

## The Qualifications of Elders

### Introduction:

1. The church one can read about in the Bible was not an afterthought in the mind of God! Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 3:5-6,8; Eph. 5:31-32.
2. Jesus built the church, Matt. 16:18.
3. The church Jesus built came into existence on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:47.
4. "Church," the word, is from *ekklesia* and means "the called out."
  - a. One is called by the gospel, 2 Thess. 2:14.
  - b. One is called out of darkness, Col. 1:13.
5. "Church," the word, is used in two senses:
  - a. Universal sense, Matt. 16:18.
  - b. Local sense, I Cor. 1:1-2; Rev. 1:10-11.
6. The church, in the local sense, when fully organized according to the biblical pattern, includes (Phil. 1:1)
  - a. Saints in Christ Jesus.
  - b. Bishops.
  - c. Deacons.
7. Regarding the "bishops," there were three Greek words referring to the same people.
  - a. *Presbuteros*, Acts 20:17, translated "elders," or "presbyters."
  - b. *Episkopos*, Acts 20:28, translated bishops or overseers,
  - c. *Poimen*, Acts 20:28, translated pastors or shepherds.(1) **Note:** These words say much regarding their work.
8. The qualifications for elders are set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
  1. Observe: there are two lists of "qualifications," and there is much duplication in the lists.

### Discussion:

#### I. There are Two General Divisions of qualifications, some positive and some negative.

##### A. Positive Qualifications:

1. A man, I Timothy 3:1,5.
  - a. "A man" – not a woman, not a boy.
2. "Desire," I Timothy 3:1.
  - a. Not "desire" for the office per se, but desire for the "work!" The "work" and the "office" must not be separated.
3. Blameless, I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6.
  - a. There are two Greek words for "blameless" in these accounts, but basically it means "not open to accusation," and denotes "one against whom no evil charge can be sustained."
  - b. Unfortunately, there are some who say the only qualification one has to have is to be blameless, and that all the other conditions help determine what is involved in being blameless.
    - (1) However, all Christians are to be blameless, Colossians 1:22. This includes preachers, I Timothy 6:14; deacons, I Timothy 3:10, and widows, I Timothy 5:7.
4. The "husband of one wife," I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6.
  - a. This rules out both polygamy and celibacy.
  - b. It denotes a married man, one joined to a wife in a lawful marriage.
  - c. "One" is more than none, and less than two.
5. Vigilant (KJV), or temperate (NKJV), I Timothy 3:2.
  - a. From *naphaleon*, denoting watchfulness, being on guard. Elders watch for souls, Hebrews 13:17. They must be on guard lest wolves in sheep's clothing make in-roads into the church and lead people astray.
6. Sober, or "sober-minded" (NKJV), I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8.
  - a. From *sophana*, and means to be "in sound mind, to practice self-control."
7. "Of good behavior," I Timothy 3:2.
  - a. From *kosmion*, denoting moderate; regular; orderly, dignified, lives a well-ordered life.
8. "Given to hospitality," or "hospitable" (NKJV), I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8.
  - a. From *Philoxenia*, means a "love of strangers." Cf. Hebrews 13:2; I Peter 4:9.

9. Apt to teach, I Timothy 3:2; cf. Titus 1:9.
    - a. From *didaktikon*, means one who is capable and able to teach. Has knowledge of the scriptures and “able” (Titus 1:9) to impart it to others.
  10. Patient, (“Gentle,” NKJV). I Timothy 3:3.
    - a. From *epieka*, and means “fair, suitable, fair, reasonable, kind, mild, equitable.”
  11. Rules “well his own house,” I Timothy 3:4.
    - a. Involves having his children in subjection with all gravity,” and having “faithful children,” Titus 1:6. “when the Bible uses the term *believer* or *believing* without qualifying terms, it always means obedient believers who have complied with the terms of heaven to be a Christian,” H.E. Phillipps.
  12. Of good report of them which are without, I Timothy 3:7.
    - a. Has a good reputation among those who are not Christians. Cf. Philippians 2:15.
  13. “A lover of good men,” (or of “what is good,” NKJV), Titus 1:8.
  14. Just, Titus 1:8.
    - a. From *dikaion*, meaning “observant of right, righteous, upright, fair, impartial. Cf. I Timothy 5:21.
  15. Holy, Titus 1:9.
    - a. From *bosion*, and means “pious, devout, religious; pious toward God.” Cf. Romans 12:1.
- B. Negative Qualifications:
1. “Not given to wine,” I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7.
    - a. Must abstain from intoxicating liquors. Under the law priests had to abstain from such lest they would be unable to distinguish between the “clean and the unclean,” Leviticus 10:9,10. All Christians are priests, I Peter 2:5,9. Would God expect less of elders in the Lord’s church than He did of priests in the tabernacle??
  2. “No striker,” or “not violent” (NKJV), I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7
    - a. From *plaktan*, denoting one “ready with a blow; a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person.” He must not be quick tempered, ready to fight back when reviled.
  3. “Not greedy of filthy lucre” (“not greedy for money, NKJV), I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7.
    - a. “Filthy lucre” is base gain; not one who obtains money in an unlawful manner. Money itself is not evil, but the “love of money” is, I Timothy 6:10.
  4. “Not a brawler,” (or “quarrelsome, NKJV), I Timothy 3:3
    - a. From *amachos*, denoting a contentious person.
  5. “Not covetous,” I Timothy 3:3.
    - a. Covetousness is idolatry, Colossians 3:5; it is greed, a desire for what belongs to another.
  6. “Not a novice,” I Timothy 3:6
    - a. Not a new convert; he is one who has a working knowledge of God’s word. Cf. Titus 1:9.
  7. “Not self-willed,” Titus 1:7.
    - a. One who *has* to have his way – regardless!
  8. “Not soon angry” (or not “quick tempered,” NKJV), Titus 1:7. Cf. Ephesians 4:26.

**II. These Qualifications may also be Divided into other Categories, such as:**

- A. Physical, Moral, and Spiritual Categories.
- B. Character, Reputation, and Habits.

**Conclusion:**

1. Though the qualifications may naturally be divided into various categories, for the sake of simplicity we have considered them under two broad categories – positive and negative.
2. The important thing is not how to categorize the qualifications; rather the important thing is that a person being considered for the eldership **possess** these qualifications!
3. The nature and number of the qualifications necessarily infer the importance of their **work**. The importance of their work infers the importance of the local **church**, and the importance of the local church infers the importance of every responsible person being a **member** of the Lord’s church.

--Bobby Witherington, August 16, 2015