf. Prov. 16:32; 25:28; Jas. 1:19,20; 2 Pt. 1:6.
 - 3) This would include power over temper and tongue. Cf. Prov. 10:19; 17:27; etc.
 - a) The elder will often be the object of petty criticism. He must be able to restrain himself from the impulse to debate every accusation made against him.
 - b) Wisdom encourages self-control in the face of unfair talk about oneself - Prov. 19:11; Eccl. 7:21,22. Cf. Mt. 5:44,45; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12,13.
 - b. **"Temperate" (1 Tim. 3:2 - NKJV, ASV, RSV).** Cf. "vigilant" (KJV), "sober-minded" (ESV).
 - 1) *Nephalios* = moderate, especially in respect to wine > watchful, circumspect.
 - 2) The reserved, well-balanced temperament of the elder contributes to an alertness to danger, a healthy wariness. Cf. Ac. 20:28-31; Hb. 13:17.
 - 3) Like an aircraft pilot, the elder can ill afford to have his attentiveness impaired by any kind of intemperance.
 - c. **"Soberminded" (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8 - NKJV, ASV).** Cf. "sober" (KJV), "sensible/master of himself" (RSV), "self-controlled" (ESV).
 - 1) *Sophron* = discreet, prudent, thoughtful, serious-minded. Cf. Mk. 5:15; Ac. 26:25; Rom. 12:3; 1 Pt. 4:7.
 - 2) Cf. "wise in the art of living" (Barclay).
 - 3) The elder must be clear-headed, possessed of good judgment, not "intoxicated" physically or mentally.
 - 4) This trait is characteristic of age, maturity — it is the opposite of what is normally associated with youth and immaturity.
 - d. **"Gentle" (1 Tim. 3:3 - NKJV, ASV, RSV, ESV).** Cf. "patient" (KJV).
 - 1) *Epieikes* = yielding; "fitting upon, i.e. fit, meet, suitable; hence, fair, reasonable . . . considerate, forbearing, kind, fair" (Bullinger). Cf. Phil. 4:5; Jas. 3:17.
 - 2) This quality does not imply weakness or compromise in dealing with sin, but rather a wholesome, considerate regard for the feelings of others. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-26.
 - 3) Gentleness engenders confidence — brethren will be willing to come to such a man with their problems.

II. BEHAVIOR AND REPUTATION

A. Behavior.

1. **"Not given to wine"** (*1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7 - NKJV, KJV*). Cf. "no brawler (not quarrelsome over wine)" (ASV), "no drunkard" (RSV, ESV).
 - a. *Me paroinos* = not addicted to wine > not exhibiting the noisy quarrelsomeness of the drinker.
 - b. Cf. **Eph. 5:18**.
2. **"Hospitable"** (*1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8 - NKJV, RSV, ESV*). Cf. "given to hospitality/lover of hospitality" (KJV, ASV).
 - a. *Philoxenos* = lit., loving strangers > welcoming strangers in one's home.
 - b. Cf. "opening his house freely to guests" (*New Testament in Basic English*).
 - c. Cf. **Rom. 12:13; Hb. 13:2; 1 Pt. 4:9**; etc.
3. **"Of good behavior"** (*1 Tim. 3:2 - NKJV, KJV*). Cf. "orderly" (ASV), "dignified" (RSV), "respectable" (ESV).
 - a. *Kosmios* = orderly > respectable, honorable, well-behaved. Cf. "modest" in **1 Tim. 2:9**.
 - b. There must be a decorous, well-arranged regularity and beauty to the elder's conduct — including his speech, habits, dress, and manners.
 - c. Like all Christians, the elder must be a person who lives in such a way as to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (**Tit. 2:10**).

B. Reputation.

1. **"Blameless"** (*1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6,7 - KJV, NKJV*). Cf. "without reproach/blameless" (ASV), "above reproach/blameless" (RSV), "above reproach" (ESV).
 - a. *Anepileptos* (**1 Tim. 3:2**) = irreproachable; "not to be caught anywhere by an antagonist (used in wrestling of a man defended and prepared at all points); hence, one in whom there was no just cause for blame" (Bullinger). Cf. **1 Tim. 5:7; 6:14**. Cf. Daniel in **Dan. 6:4,5**.
 - b. *Anegkletos* (**Tit. 1:6,7**) = unimpeachable; "not accused, with nothing laid to one's charge, . . . though blamed yet undeserving of blame" (Bullinger).
 - c. The elder must be a man of impeccable character and unquestioned integrity — "above suspicion of moral fault" (Barclay). Cf. **Phil. 2:15**.
 - d. The elder must be able to teach and admonish without hypocrisy. Cf. **Mt. 7:3-5; Rom. 2:21**.
2. **"A good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil"** (*1 Tim. 3:7 - NKJV*). Cf. "A good report of them which are without" (KJV).
 - a. Cf. **Mt. 5:16; Tit. 2:8,10; 1 Pt. 2:12,15; 3:16**.
 - b. The word translated "good" in "good testimony" is *kalos* = not merely good in the strict legal sense, but that which is widely acknowledged to be fine, beautiful, noble, honorable.
 - c. The world tends to judge the church by its leaders — the elder must not furnish "ammunition" that can be used by Satan and the opponents of the faith. (But consider also the point made in **Lk. 6:26; Rom. 12:18**; etc.)
 - d. The devil is always seeking to ensnare the Lord's people, and especially those in the position of oversight, in some accusation which he can manipulate to the evil advantage of his cause. To avoid this trap, the elder must be a man above reproach both *inside* and *outside* the church.

Conclusion

- A. The elder gives us real-life evidence that it is possible to be a faithful Christian.
- B. More than that, the elder also gives us reason and motivation to be a faithful Christian - **Hb. 13:7**.

SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

LEADERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS

Introduction

- A. Text: **1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9.**
- B. The position occupied by the “overseers” (**1 Pt. 5:2**) of God’s household obviously involves *leadership*.
- C. Two specific leadership skills are prerequisite: *ruling* and *teaching*.

I. THE ELDER’S ABILITY TO RULE

- A. **“A bishop then must be . . . THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” (1 Tim. 3:2; cf. Tit. 1:6).**
 - 1. *Mias gunaikos aner* = lit., a man of one woman. Three basic approaches to this are taken:
 - a. An elder need not be married, but if he is, he must not be guilty of polygamy, concubinage, unscriptural divorce and remarriage, adultery, etc. In other words, a man merely must be “blameless” in regard to marriage-related sins.
 - b. An elder need not be married, but if he is, he must not be a digamist, i.e. married serially.
 - 1) Cf. “not have been married more than once” (Jerusalem Bible; cf. Moffatt).
 - 2) This option has nothing to support it but Roman Catholic tradition.
 - 3) The NT teaches (**Rom. 7:2,3**; etc.) that death severs the “bond” between husband and wife, leaving the survivor free to be honorably married to another.
 - c. An elder must *be* married, must be *scripturally* married, *and* must not be guilty of polygamy, etc.
 - 2. Arguments favoring the first approach.
 - a. *Argument that the qualification is “restrictive” and not “positive” in nature:*
 - 1) Since Paul specified one wife, his intent was only to restrict the eldership to the non-polygamists in the early church, not to positively enjoin marriage upon the elder.
 - 2) Paul only meant “blamelessness” in matters of sin pertaining to the opposite sex.
 - b. *Argument from other passages that do not exclude celibacy:*
 - 1) “Own wife” (**1 Cor. 7:2**).
 - 2) “Wife of one man” (**1 Tim. 5:9**).
 - c. *Arguments regarding celibacy:*
 - 1) A man can get experience “ruling” without being married.
 - 2) It would be arbitrary to exclude celibates, since celibacy is not sinful *per se*.
 - 3) Paul taught that celibates can serve God better in some ways - **1 Cor. 7:32-35**.
 - 4) Paul himself was celibate and an elder. (There is, however, no evidence whatsoever in the NT that Paul was an elder.)
 - 5) Jesus was celibate and He was the “Chief Shepherd” (**1 Pt. 5:4**).
 - d. *Arguments from outside the Scriptures:*
 - 1) The consensus of scholarship approves of unmarried elders.
 - 2) Requiring marriage would exclude some of the most “qualified” men in the church.
 - 3) Requiring marriage leads to absurd hypothetical conclusions.
 - 3. However, *the most natural sense* of the language and the *context* point toward the third approach.
 - a. One = more than none and less than two. Cf. **Eph. 4:4-6**.
 - b. The language is both positive (enjoining: one wife) and negative (restricting: only one wife).
 - 1) If Paul’s meaning was “one wife” (more than none, less than two) no wording he could have used would have been more apt.
 - a) “Married” would require marriage, but would not exclude polygamy.
 - b) “Not a polygamist” would exclude polygamy, but not require marriage.
 - 2) Only “husband of one wife” requires marriage, scripturality in the marriage, faithfulness

to one's spouse, etc. and also excludes all wrongful extra-marital relationships, etc.

- c. A bachelor simply is not what the text says an elder must be: *a husband*.
- d. Common sense suggests several needs for an elder to be married.
- e. The man who has never been married has not experienced the *primary* relationship in life in which a man learns how to lead others.
 - 1) What about widowers?
 - a) Might a man who *had* been married be appointed an elder?
 - b) What about the case of a man whose wife dies while he is serving as an elder? Does he remain qualified even though his wife is no longer living?
 - 2) The safest course is to hold to the marriage qualification as it is stated in **1 Tim. 3:2** and **Tit. 1:6** — the elder is required to *be* the husband of one wife, not to *have been* such.
- f. The man who has failed to lead his wife *well* (**Eph. 5:22-33**; **Col. 3:19**; **1 Pt. 3:7**; etc.) has failed in the most fundamental, important, and challenging leadership role in life, no matter what success he may have had as a leader in his career, etc.
- g. When we really want to know about a man's leadership qualities, we look at how he has done in the deepest, most long-term relationship in his life: the husband-wife relationship. There is where we will find his true character and his true ability to lead others in a positive direction.

B. "ONE WHO RULES HIS OWN HOUSE WELL, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:4,5).

1. The words used:
 - a. "Rule" = *proistemi* = lit., to stand before > be at the head of; direct, preside over, manage; rule with care and diligence. Cf. **1 Tim. 5:17**.
 - b. "Submission" = *hupotage* = subordination, subjection. Cf. **1 Tim. 2:11**.
 - c. "Reverence" = *semnotes* = respect, dignity, seriousness.
 - d. "Take care of" = *epimeleomai* = look after, have responsibility for; involves "solicitude expressed in forethought" (Bullinger). Cf. **Lk. 10:34,35**.
2. Arguments to evade this qualification are similar to those for unmarried elders.
3. The man who rules his own house well elicits obedience and respect.
 - a. Cf. "able to control and command the respect of his children" (Phillips).
 - b. Both elements — ability to control and maintenance of respect — are required.
4. It is dangerous and unscriptural to minimize this qualification, or substitute for it other types of managerial skills.
5. The church is a family relationship — it requires family-type leadership.

C. "HAVING FAITHFUL CHILDREN not accused of dissipation or insubordination" (Tit. 1:6).

1. "**Faithful children**" (**NKJV, KJV**). Cf. "children that believe" (ASV; cf. NASV, NIV), his children are "believers" (RSV, ESV; NEB, TEV, Jer).
 - a. What is meant by faithful "children," i.e. must a man have more than one faithful child?
 - 1) The term "children" can mean "offspring" or "young people," without regard to number.
 - 2) This is true in English as well as in Greek. A sign that says "No Children Admitted" would be understood to apply to any number of children, even just one.
 - 3) Many biblical texts illustrate this usage: **Gen. 21:7**; **2 Chron. 28:3** (cf. **2 Kgs. 16:3**); **Mt. 22:24** (cf. **Deut. 25:5**); **Lk. 14:26**; **1 Cor. 7:14**; **Eph. 6:4**; **1 Tim. 5:4,10**; etc.
 - 4) Would **Eph. 6:4** be thought to apply only to fathers who have two or more children?
 - 5) Most of those who believe that a man is disqualified if he has even one *un*-faithful child, would argue that the expression "unbelieving children" can apply when there is one such child in the family.
 - 6) It should be pointed out that even though a man with only one child may technically satisfy the bare legal requirement of the qualification "faithful children," the more faithful children a man has the more confidence we are able to have in his ability to lead others to follow the Lord.
 - b. What is meant by "faithful" or "believing" children? Three questions arise:

- 1) Must an elder's children be faithful *Christians*?
 - a) Although *pistos* ("faithful") can mean "trustworthy" or "dependable," it is rarely, if ever, used to refer to anyone after the establishment of the church who was not a Christian. Cf. **1 Tim. 6:2**; **2 Tim. 2:2**; **Rev. 2:10,13**. Cf. **Ac. 10:45**; **16:1**; **2 Cor. 6:15**; **1 Tim. 3:11**; etc.
 - b) Cf. *apistos* ("unfaithful" or "unbelieving") - **1 Cor. 6:6**; **7:12-15**; **14:22-24**; **2 Cor. 6:14,15**; **1 Tim. 5:8**; etc.
- 2) Must *all* of an elder's children be faithful Christians?
 - a) Do the expressions "his own house" and "children" mean the sum of all those under a man's care as head of the household?
 - b) What if some of the children are still too young to have obeyed the gospel?
 - c) Of those old enough to have obeyed the gospel, what if some are faithful Christians and others are not?
- 3) Must an elder's children be faithful Christians *at present*?
 - a) What if some of an elder's children become unfaithful to the Lord after having been faithful Christians at one time?
 - b) What if those who have become unfaithful did so as adults, no longer living as children under their father's authority?
 - c) To what extent is a man responsible for the decisions of a child who turns out to be a "stony" or "thorny" Christian (**Mt. 13:18-23**)?
 - d) To what extent does a child who turns away from the Lord damage his father's credibility and respect as a spiritual leader?
 - i) This is an important issue that should be weighed very carefully.
 - ii) Sometimes the unfaithfulness of a child impairs a man's reputation and undercuts the credibility of his leadership and teaching even when the unfaithfulness was not the result of parental failure. Cf. **Gen. 34:30**; **Lev. 21:9**; etc.
 - iii) Consider the principles in **Prov. 28:7**; **29:15**; etc.
 - e) What if a man's faithful children are no longer living?
2. **"Not accused of dissipation or insubordination."**
 - a. *Asotia* = lit., not to be saved > debauchery, riotous excess, reckless and profligate living. Cf. **Lk. 15:13**; **1 Pt. 4:4**.
 - b. *Anupotaktos* = lit., not made subject > unruly, undisciplined, rebellious, out of control.

D. The controversy that too often surrounds these qualifications should not divert our attention from *the importance of what is plain*.

1. We should not make the matter more difficult than it really is.
2. Regarding a prospective elder's family, we must straightforwardly decide whether — *at the present time* — the man does or does not possess these two qualifications:
 - a. Is he one who (**1 Tim. 3:4,5**) rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence?
 - b. Is he one who (**Tit. 1:6**) has faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination?
3. If a prospective elder has the latter qualification, but he also has one or more children who are not faithful to the Lord, we should simply ask:
 - a. Are the unfaithful children that he has an indication that he does not rule his own house well?
 - b. And, even if he does rule his own house well, is the man's influence so affected by the unfaithful children that he has that his work as an elder would be handicapped?
4. These questions are not very hard to answer in most cases.

II. THE ELDER'S ABILITY TO TEACH

- A. **"ABLE TO TEACH"** (**1 Tim. 3:2 - NKJV, ESV**). Cf. "apt to teach" (KJV, ASV), "an apt teacher" (RSV).
1. *Didaktos* = skillful in teaching. Cf. **2 Tim. 2:24**.
 - a. Cf. "a ready teacher" (Bas), "a capable and qualified teacher" (Amp).

- b. The "aptness" of a man to teach would involve:
 - 1) What he teaches.
 - 2) How he teaches.
 - 3) Consistency between his teaching and his life.
 - 4) His disposition to teach.
- c. The last point is important. "Apt to teach" involves not only *skill*, but *willingness* and *promptness* to teach, corresponding to the readiness to learn of the "teachable" student (cf. McGarvey).
- d. In considering a man's ability to teach, we should remember that there are various kinds of teaching, both public and private. Cf. **Ac. 20:20**.
- e. Although **1 Tim. 3:2** does not require every elder to be skilled at public teaching, the value of such preaching and teaching by elders has probably been underemphasized.
- 2. Teaching is one of the most vital functions of the elder/shepherd/overseer.
 - a. Presbyterianism makes an erroneous distinction, on the basis of **1 Tim. 5:17**, between "teaching elders" and "ruling elders."
 - b. The "evangelistic oversight" theory erroneously teaches that elders must personally do all the preaching after they are appointed. However, elders may teach personally and also use the services of other teachers and preachers.
- 3. It is wrong to dilute this qualification and merely appoint "the best we have."
- B. **"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" (Tit. 1:9).**
 - 1. The elder needs a firm grasp of sound doctrine (wholesome, healthful teaching). Cf. **2 Tim. 1:13; 3:14**.
 - a. He must be skilled in it himself. Cf. **Hb. 5:12-14**.
 - b. He should also require it from the pulpit, in classes, etc. where he is an overseer.
 - 2. "Exhort" = *parakaleo* = to give instruction; stimulate faith, encourage, comfort.
 - 3. "Convict" = *elegcho* = to bring to light, expose, point out.
 - a. The idea is "confute" (RSV), rather than "convince" (KJV).
 - b. Those who "contradict" (i.e. gainsayers, objectors) must be identified, examined fairly, and either corrected or put to silence - **Tit. 1:10,11**.
 - c. Cf. **Ac. 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2**; etc.
 - 4. To fulfill his responsibility, the elder must not only be *able* but also *willing* to "exhort and convict those who contradict."

Conclusion

- A. Leadership involves influencing other people for good.
- B. In both ruling and teaching, the elder must be qualified to influence the local congregation for good.

THE SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS

Introduction

- A. Text: **Tit. 1:5**.
- B. Biblical information about elders is intended not only for *instruction* but *application*.
- C. In this lesson, we will inquire into the actual induction of men into the eldership.

I. PERTINENT INFORMATION

- A. Scriptural principles.
 - 1. Men become scriptural elders by appointment, not assumption - **Ac. 14:23; Tit. 1:5**.
 - a. A precedent is provided in **Ac. 6:1-6** for the two-fold manner of gaining church officers.
 - 1) *Selection*.
 - a) The church was told to “seek out” (**v.3 NKJV**) men to qualified to serve.
 - i) *Episkeptomai* = look at as though to select; look out, seek out, choose.
 - ii) Cf. “look ye out” (KJV, ASV), “pick out” (RSV, ESV), “choose” (NIV).
 - b) Select = to choose from among several possibilities, to pick out.
 - c) Selection of candidates is a necessary preliminary to appointment, and is distinct from it.
 - i) Selection is entirely dependent on *possession of qualifications* — it amounts to a *recognition* of those who in fact qualify. Cf. **Ac. 13:2-4**.
 - ii) Appointment of one wrongfully selected would be fruitless.
 - d) Selection implies *identification, examination, and approval*. Cf. **1 Tim. 3:10**.
 - i) This text does not involve probationary, “trial” service before appointment, but rather examination, etc. before entering the work.
 - ii) “Prove” = *dokimazo* = assay, make trial of, put to the proof, examine > examine and judge of, prove by test, approve on trial. Cf. **Lk. 14:19; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 8:8; 13:5; Eph. 5:10; 1 Thess. 5:21**.
 - e) Selection is by the congregation at large — not the preacher, the present elders, a visiting preacher, or elders elsewhere. Cf. **1 Cor. 16:3,4**.
 - i) The congregation as a whole is best suited to ascertain the qualifications of its own members.
 - ii) The choice of the congregation itself as to whom it will voluntarily submit is conducive to better cooperation with its elders later.
 - iii) Where previously appointed elders are already serving, it is entirely right — indeed, it is a part of their responsibility — to oversee and guide the process by which the congregation as a whole selects additional elders.
 - 2) *Appointment*.
 - a) The apostles said that those selected by the church would be those they would “appoint” (**Ac. 6:3**) to do this work.
 - i) *Kathistemi* = to set down > constitute; put in charge; appoint, ordain.
 - ii) Cf. “assign” (Amplified Bible), “turn this responsibility over to” (NIV).
 - iii) Cf. **Mt. 24:45,47; Lk. 12:14; Ac. 7:10,27,35; Tit. 1:5; Hb. 5:1** (cf. **v.4**); **7:28; 8:3**. Cf. **Lev. 8:1-36**.
 - b) Appoint = to point to > to designate to fill an office or position.
 - i) Cf. “ordain” (**Tit. 1:5 KJV**).
 - ii) Ordain = to put in order, arrange > to assign to a charge, duty, office.
 - c) In **Ac. 14:23**, elders were said to have been “appointed” (NKJV, ASV, RSV, ESV). Cf. “ordained” (KJV).
 - i) *Cheirotoneo* = to choose or elect (by raising hands) > to appoint, install.

- ii) Related words: induct, inaugurate, invest, etc.
 - d) There is no scriptural distinction between “God appointing” and “man ordaining” church officers.
 - e) Appointment involves the conscious *assigning* of the eldership to particular men.
 - f) NT Christians signified appointment to a specific work by prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands. Cf. **Ac. 14:23**. Cf. **Ac. 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim. 5:22**.
 - g) The evangelist’s role concerns the appointment of elders. “Preachers can only appoint those who have been selected by the congregation, and the congregation can only select those who are qualified” (Phillips). Cf. **Tit. 1:5**.
 - h) The appointment of elders implies an agreement between them and the congregation involving mutual commitments and responsibilities.
- b. The induction of elders, then, is a process: preparation > selection > appointment.
2. Views diverge widely as to how elders are to be selected and appointed.
- a. Some even contend (from **2 Tim. 3:17**) that elders are *not* to be appointed today, since the Scriptures do not specify how.
 - b. Yet this is one of several areas where scriptural principles must be implemented by human judgment.
 - 1) For example, carrying out the command to observe the Lord’s Supper (**1 Cor. 11:23-26**) requires that a number of judgments be made as to how the Lord’s general instructions will be implemented.
 - 2) In the NT, God often left it to the local congregation to determine its own method of selection when there was a need to identify individuals for some specific purpose. Cf. **Ac. 6:1-6; Cor. 16:3,4; 1 Tim. 5:3,9,10**; etc.
3. It seems reasonable that guidelines like the following would be helpful:
- a. *Lawfulness and expediency* - **1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23**.
 - b. *Edification* - **1 Cor. 14:26**.
 - c. *Decency and orderliness* - **1 Cor. 14:40**.
 - d. *Unselfishness* - **1 Cor. 10:24; Phil. 2:3,4**.
 - e. *Impartiality* - **1 Tim. 5:21**.
 - f. *God’s glory* - **1 Cor. 10:31**.

B. Practical suggestions as to a scriptural procedure.

1. *Preparation.*
 - a. Wise, reverent preparation would include much prayer (individual and congregational), consideration of the far-reaching seriousness of the matter, scriptural study/teaching/discussion of the qualifications and work of the elder, etc.
 - b. God’s will must be understood - **Eph. 5:17**.
 - c. Since no specific method is required by the Scriptures, congregations do well, prior to seeking elders, to *agree* on a method which meets all relevant scriptural requirements and violates no scriptural principle.
2. *Selection.*
 - a. Nominations, preferably in writing and signed, are sought from the whole congregation.
 - 1) Considering the seriousness of the responsibility, it is helpful and courteous for men to be approached privately before being named.
 - 2) This helps avoid the embarrassment of withdrawal if a man knows he is not qualified.
 - b. Nominees who consider withdrawing should be impressed with the need for *God-approved reasons for withdrawal*.
 - c. Nominees might well be brought before the church to speak concerning their attitudes toward the eldership, etc. and to be questioned by the congregation.
 - d. In some way nominees are to be “proved” as to their qualifications - **1 Tim. 3:10**.
 - 1) Adequate time must be allowed for each member to examine the men. Perhaps a questionnaire could be used to gain each member’s knowledge of each man.
 - 2) Objections must be both *scriptural* and *substantiated* — and handled judiciously.
 - a) Objections should be written and signed.
 - i) Ideally, these should have been discussed privately by the objector with the

- nominee.
 - ii) Most problems are eliminated when “all talk is to the right people.”
 - iii) Public debate about a man is more divisive than helpful.
 - b) Potential problems.
 - i) Objections based on mere selfishness, opinion, dislike, etc.
 - ii) A group of spiritually weak members being allowed to block the congregation's progress.
 - c) Scriptural objections should result in withdrawal of the nominee.
 - i) When faced with a negative consensus about him within the congregation at large, an honorable man will usually volunteer to remove himself from further consideration — the man who refuses to do so simply because he is self-willed is not qualified to be an elder anyway.
 - ii) Realistically, a man cannot lead those who are unwilling to accept him as a leader.
 - d) Unresolved differences here should be maturely arbitrated. Cf. **1 Cor. 6:5**.
 - 3) Both nominees and the congregation should behave in a Christlike way.
 - a) The problem of political maneuvering during the selection and appointment of elders is all too familiar.
 - b) Too many congregations have been hurt by the ungodly pettiness of men who “aspire” to the eldership but are passed over by their brethren.
 - c) Carnal attitudes and methods — either by the congregation or by a nominee — are sinful and counterproductive.
 - 4) Nominees proven to be qualified must be urged to accept their opportunity and responsibility. Cf. **Col. 4:17**.
3. *Appointment.*
- a. Qualified men are to be formally appointed, i.e. actually assigned to their work.
 - b. The evangelist plays some role in the actual appointment of elders - **Tit. 1:5**.
 - c. What could be more appropriate than a service of the church devoted to this appointment, including Bible teaching impressing the responsibilities of all concerned?

C. The question of an elder's tenure.

1. Various erroneous extremes have been advocated.
 - a. *Once an elder, always an elder.* However, elders are not immune from apostasy, and it would be as wrong to retain an unworthy elder as to appoint him at first.
 - b. *Fixed term of office.* However, there is no scriptural reason to limit an elder's service, and supposed advantages are far outweighed by many disadvantages.
2. An elder's tenure of office is limited to the period during which he is qualified and does the work scripturally — subsequent failure in either dictates his resignation or removal.
 - a. Resignation or removal should not be too quick (frivolousness) nor too tardy (self-willed retention of the office).
 - b. Valid reasons might include:
 - 1) Subsequent loss of any qualification. Controversial areas include: death of wife or children, apostasy of a child, etc.
 - 2) Physical or mental incapacity. It is wrong to retain incapable men as “honorary” elders.
 - 3) Scandal or loss of influence, credibility, leadership.
 - 4) Other possible reasons: potential health hazards, family responsibilities, burnout, etc.
3. An elder in one congregation is not automatically an elder in another congregation if he moves elsewhere.
4. An eldership is dissolved if a congregation, for whatever reason, is left with but one elder.

II. ESSENTIAL EXHORTATION

A. The *need* to appoint elders.

1. A relatively new congregation may be “scripturally unorganized” and have to function using an orderly meeting of the men to reach a consensus on expedients — but such congregations are “lacking” (**Tit. 1:5**).
2. Almost all congregations with elders need additional ones — in most cases, a congregation needs as many elders as it has men qualified to serve.
3. Just as we should not appoint any man who is not qualified, we should not fail to appoint any man who is.
4. Why would a congregation without elders, or one needing additional ones, complacently neglect to develop/appoint them?

B. The *attitudes* which ought to prevail.

1. Reverence and love are needed. Cf. **Eph. 4:1-3**; **Phil. 1:27**.
2. The ungodly divisiveness that often arises is a disgrace to the gospel and discourages congregations from carrying out God’s instructions for their government.
3. Care and deliberation are called for in the selection and appointment of elders.
 - a. The consequences of decisions about elders usually last for years.
 - b. Since it is easier to appoint unqualified men than it is to remove them, it is wise to take the time to be sure we are acting with God’s approval.
 - c. The damage done by unqualified elders is hard to undo.
4. We need maturity, courage, frankness, and forthrightness — we must balance courage and consideration!
5. We need to have a genuine desire to please God and do what is best for the congregation.

Conclusion

- A. Here as elsewhere, the Christian will seek to glorify God - **Col. 3:17**; **1 Pt. 4:11**.
- B. Scriptural selection and appointment of elders is both possible and needed.

CONGREGATIONAL DUTIES TO ELDERS

Introduction

- A. Text: **Hb. 13:17**.
- B. Certain mutual responsibilities and reciprocal commitments are implied in the various works of the elder. These need to be understood and agreed on. For example:
1. Rule <—> submit.
 2. Lead <—> follow.
 3. Set example <—> imitate.
 4. Teach <—> learn.
- C. Those on whose behalf elders “watch” are themselves accountable.
1. It is a serious mistake to disregard warnings that the Lord has graciously provided for us. Cf. **2 Chron. 36:15,16; Mt. 23:37-39**.
 2. We are responsible for heeding those who warn us. Cf. **Ezek. 3:19; 33:9**.
- D. We can properly relate ourselves to our elders by:

I. SUBMITTING TO THEM

- A. **Hb. 13:17** is an important passage.
1. “Obey” = *peitho* = to allow one’s self to be persuaded, yield to. Cf. **Lk. 16:31; Ac. 5:36,37; Jas. 3:3**. Cf. **Jn. 3:36**.
 2. “Be submissive” = *hupеiko* = to cease fighting, give way under, yield.
 3. Contrast the “submissiveness” of sheep with the “self-will” of goats.
- B. When one identifies with a congregation, he places himself under the oversight of its elders.
1. As a part of the body, he agrees to work cooperatively for the good of the whole body - **Rom. 12:4,5**.
 2. He agrees to defer to the good judgment of qualified elders, men who have the proven ability to make wise decisions - **Hb. 13:17**.
 3. In what areas do we submit? Consider the following as examples or illustrations:
 - a. The use of talent requested.
 - b. Participation in work assigned.
 - c. Attendance at appointed assemblies.
- C. Two extremes must be avoided. A balance must be maintained between:
1. *No submission*. “It’s-none-of-the-elders’-business-what-I-do” rebelliousness, selective obedience.
 2. *Blind submission*. “It’s-the-elders’-responsibility” indifference, etc. No Christian can justify participation in sin by assuming the elders alone will answer for it. Cf. **Ac. 5:29**.
- D. True submissiveness is willing (**Philem. 14**) and respectful (**1 Tim. 3:4**).
- E. Men with scriptural qualifications will be individuals who engender such loving obedience and will rarely have to demand compliance with their leadership. Cf. **2 Thess. 3:9**.
- F. Shepherdless sheep are in danger — it is a blessing, not a curse, to have godly men to whom we may submit in the Lord’s work.

- G. Scriptural submissiveness within the flock is conducive to the joy of the shepherds and the profit of all - **Hb. 13:17**.

II. EXHORTING THEM

- A. There is a difference between rebellious murmurings and substantiated charges of wrongdoing.
1. Unfounded charges and idle rumors against elders are prevalent, perhaps because the corrective work of elders provokes retaliatory accusations.
 2. One must often consider the source and disregard unverifiable allegations - **1 Tim. 5:19,20**. Cf. **Jd. 8-10**.
- B. Still, when an elder has truly erred, his brethren must exhort him — respectfully. Cf. **1 Tim. 5:1** (cf. **Lev. 19:32**).
- C. If necessary, disciplinary action must be taken.

III. HELPING THEM

- A. How can an individual Christian assist those who watch for his soul?
1. Prayer.
 2. Patience and allowance for growth.
 3. Restraint from gossip.
 4. Encouragement.
 5. Support and endorsement.
 6. Input, feedback, and open communication.
- B. The simple maintenance of peace is a great help to elders - **1 Thess. 5:13**. Cf. **Eph. 4:3**; **Col. 3:15**.

IV. JUDGING THEM FAIRLY

- A. When judgments must be made regarding someone else's conduct, we are commanded to be fair and just — nowhere is this any more important than in the judgments we make about the performance of our elders. Cf. **Mt. 7:2-5**; **Jn. 7:24**.
- B. We are often inclined to evaluate the job our elders are doing by a much harsher standard than we judge ourselves by.
- C. Here are some questions to ask ourselves when we feel the urge to criticize our elders:
1. Considering the job I am doing as a member of the congregation, would it be hypocritical of me to criticize the job someone else is doing as a leader of the congregation?
 2. If all the members of the congregation related themselves to the elders as I do, how difficult would the work of the elders be?
 3. Am I a part of the solution or a part of the problem?
 4. Am I anything more than an armchair critic, a Monday-morning quarterback?
 5. Do I know what I am talking about? How many of the facts do I have? Is what I know about the situation enough to make a responsible judgment, or are there aspects of the problem that I may be unaware of that would significantly alter my judgment if I knew about them?
 6. Am I aware how much easier hindsight is than foresight? Do I understand how much more difficult it is to make wise judgments in the midst of stressful, complicated, and rapidly-developing circumstances than it is to say, after the fact, what should have been done?
 7. What price have I paid to see this problem from the perspective of an elder, to understand the mat-

ter within his frame of reference, and to empathize with his situation? How far have I walked in my elders' shoes?

8. Are my criticisms of my elders truly fair and just?

V. RECOMPENSING THEM

- A. At the very least, elders deserve the admiration and expressed appreciation of their brethren.
- B. Sometimes, financial support is also in order - **1 Tim. 5:17,18**; **1 Pt. 5:2**. Cf. **1 Cor. 9:1-14**.
 1. Time spent "in the word and doctrine" is in addition to the normal work of oversight/shepherding.
 2. "Double honor" = another *kind* of honor, not twice as much of the usual honor.
 3. Despite unfounded objections, there is a real need today for full-time, paid elders.
 4. Such would go far toward diminishing evangelist rule, as well as add to the effectiveness of the oversight.

VI. USING THEM

- A. By *asking* for elders' help, prayers, etc. - **Jas. 5:14,15**.
 1. Too often, elders are the last to know of situations needing their involvement.
 2. Preachers, as well as others, need to learn to ask: *Have you talked with the elders about this?*
- B. By *imitating* them - **Hb. 13:7**. Cf. **1 Cor. 11:1**.
 1. Men unfit to be imitated ought not to be appointed. Cf. **Mt. 15:14**.
 2. Great results would come from more time spent imitating elders and less spent criticizing.
- C. By *seeking* their company and counsel, learning from them, utilizing their potential to the full advantage intended by the Lord.

VII. RESPECTING THEM

- A. By *recognizing* them - **1 Thess. 5:12**.
 1. "Recognize" or "know" (KJV, ASV) = *oida* = acknowledge; have due regard for; take an interest in.
 2. Such requires closeness of association, not distant aloofness. Our children, too, need closeness to elders in the church.
- B. By *esteeming* them "very highly in love for their work's sake" (**1 Thess. 5:13**).
 1. Attitudes of cynicism, skepticism, and hypercriticism toward the eldership in general (and individual elders in particular) need to be replaced with a wholesome honor.
 2. Untold good can be done by elders who have their brethren's love, trust, and respect.

Conclusion

- A. The relationship between a congregation and its elders is impressive indeed. It was designed by God.
- B. May we properly value the importance, beauty, and wisdom of the true government of the Lord's body - **Phil. 1:1**.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A DEACON

Introduction

- A. Text: **Phil. 1:1**.
- B. In **Phil. 1:1**, Paul addressed himself to “all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.”
- C. “Deacons” were a part of the scriptural organization of congregations in the NT.
- D. This was a work to which Christian men were appointed in the various congregations only if they were considered by their brethren to possess certain scriptural qualifications of godliness - **1 Tim. 3:8-13**.

I. THE DEACON'S WORK AND ITS IMPORTANCE

- A. The word “deacon” appears only a few times in our English translations.
 - 1. Cf. **Phil. 1:1**; **1 Tim. 3:8,13**.
 - 2. It is a translation of the Gk. *diakonos* (“servant, minister”).
- B. Though the word “deacon” does not appear there, **Ac. 6:1-7** records the appointment of men who were to serve the congregation at Jerusalem — these men were called simply “the seven” in **Ac. 21:8**.
- C. That the work of deacons is what these men were appointed to is apparent from at least three considerations:
 - 1. They were specifically selected and appointed to render service on behalf of their brethren.
 - 2. Their service would free others for other responsibilities.
 - 3. The process of elimination excludes any other appointed office or service in the early church.
- D. If in fact these men were only assigned an *ad hoc* service to perform, it still can be said that those later described as deacons (i.e. “servants”) in a permanent sense were simply men who were willing to do on an ongoing basis what these seven were willing to do temporarily: *accept assigned service to the congregation*.
- E. If the seven in Jerusalem were not “deacons,” then we really have no other passage that sheds light on what a deacon is or does.
- F. Deacons are appointed to take care of certain responsibilities for their brethren. Their work is to help us in the Lord's work by doing things the congregation needs to have done so that its work can go forward.
- G. Their work is not always “temporal” or “material” in contrast to the “spiritual” work of elders — but it does consist of support activities that constitute “service” rather than “oversight.”
- H. At least two of “the seven” in Jerusalem were gospel preachers — Stephen (**Ac. 6:8-7:60**) and Philip (**Ac. 8:4-40**; **21:8**) — but their work as deacons was distinct from “the ministry of the word” (**Ac. 6:2,4**).
- I. Deacons are a vital part of what God has provided to make the church strong and effective in its work — the office of deacon is important and needed.
- J. Deacons are not men who are not quite “good enough” to be elders, nor are they merely those who are “on their way up” to becoming elders.
- K. We need to view the deacon's work in a better light — it is important in its own right.

II. THE DEACON'S WORK AND THE SPIRIT OF SERVANTHOOD

- A. The deacon is a living example of the fact that in Christ the worldly concept of "honor" is reversed. He exemplifies the principle that true greatness consists of serving, rather than being served - **Mk. 9:33-35**. Cf. **Mt. 20:20-28; 23:11**.
1. The work of the deacon, by definition, involves manifesting the "spirit of servanthood" which is required of all Christians.
 2. There is perhaps no work in the Lord that a man can do in which this Christian attitude is any more important.
- B. When a deacon does not do his work or does it with a reluctant, complaining spirit, he exhibits the very opposite of the frame of mind that ought to possess the deacon.
- C. Those who serve as deacons, and those who desire to, should meditate on whether, in regard to being a "servant," they have the attitude of:
1. Paul - **2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Tim. 1:12**.
 2. Or Martha - **Lk. 10:40**.
- D. We all need to be encouraged to have a greater willingness to be servants one to another. Cf. **1 Cor. 16:15; Hb. 6:10**.
- E. Hence, there may be no part of the godly deacon's work that we derive any greater benefit from than his example of being ready to render service.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTITUDES IN RELATION TO THE DEACON'S WORK

- A. On the part of the congregation, there needs to be gratitude and a willingness to cooperate with those who serve as deacons. Deacons need to be encouraged, rather than discouraged.
- B. On their part, deacons need, like any other "steward," to be "faithful" (**1 Cor. 4:2**) to their trust.
- C. Deacons need to be conscientious. If elders, for example, have to spend so much time working with deacons to get them to do their work, the purpose of having deacons is defeated.
- D. Deacons need to be challenged to "take heed" to their service and "fulfill it" (**Col. 4:17**) — and encouraged to serve "as with the ability which God supplies" (**1 Pt. 4:10,11**).
- E. It takes a special caliber of person to allow himself to be designated a servant to his brethren and then to carry out the service assigned to him in a hard-working, responsible way.

Conclusion

- A. Paul wrote that "those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (**1 Tim. 3:13**).
- B. Working together, with the help and service of godly deacons, we will be encouraged to abound in the work of the Lord - **1 Cor. 15:58**.

SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS AND APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS

Introduction

- A. Text: **Ac. 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13.**
- B. Meaning "servant," the word *diakonos* in the NT can refer to all Christians - e.g. **Jn. 12:26.**
- C. But the word is also used to describe men in a local congregation who possess particular qualifications and have been appointed as "servants" in a special sense within the congregation - e.g. **Phil. 1:1.**
- D. In this lesson, we will consider the scriptural qualifications of deacons.

I. THE APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL SERVANTS IN THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

- A. To fill an early need in the congregation at Jerusalem, men were appointed to a status as servants that corresponds to what would later be known as the work of deacons - **Ac. 6:1-6.**
- B. Those to be selected and appointed to this work of service were to have certain characteristics.
 - 1. **"Men" (Ac. 6:3 NKJV, KJV, ASV, RSV, ESV).**
 - a. There is no evidence that the office of deacon was ever filled in the NT period by anyone other than a male member of the congregation.
 - b. The question is not one of *ability*, but *eligibility*.
 - 2. **"Of good reputation" (Ac. 6:3 NKJV).** "Honest report" (KJV), "good report" (ASV), "good repute" (RSV, ESV).
 - a. *Marturoumenous* = lit., those having been borne witness to.
 - b. Deacons must be men about whom others bear good witness.
 - c. Some translators take this expression to be related to the matter of being full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Cf. "known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom" (NIV).
 - 3. **"Full of the Holy Spirit" (Ac. 6:3 NKJV).** "Holy Ghost" (KJV), "the Spirit" (ASV, RSV, ESV).
 - a. *Plereis pneumatos hagiou* = full of (the) Holy Spirit.
 - b. Cf. "spiritually-minded" (Phillips).
 - c. All Christians are to be "filled with the Spirit" (**Eph. 5:18**).
 - d. To be filled with the Spirit means to be guided by the Spirit's truth and to exemplify the fruit borne when one is so led. Cf. **Gal. 5:16-26.**
 - 4. **"Full of . . . wisdom" (Ac. 6:3 NKJV, KJV, ASV, RSV, ESV).**
 - a. *Plereis . . . sophias* = full of wisdom. Wisdom is the skill of applying knowledge, "a right application of . . . knowledge" (Bullinger).
 - b. Cf. "practical" (Phillips).
- C. To these qualities of godly character are added the qualifications Paul lists in **1 Tim. 3:8-13.**

II. THE DEACON'S CHARACTER

- A. Negative qualifications.
 - 1. **"Not double-tongued" (1 Tim. 3:8 NKJV, KJV, ASV, RSV, ESV).**
 - a. *Me dilogous* = double-tongued, insincere. This is the only occurrence of this term in the NT.
 - b. Cf. "Men of . . . sincere conviction" (Phillips).
 - c. The deacon must be a man of integrity, not unstable, duplicitous, or apt to tell different versions of the "truth" depending on the situation.
 - 2. **"Not given to much wine" (1 Tim. 3:8 NKJV, KJV, ASV).** "Not addicted to much wine" (RSV, ESV).

- a. *Me oino pollo prosechontas* = not given to much wine.
- b. The argument that elders must not drink wine at all (**1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7**), but that deacons are permitted to be moderate drinkers is not supported by the text.
 - 1) James Bales comments: "To argue that by forbidding 'much wine' St. Paul approves some use of wine of *any* and *every* sort, is to adopt a mode of interpretation exceedingly dangerous, and wholly inconsistent with usage."
 - a) *Dangerous*. The reasoning which says that the forbidding of "much wine" allows indulgence in a lesser quantity is just as weak as that which says the forbidding of "murder" permits any lesser mistreatment of another person. "Once lay it down that what is not forbidden is approved, and the Bible becomes a book of the wildest licence" (Bales).
 - b) *Inconsistent with NT usage*. When Peter said that "they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same *flood of dissipation (excess of riot - KJV)*" (**1 Pt. 4:4**), he did not mean to imply that Christians might acceptably engage in such things to a lesser extreme.
 - 2) In our culture, at least, the man who is a drinker at all would run afoul of the qualification "reverent," if not the qualification "not given to much wine."
 - 3) The blamelessness of the deacon's life in general as a Christian would eliminate the very possibility of his being a "social drinker."
3. **"Not greedy for money" (1 Tim. 3:8 NKJV)**. "Filthy lucre" (KJV, ASV), "gain" (RSV), "dishonest gain" (ESV).
 - a. *Me aischrokerdeis* = not "eager even for dishonourable gain" (Bullinger).
 - b. Cf. "not sordidly greedy for profit" (Phillips), "with no squalid greed for money" (Jer).

B. Positive qualifications.

1. **"Reverent" (1 Tim. 3:8 NKJV)**. "Grave" (KJV, ASV), "serious" (RSV), "dignified" (ESV).
 - a. *Semnous* = venerable, honorable, dignified.
 - b. Cf. "men of serious outlook" (Phillips), "men of high principle" (NEB), "respectable" (Jer), "worthy of respect" (NIV).
 - c. The frivolous man who does not take the faith seriously can hardly be expected to take the work of the deacon seriously.
2. **"Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9 NKJV)**. Cf. "in a pure conscience" (KJV, ASV), "with a clear conscience" (RSV, ESV).
 - a. The deacon must have demonstrated a stability with regard to the faith that was "once for all delivered to the saints" (**Jd. 3**).
 - b. Cf. "they should hold to the revealed truth of the faith with a clear conscience" (TEV).
 - c. The deacon must be a man who maintains the revealed faith steadfastly and does not violate his conscience by doing that which conflicts with that faith.

III. THE DEACON'S FAMILY

A. **"Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11 NKJV)**.

1. Specific qualities of deacons' wives are required.
 - a. **"Reverent" (1 Tim. 3:11 NKJV)**. "Grave" (KJV, ASV), "serious" (RSV), "dignified" (ESV).
 - 1) *Semnas* = venerable, honorable, dignified.
 - 2) Cf. "Their wives should share their serious outlook" (Phillips).
 - b. **"Not slanderers" (1 Tim. 3:11 NKJV, KJV, ASV, RSV, ESV)**.
 - 1) *Me diabolous* = not a slanderer, accuser.
 - 2) Cf. "women . . . who will not talk scandal" (NEB), "not gossips" (Jer), "not malicious talkers" (NIV).
 - c. **"Temperate" (1 Tim. 3:11 NKJV, ASV, RSV)**. "Sober" (KJV), "sober-minded" (ESV).
 - 1) *Nephaleous* = sober, temperate, abstinent.

- 2) Cf. "women of . . . self-control" (Phillips).
- d. **"Faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11 NKJV, KJV, ASV, RSV, ESV).**
 - 1) *Pistas en pasin* = faithful in all things. The idea is that of worthiness of trust, confidence.
 - 2) Cf. "trustworthy in every way" (NEB), "quite reliable" (Jer).
2. The character and conduct of deacons' wives greatly affects the work their husbands do in the Lord.

B. **"Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Tim. 3:12 NKJV).** "Manage their children and their households well" (RSV, ESV).

1. As with the same requirement for elders, this condition means just what it says: a deacon must have one wife, i.e. he must have less than two and more than none.
2. Deacons must be good heads of their families. Cf. "Able to control their children and manage their own households properly" (Phillips).

IV. THE APPOINTMENT AND SERVICE OF DEACONS

A. **"But let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless" (1 Tim. 3:10 NKJV).** Cf. "tested" (RSV, ESV), "let them use the office of a deacon" (KJV).

1. "They are to be examined first, and only admitted to serve as deacons if there is nothing against them" (Jer).
2. Blameless.
 - a. *Anekpletoi ontes* = being unimpeachable, with nothing justifiably laid to one's charge.
 - b. Like elders, deacons must have a character that cannot be honorably called into question.

B. **"For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 3:13 NKJV).** Cf. "confidence in the faith" (RSV, ESV).

1. "Those of them who carry out their duties well as deacons will earn a high standing for themselves and be rewarded with great assurance in their work for the faith in Christ Jesus" (Jer).
2. "Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus" (NIV).

Conclusion

- A. The office of deacon is an important part of that which makes up the local congregation of saints - **Phil. 1:1.**
- B. The qualifications that God requires of the men who do this work are needed for the work to be done well.
- C. Just as with the qualifications for elders, we need to take the qualifications for deacons seriously.

PAUL'S EXHORTATION TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS - ACTS 20:17-38

Introduction

- A. Text: **Ac. 20:17-38**.
- B. Paul apparently worked for a longer time in Ephesus (three years) than any other place on his three missionary journeys - **Ac. 20:31**.
- C. We cannot miss the poignancy of his last visit with the elders at Ephesus — the occasion must have been bittersweet.
- D. What would we have said if we had been Paul?
- E. What Paul did say gives all of us much to consider in regard to the Lord's work:
 - 1. Not only elders, but the rest of us.
 - 2. Not only elders already serving, but those just beginning.
- F. At least four points stand out:

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING CAREFUL

- A. Paul urged the elders from Ephesus to "take heed" (**v.28**).
 - 1. "To yourselves."
 - 2. "And to all the flock."
- B. Paul gave similar advice to Timothy - **1 Tim. 4:16**.
- C. It is a serious thing to live as people accountable to God - **2 Cor. 5:10**. Cf. **Hb. 12:28,29**.
- D. "Take heed" and "be careful" are good words of advice - **1 Cor. 10:12**; **Eph. 5:15-17**.
- E. All of us need the reminder Paul sent to Archippus: "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it" (**Col. 4:17**).

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING A SHEPHERD

- A. Paul spoke to the elders from Ephesus about the flock "among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (**v.28**).
- B. As overseers, elders endeavor to "shepherd" (**v.28**) the church.
 - 1. As shepherds, elders do their work under the "Chief Shepherd" (**1 Pt. 5:2-4**).
 - 2. That which they are to "feed" the flock is the truth of God. Cf. **Jer. 3:15**.
- C. The church which they were to shepherd was not their own, but rather "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (**v.28**).
- D. The eldership is a stewardship - **1 Pt. 5:3**.
- E. What carefulness must elders exercise in shepherding those whom God has bought with the blood of His own Son!

III. THE REALITY OF DANGERS TO THE CHURCH

- A. Paul said to the elders from Ephesus, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (v.29). Cf. vv.30-32.
1. Paul's advice was: "Therefore watch" (v.31).
 2. The matter was so serious Paul said he had not ceased "to warn everyone night and day with tears" (v.31).
- B. The dangers facing the Lord's church are quite real. Cf. Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Pt. 1:13.
1. Each of us need to be more careful than we sometimes are to guard what has been entrusted to us. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:13.
 2. Elders, especially, are to watch for spiritual dangers to the flock and to be ready to deal with them - Tit. 1:9-11.
 3. Good shepherds have the courage to interpose themselves between the flock and predators that endanger it. Cf. Jn. 10:11-15.
- C. Elders need to be realistic, wise, and vigilant men whose eyes are wide open to what is going on in the world around them.

IV. THE JOY OF HELPING OTHERS

- A. Paul said to the elders from Ephesus that he had tried to show them "that you must support the weak" (v.35). Cf. vv. 33-35.
1. Elders must serve as examples to their brethren. Of the things that must be exemplified, there is no more fundamental principle in the law of Christ than the principle that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (v.35).
 2. It is in mutual burden bearing that we fulfill the law of Christ - Gal. 6:2.
 3. A severe accounting awaits shepherds who have neglected the weak - Ezek. 34:4.
 4. No one needs elders more than the weak and no work comes closer to the essence of shepherding than tending to the weak - 1 Thess. 5:12-14; Jas. 5:13-16.
- B. Ultimately, this is the source from whence the elder's joy flows: the blessedness of giving (rather than getting), of serving (rather than being served), of making a contribution. Cf. Jn. 13:17.

Conclusion

- A. Jesus is "the Shepherd and Overseer" of our souls - 1 Pt. 2:25. Cf. Mt. 2:6.
- B. Elders serve well when they follow the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Pt. 5:4).
- C. When elders faithfully "shepherd the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pt. 5:2), they have this promise: "when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Pt. 5:4).