



Qualified Elders are Models for Us All

Intro: Elders or Pastors among any congregation are vital. Not only are these men necessary, they must necessarily be godly, capable, and committed men. Lowering the standard for Elders or Pastors only does damage over time. There are seemingly unlimited stories of heartbreak and pain due to the antics of men who wore the title without meeting the qualifications. God raises godly men to serve as elders/pastors, and these men are meant to (among other things) provide an example and encouragement to those in His care. The Gospel is true! Grace abounds, God renews, and He is good.

Passage: Titus 1:7-9

Background

- Elders/Pastors are Paul's solution for the instability in Crete, but these men must be model Christians and gifted leaders. In all times, Elders in the local church are called to steward the people of God in their care. Such men must always be model Christians and gifted leaders.
 - An Elder/Overseer/Pastor is NOT:¹
 - **A biblical Elder is not simply an older male.**
 - Life experience may indeed contribute to wonderful wisdom, but there is more required.
 - **A biblical Elder is not simply a successful businessman.**
 - "Success and leadership in the business world do not always or necessarily bode well for eldership in the local church."

¹ These are taken from an article by 9marks. Full articles may be accessed here: <http://9marks.org/article/looking-few-good-men/>

- **A biblical Elder is not simply an involved community member.**
 - “Serving the community in these ways certainly doesn’t preclude a man from qualifying. But as we look around to see who might meet the biblical requirements, community service alone cannot be our ultimate criteria.”
- **A biblical Elder is not simply a “good ole’ boy”.**
 - “Living in the same location and having the same friends or even being a member of the same church for 30+ years doesn’t make a man an elder... Likeability can often be deceptive.”
- **A biblical Elder is not a politician.**
 - Those who have difficulty distinguishing between politics and the local church should be avoided for this role.
- **A biblical Elder cannot be a female.**
 - The Elder qualification passages (Titus 1 and 1 Tim. 3) assume a male gender.
 - “Teaching” and “exercising authority” are primary tasks of an Elder, and such tasks are explicitly prohibited for women to do over men in the local church (1 Tim. 2:12-14).
 - The biblical teaching of male leadership in the home and in the local church (1 Tim. 2:12-14; 1 Cor. 11:3) is rooted in the creation account (Gen. 1 & 2); therefore, it may not be relegated to the arenas of the cultural or the temporary.
 - Such a view does not have anything to do with the value, skill, ability, virtue, or status of males or females. Men and women are of equal value before God, and people from either gender may distinguish themselves by evidencing extraordinary skill and virtue. It is clear, from Scripture, that men and women are of equal value and worth, but God creates men and women with distinct and purposeful functions.

Exposition of Major Ideas in the Passage

- **Setting Elders Apart**

- *“God’s steward... able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”*

1) The elders/overseers/pastors are God’s stewards of the congregation

- Elders are *“God’s stewards”* – Christ is the supreme Shepherd and Overseer (1 Pet. 2:25) of all those in His sovereign care (John 10:11-18), and He Himself has given under-shepherds to care for His body (Eph. 4:11-14) under His authority (Eph. 4:15-16).

- There are massive implications here:

- The Elder is not allowed to invent his own rules or structure, but only to implement those already established by the true Master (Titus 1:9).
- Those under the care of the Elder are to carefully listen and willingly submit to the authority of the Elder as he guides according to the commands of the Master (Heb. 13:17).

2) The elders/overseers/pastors are the primary instructors of sound doctrine among a congregation

- *“holding firm... as taught”* indicates the instruction and familiarity of God’s Word the elder is expected to have already benefited from.

- An elder must not be a novice with the Scriptures, and any allowance here will result in serious peril.

- *“the trustworthy word”* indicates both the trustworthiness of the Word of God generally and the trust with which an elder must hold this Word.

- God’s Word is trustworthy indeed, and an elder must trust God’s Word over and against all other words. An elder must find solace and companionship in God’s Word if he may find it nowhere else in the world.

- Platt – *“Being devoted to the truth, ‘holding fast the faithful word’ (NASB), means respecting the*

Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God. It means affirming the Bible's priority, authority, and sufficiency for what we believe and how we will live. It means the minister of God places himself gladly and willingly, and in full submission, under the Word. He is a Word man, a Word minister, a Word-constrained and captivated slave... He would never think of standing before the congregation and doing anything less than proclaiming the Word of God. He will honor *what* God has said, and he will honor *how* God has said it."²

- “*able to give instruction in sound doctrine*”
 - Not only must an elder be instructed in sound doctrine and familiar with it himself, he must also be ‘able to give instruction’ in the same ‘sound doctrine’ he has received and now knows.

3) The elders/overseers/pastors are responsible for rebuking those who contradict sound doctrine

- “[*able to*] *rebuke those who contradict it*”
 - In addition to the task of instructing and teaching (one might say, included in such a task), an elder must also be able to ‘rebuke’ or demonstrate the error of those who contradict sound doctrine.
 - Part of an instructor’s task, in any educational discipline, is to measure the success of the student’s learning. If a student is in error, the instructor must correct the student for his/her benefit.

² Platt, 240

- **Assessing Elders' Credibility**

- “*He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, & but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined.*”

- **Negative & Other's Focused**

- Not Arrogant – self-indulgent, self-focused, self-satisfied
 - Not Quick-Tempered – prone to anger or (possibly) holding a grudge
 - Not a Drunkard – so careless towards others that he overindulges himself to the degree that he loses his wits
 - Not Violent – desirous of physically harming others
 - Not Greedy – so focused on his own wants that he is unconcerned about the needs of others

- **Positive & Other's Focused**

- Hospitable – loves and welcomes those unlike and/or unfamiliar him
 - Lover of Good – loves what God declares to be truly good, admiring it in others and striving towards it himself
 - Self-Controlled – temperate, sober-minded; he keeps his head around and for the sake of others

- **Positive & Personally Focused (though benefitting others)**

- Upright – his thoughts, words, and deeds are consistent and progressively aligning with God's character and commands
 - Holy – he demonstrates a life of piety, no longer dominated by sin
 - Disciplined – similar here to “self-control,” (the distinction is *personal* rather than *others* focus) he must personally master himself

- **An Elder must measure up well when assessed by this standard.**

- Congregations should not compromise on this standard because it is ‘hard’ or ‘inconvenient.’
 - Elders/Pastors should not demand ‘grace’ from their congregations if they display a pattern of failure.

- No doubt, this does throw down the gauntlet... However, we would all do well to remember (1) that it is God who has done the tossing; and (2) it is God who raises and sustains elders/pastors to meet the challenge.

- **Elders, Models for all Christians**

- Does Christ command that all Christians strive towards this same standard of moral character?
 - YES! Unquestionably, Yes!
 - “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).
 - “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled” (Heb. 13:4).
 - “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3).
 - “My beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:9).
 - “Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery...” (Eph. 5:18).
 - “Love does no harm [or wrong] to a neighbor...” (Rom. 13:10).
 - “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have...” (Heb. 13:5).
 - “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Pet. 4:9).
 - “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good” (Rom. 12:9).
 - “Be sober-minded; be watchful” (1 Pet. 5:8).
 - “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:12).
 - “As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Pet. 1:15).

- “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things” (1 Cor. 9:24-25).

Conclusion: Does Christ command that all Christians strive towards this same standard of moral character?

YES! Unquestionably, Yes!

- Why, then, are Elders/Pastors particularly addressed in this way?
 - So that you will see and know: “The Gospel is TRUE! Grace abounds, God’s Spirit changes us from the inside out, and He is good!”
 - “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7).
 1. The Gospel is TRUE! – Grace abounds
 - Christ really does cover us by His grace!
 - Sinners really are counted righteous in God’s sight, and are beloved by God.
 2. The Gospel is TRUE! – God’s Spirit changes us
 - God truly does grant sinners new affections
 - I testify to you that I truly love and desire things I did not before, and I am even growing in that love and desire.
 3. The Gospel is TRUE! – God is good
 - While His commands may seem difficult (even impossible and counterproductive at times), I testify to you that I have and do experience the joy and peace of God – and especially so when I die to myself
 - The pressure-cooker of life’s hard, messy, and painful times truly does produce endurance, character, and hope in me when I submit myself to Christ and follow Him (Rom. 5:3-5).

Application

- What is God commanding us to BELIEVE here?
 - Pastors (both in their role of instruction and correction) are for our benefit (our spiritual good), as they submit themselves to God's Word
 - Moral character, godliness, and consistency are essential attributes of pastors
 - These attributes are both a gift and the goal of all Christians
- What is God commanding us to DO here?
 - Listen to, consider, and apply the godly instruction and correction of your pastors
 - Seek and encourage the biblical attributes of pastors, not those things that would merely be your preferences or personal interests
 - Be encouraged by the faith and practice of your pastors, and strive towards the same faith and practice

My Prayers

- May God guard and keep me, as I serve as a pastor among FBC Diana
- May God grow us all in godliness and raise up men from among this congregation to serve and lead with these qualities
- May God encourage us all and help us strive towards holiness together

Pastor Marc's Commentary

- Outline of the Letter:
 - Salutation (1:1-4) **doctrinal statement #1*
 - Organizing the Churches in Crete (1:5-16)
 - Order and Qualified Elders (1:5-6)
 - **Qualifications of Elders/Overseers (1:7-9)**
 - Dealing with False Teachers (1:10-14)
 - Stark Distinctions and True Intimacy with God (1:15-16)
 - Instructing Various Groups (2:1-14)
 - Instructions for Titus and Others A (2:1-6)
 - Instructions for Titus and Others b (2:7-10)
 - Theology for Life (2:11-14) **doctrinal statement #2*
 - Instructing on Doing What is Good (2:15-3:11)
 - Initial Charge (2:15-3:2)
 - Human Depravity and the Grace of God (3:3-7) **doctrinal statement #3*
 - Final Charge (3:8-11)
- Closing and Benediction (3:12-15)

7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

- “*an overseer*” (v7)
 - The term here is *episkopon* or *episkopos* meaning ‘overseer’ or ‘supervisor.’
 - This term is interchangeable with the term *presbyterous* translated ‘elder.’ In fact, *presbyterous* is used in Titus 1:5 to begin the qualifications section of the letter, and *episkopon* is used here in verse 7. The context and the proximity strongly indicate a virtually identical usage of these two terms.
 - For all intents and purposes, an elder is an overseer, and an overseer is an elder.
 - This term is also used in the 1 Timothy 3 passage, which also describes the qualifications for pastors/elders/overseers
- “*God's steward*” (v7)
 - The term here is *oikonomon* meaning ‘steward’ or ‘manager,’ especially connoting ‘household management and care.’
 - A pastor/elder/overseer, as God’s ‘steward,’ is responsible for dutifully managing household affairs in the true master’s stead.
 - Christ is the supreme Shepherd and Overseer (1 Pet. 2:25) of all those in His sovereign care (John 10:11-18), and He Himself has given under-shepherds to care for His body (Eph. 4:11-14) under His authority (Eph. 4:15-16).
 - There are massive implications here:
 - The Elder/Pastor/Overseer is not allowed to invent his own rules or structure, but only to implement those already established by the true Master (Titus 1:9).
 - Those under the care of the Elder/Pastor/Overseer are to carefully listen and willingly submit to the authority of the Elder/Pastor/Overseer as he guides according to the commands of the Master (Heb. 13:17).

- “*above reproach*” (v7) (1 Tim. 3:2)
 - Paul begins his new section of qualifications with the same phrase as before, “above reproach.” The reader ought to take note of the repetition, for good authors only use such things with intent.
 - It would be wise to use this phrase, just as before, as the qualifier for all that follows.
 - Platt says, “It speaks of one who is not liable to accusation or question as to his personal character and integrity...”³
 - Therefore, one would be wise to consider each qualification in light of this descriptive qualifier.
 - For example, there may be no current reports of a man losing his temper, but he may have a reputation that would make the accusation of such an episode all-too-believable.
 - The reminder from Hughes is important to note again. The credibility of Gospel message itself is at stake when our moral character is on the line.
 - Hughes says, “Christian leaders should always be concerned for the testimony of the gospel. Because we are responsible for the spiritual welfare of others as well as ourselves, we should seek to make the gospel credible to others by our example.”⁴
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - Colossians 1:22 – “[Christ] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and **above reproach** before him”
- “*He must not be arrogant*” (v7)
 - authadē – self-willed, self-satisfied, self-indulgent
 - An Elder must not be focused on or centered upon himself.
 - Does he think first of what he wants to do or say, or does he think first about what is best or most faithful to Scripture?
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - Philippians 2:3 – “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

³ Platt, 235

⁴ Hughes, 322

- Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, patience, **kindness**, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”
- “*He must not be... quick-tempered*” (v7)
 - orgilon – prone to anger or even holding onto anger (like holding a grudge)
 - An Elder must not be easily roused to sinful fury; he must be capable of ‘keeping his wits’ in reasonable situations.
 - Does he lash out when someone disagrees with him, or does he resort to an angry response rather than patience?
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - James 1:9 – “my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, **peace**, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”
- “*He must not be... a drunkard*” (v7) (1 Tim. 3:3)
 - paroinon – given to wine, drunken
 - An Elder must not be one who gives himself over to strong drink. Strong drink, when consumed excessively, will inhibit one’s ability to control his thoughts, words, and deeds; such loss of personal restraint is contrary to the qualification of “self-control” (v8).
 - This qualification says nothing of the sinfulness or goodness of wine or strong drink. While there certainly is ground here to begin a doctrinal stance on such matters, there is limited informative teaching on it. Therefore, in my view, to require total abstinence from alcohol on the basis of this text (or 1 Tim. 3), for an elder or any other Christian, is unwarranted.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - Ephesians 5:18 – “do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery...”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, **self-control**”
- “*He must not be... violent*” (v7) (1 Tim. 3:3)
 - plēktēn – a striker, pugnacious, a brawler

- An Elder must not be one who settles disputes with physical violence. Seemingly the next step related to a contentious disposition, after that of being ‘quick-tempered’ or ‘angry,’ violence is also unbecoming of a man who would serve Christ and others in the role of elder/pastor/overseer.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - Romans 13:10 – “Love does no harm [or wrong] to a neighbor...”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, **peace**, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness**, self-control”
- “*He must not be... greedy for gain*” (v7) (1 Tim. 3:8)
 - *aischrokerdē* – greedy, greedy for immoral gain
 - The idea here may be a general greed or it may be referring to a particular kind of corruption – a willingness to manipulate for the sake of gain. In either case, the greedy pursuit of material wealth must not be found in the life of an elder.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - Hebrews 13:5 – “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have...”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, **goodness**, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”
- “[*He must be*] *hospitable*” (v8) (1 Tim. 3:2)
 - *philoxenon* – lover of strangers or guests
 - An Elder must be loving and welcoming those who are different or unfamiliar. An elder must do more than tolerate others, he must love and welcome them.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - 1 Peter 4:9 – “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, **joy**, peace, patience, **kindness**, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”
- “[*He must be*] *a lover of good*” (v8)
 - *philagathon* – loving what is good, lover of what God loves or declares to be good

- An Elder must love what is actually good, those things and ideas that God says are good. Goodness is not measured by any other standard, and so an elder must love what is good according to the standard of true goodness.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - Romans 12:9 – “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, **goodness**, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”
- “[*He must be*] *self-controlled*” (v8) (1 Tim. 3:2)
 - *sōphrona* – of sound mind, self-controlled, temperate, sober-minded
 - An Elder must not be impulsive or ruled by his passions, but instead exhibit thoughtfulness and self-control.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - 1 Peter 5:8 – “Be sober-minded; be watchful”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, **self-control**”
- “[*He must be*] *upright*” (v8)
 - *dikaion* – just, righteous, in conformity to God’s character
 - An Elder must live and act with impartiality. God’s righteous character and His clear commands must be the pattern of an elder’s thoughts, words, and deeds.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - 1 Peter 2:12 – “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy**, peace, patience, kindness, **goodness, faithfulness**, gentleness, **self-control**”
- “[*He must be*] *holy*” (v8)
 - *hosion* – pious, godly, holy

- An Elder must be one who lives in accord with God’s righteous commands; he must be one who demonstrates a freedom from the slavery to sin.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - 1 Peter 1:15 – “as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, **goodness, faithfulness**, gentleness, **self-control**”
- “[*He must be*] *disciplined*” (v8)
 - *enkratē* – self-controlled, mastered from within
 - An Elder must be self-controlled and disciplined in life.
 - The standard is for all Christians
 - 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 – “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things.”
 - Galatians 5:22-23 – “the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy**, peace, **patience**, kindness, **goodness, faithfulness**, gentleness, **self-control**”
- “*He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught*” (v9)
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- “*able to give instruction in sound doctrine*” (v9) (1 Tim. 3:2)
 - Not only must an elder be instructed in sound doctrine and familiar with it himself, he must also be ‘able to give instruction’ in the same ‘sound doctrine’ he has received and now knows.
 - This distinguishing characteristic of an elder certainly has to do with his general capability to teach or instruct others, but it seems vital that the elder not merely be capable of teaching generally, rather he must be specifically capable of teaching or instructing others in the Word of God.
 - Of course, an elder must be ‘able to teach.’ But he must specifically be so familiar with and so submitted to the Scriptures that he is able to aptly teach and instruct in the sound doctrines that such things produce.
 - The phrase is even further intensified when one considers the language that has been translated ‘give instruction.’ The actual wording (*parakalein didaskalia*) connotes *coming alongside another for the sake of instructing*.
- “[*able to*] *rebuke those who contradict it*” (v9)
 - In addition to the task of instructing and teaching (one might say, included in such a task), an elder must also be able to ‘rebuke’ or demonstrate the error of those who contradict sound doctrine.
 - Part of an instructor’s task, in any educational discipline, is to measure the success of the student’s learning. If a student is in error, the instructor must correct the student for his/her benefit.
 - This correction may not always be received well, and an elder must display his moral character and his ability to instruct strong efforts to correct even the obstinate student.

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