

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason, I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

Volume 16, Issue 1

January 2018

Qualifications of an Elder

Introduction

In the last couple of issues we have been looking at how God builds leaders and develops their authority. It is important that we understand that leadership is a calling of the Lord and that there are qualifications for one who would fulfill this calling. One does not become a leader by accident but by the preparation of the Lord .

Qualifications of an Elder

The basic qualifications of an elder reveal the fact that he has taken the Word of God seriously and has applied the teachings of the Lord to his life and that of his family. In other words, he has sought the Kingdom of God for himself and his family by applying the rulership of the Lord to himself, his family, and his work. In Paul's letter to Timothy he lays out the primary requirements for an elder.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 NASB

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

Paul told Titus, when he left him in Crete to set in order the things that remained by appointing elders in every city. The implication of this is that the final step of putting things in order is the appointment of elders. I believe this step is what moves a group of disciples from being a gathering of believers into a lawful assembly (ekkllesia).

Paul told Titus to evaluate the prospective elder by the same set of characteristics that he had told Timothy.

Titus 1:5-9 NASB

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

One of the requirements listed above is that the elders must be “able to teach”. This doesn't necessarily mean that an elder must have what we would call a “pulpit personality”. This type of teaching was not the norm in the early Church. It is only as we have moved to large buildings and created a distinction between clergy and laity that the “pulpit personality” has come into being. Most local teaching in the early church was done in small groups or even one on one. Any Elder should be able to counsel or teach an individual or family in a small environment. This type of teaching is closer to a discipleship relationship than what we would consider to be that of a teacher.

Table of Qualifications for an Elder from the Scriptures

Elder Qualifications from Timothy	Fuller Meaning of Original Greek Words
above reproach	blameless, Or <i>without reproach</i> : one who cannot be <i>laid hold of</i> , who gives no ground for accusation.
husband of one wife	husband with only one wife
temperate	sober, circumspect, vigilant, to be <i>sober and wary; cool and unimpassioned, to be calm, dispassionate, and circumspect</i>
prudent	<i>safe (sound) in mind</i> , that is, <i>self controlled (moderate as to opinion or passion)</i> : - discreet, sober, temperate
respectable	<i>orderly</i> , that is, <i>decorous</i> : - of good behavior, modest
hospitable	<i>fond of guests</i> , that is, <i>hospitable</i> : - given to (lover of, use) hospitality
able to teach	<i>instructive</i>

not addicted to wine	<i>quarrelsome over wine</i>
not pugnacious	a <i>smiter</i> , that is, <i>pugnacious (quarrelsome)</i> : - striker
gentle	<i>forbearing, appropriate</i> , that is, <i>mild</i> : - gentle, moderation, patient
peaceable	<i>not contentious, peaceable</i> : - not a brawler
free from love of money	<i>not a money-lover, unavaricious</i> : - without covetousness, not greedy of filthy lucre
manages household well	<i>placed in front, dwelling, family, home</i>
dignified control of children	children under <i>subordination</i> : - subjection
not a new convert	a <i>young convert</i> (“neophyte”): - novice
good reputation outside church	<i>good evidence</i> given - record, report, testimony, witness
Additional Elder Qualifications from Titus	Fuller Meaning of Original Greek Words
believing children	<i>trustworthy, trustful</i> , believing, faithful, sure, true children
no dissipation	not charged with <i>unsavedness</i> , that is, <i>profligacy</i> : - excess, riot
no rebellion	not charged with <i>unsubdued</i> , that is, <i>insubordinate</i> - disobedient, that is not put under, unruly
no reproach	<i>unaccused</i> , that is, <i>irreproachable</i> : - blameless
not self-willed	not <i>self pleasing</i> , that is, <i>arrogant</i> : - self-willed
no quick-tempered	not <i>irascible</i> : - soon angry
loves what is good	<i>fond of good</i> , that is, a <i>promoter of virtue</i> : - love of good men
sensible	<i>safe (sound) in mind</i> , that is, <i>self controlled, moderate</i> as to opinion or passion - discreet, sober, temperate
just	<i>equitable</i> (in character or act), <i>innocent, holy</i> - just, meet, righteous
devout	<i>consecration, purity</i> from defilement, that is, <i>hallowed, pious, sacred, sure-</i> holy, mercy
self-controlled	<i>strong in a thing (masterful)</i> , that is, <i>self controlled</i> (in appetite, etc.)- temperate
holds fast to word	<i>adhere to, care for-</i> hold fast, hold to, support the trustworthy word
able to exhort	<i>powerful or capable, possible-</i> able, could, power, strong; to <i>call near</i> , that is, <i>invite, invoke</i> (by <i>imploration, exhortation</i> or <i>consolation</i>): - beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort (-ation), intreat, pray

able to refute	<i>powerful or capable, possible-</i> able, could, power, strong; to <i>confute, admonish:</i> - convict, convince, tell a fault, rebuke, reprove; those who <i>dispute, refuse-</i> answer again, contradict, deny, gainsay, speak against
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These requirements fit into three broad categories: 1) personal character, 2) family situation, and, 3) spiritual ability.

It may help us to understand by creating another table where we categorize the requirements for an elder as listed above into the three categories.

Categorization of Elder Requirements

Personal Character	Family Situation	Spiritual Ability
above reproach	husband of one wife	able to teach
temperate	hospitable	not a new convert
prudent	manages household well	holds fast to word
respectable	dignified control of children	able to exhort
not addicted to wine	believing children	able to refute
not pugnacious		
gentle		
peaceable		
free from love of money		
good reputation outside church		
no dissipation		
no rebellion		
no reproach		
not self-willed		
not quick-tempered		
loves what is good		
sensible		
just		
devout		
self-controlled		

As can be seen from the table above an elder has grown up, that is, matured in the Lord. He is well on his way to becoming conformed to the image of Christ. His family is maintained in good order and his spiritual ability is based on the word and its delivery to others.

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