

Qualifications of Church Elders - part 4

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[0:00] And as the Lord has been using His Word to convict me and to draw me closer to Himself, I'm not shocked that it has been for. And I wanted to add a couple more, honestly. I was very tempted to, but I said, no, I desire to get through this letter to Titus at some point this year.

And in order to do that, we just have to keep pushing on a little bit. So let's go ahead and read Titus 1 verses 5 through 9, and we'll pick up from there.

Apostle Paul writes, So concerning the qualifications of an elder, as I mentioned the last few weeks, there are three areas that must be taken into consideration.

The area of the elder's family life, his personal conduct, and his teaching. And we'll get into the teaching, Lord willing, next week. One thing to keep in mind, though, is that nothing particular about their qualifications compared to the holy life of a believer is called to.

Is that, I mean, there's nothing different, sorry, there's nothing different between the life and qualifications of an elder and what life a believer is called to live in Christ.

[2:10] The only difference is that an elder is set up as the leadership in the church to serve as examples in these areas. And that's why I've had no problem settling down on these four or five verses here for a few weeks, because it's not just about me and Josh and Ian as the elders in the church.

It's not just about those who desire to be elders, though that is all very important and applicable, because that's who Paul is talking about specifically. But the reality is that the only difference is that we are put on display as examples of these things, whereas all believers are called in these areas of holiness.

So, for instance, in the family life, the husband of one wife and having obedient children. And, you know, that's what we're called to. We're called to a, you know, lifelong monogamous marriages, right?

We're called to lifelong, you know, one man, one woman for life. That's what God intended in his design for marriage. Now, it doesn't perfectly play out in our world. We live in a world that has fallen and full of sin, and we see that that is not perfectly held out.

But with the elders and the leaders in the church, they're to set the example and be the example to follow. Having obedient children, that doesn't always follow in any situation.

[3:37] But children who are willing to submit themselves to your authority in the home and to do as they're told and instructed to do is one that should be modeled and exemplified.

And again, certainly not perfectly. And by no means should an elder's home life be held up or, you know, their children, especially is what I'm getting at, should their children be held up as like, okay, children, you are setting the example.

You're the bar to follow. And if you err and you, you know, do something wrong or whatever, shame on you and you get a harsher consequence because you're an elder's child, that's not right.

Children are children, right? And they need to be instructed and brought up appropriately. And so in the home, you know, the elder should be leading in that example and should be, you know, disciplining appropriately, instructing appropriately.

And Lord willing, while the kid is in the home, they're living obediently to the authority of their father and mother. Last week, we got started on this, the area of personal conduct.

[4:52] And we see that there are five negatives and six positives in these verses, in verses, excuse me, seven and eight. We looked at the five negatives last week.

So he must not be arrogant. He should not be a self-interested person that asserts his own will with utter disregard for how others might be affected. That is not Christian thought and mindfulness.

We as believers are called to put others above ourselves, to consider others as more important than ourselves. He must not be quick-tempered. So he must guard against the spirit of hostility, resentment, and anger, even when everything seems to be going wrong and people are critical or indifferent.

Hence why I walk away from the Dutch Blitz table and I don't choose to take it on anymore. I know what it does to me and I say, you know what? I'm going to guard myself against the spirit of hostility and anger.

Not to mention James 1.20, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. We saw the third negative. He must not be a drunk.

[6:00] An elder must not be continually in the presence of alcohol. It should have no control over him. And as we looked at a little bit last week, God has always called the leaders of his people to higher standards than other believers.

And we looked at Leviticus 10.9, that Aaron and the other high priests were to abstain from alcohol. And Proverbs 31, verses 4 and 5, political authorities, political leaders, particularly the king, were to abstain from alcohol because it impairs their judgment.

So God has always held the leaders among his people to a higher standard and expectation. The fourth negative was must not be violent.

An elder should have no part in meanness, abusiveness, or retaliation, no matter how cruelly provoked. Now that can be physical or it can be verbal. It can be emotional.

The abuse that is out there, and that does come from the pulpit in some places, is just, I'm flabbergasted when I read about it. I cannot believe that such people are brought in as leaders in a church who treat others in such a harsh manner.

[7:08] But that's not what an elder's supposed to be. They're supposed to be not, they're not to be violent. Whether it's, you know, hey, let's go fisticuffs outside in the parking lot, or abusively talking down to others and emotionally scarring them.

Conflict should always be resolved peacefully, reasonably, and without animosity. And then the fifth negative was he must not be greedy for gain. And Paul's referring to a person who without honesty or integrity seeks wealth and financial prosperity at any cost.

And we see that, I mean, people do get into ministry to make a profit. And that started in Paul's day. And it's still happening today. But it's not enough that elders should not be scoundrels.

The grace of God should also, should so permeate their lives as to be evident through the expression of good works. And I reference James 2.18, show me your faith apart from your works and I'll show you my faith by my works.

And thus enters the six positive traits of elder candidates. The six positive traits that all believers should seek to emulate and have in their life as they follow Christ.

[8:24] First trait number one, he must be hospitable. Excuse me. He must be hospitable. The believer must be willing to use what he has for the best purposes and good of others.

Selfless provision and care for others is a practical step of showing that you're not greedy for gain. You want to show that you're not clinging to and you're grasping and holding on to tightly your worldly goods and money and all that?

Be hospitable to others. Be willing to sacrificially give. Have them in your home. Give what they may need. Even if it means you have to go without for their sake.

It's a quality that God expects of all his people. Think about the Old Testament. Exodus 22 verse 21. We see that sojourners were to be treated kindly. Exodus 22 verse 21 says, You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him.

For you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. That's God speaking to his people. Do not wrongly oppress and treat a sojourner. And we also see in the Old Testament that a lack of hospitality was a condemnable offense.

[9:37] It was a condemnable offense. Deuteronomy 23 verses 3 and 4. No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the 10th generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way when you came out of Egypt and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Baor from Pethor of Mesopotamia to curse you.

So that is a clear condemnation of people who did not show hospitality to others. So God expects hospitality to be shown from his people and he will, or at least in this instance in Deuteronomy, he

condemns and punishes those who don't show hospitality.

What about in the New Testament? That's the Old Testament. That doesn't apply to us, right? Well, that's what some Christians want to believe. What about New Testament expectations? Well, think about this. And I just, I don't have time to go into these verses.

I want you to check it out if you're writing it down. Matthew 25 verses 31 to 46. Matthew 25 verses 31 to 46. The very basis for Jesus' final judgment laid out in those verses is the expression of hospitality towards those in need or the lack thereof.

Lord, when did we, you know, when did we see you needy? When did we see you thirsty? When did we see you hungry? You know, those questions that are asked at the judgment seat of Christ.

[11:18] When did this happen, Lord? And he says, surely as you've done it to the very least of these, so you've done it to me. So hospitality, it's a basis for the final judgment of Christ.

And Christians are urged to show hospitality to both believers and unbelievers. Romans 12, 13. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Hebrews 13, verse 2. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 1 Peter 4, 9.

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. Show hospitality without grumbling, without complaining, or even without making an excuse.

I've used this one. You haven't, but I have. Man, the house is not ready to receive guests. We can't have anybody.

[12:22] Look at the mess. The kids haven't picked up their stuff. There's laundry everywhere. Dishes are undone. No, we can't have anybody around today. God bless you all for having immaculate, perfect homes.

I strive to that someday. But we do make excuses, don't we? And yet, there it is. 1 Peter 4, 9. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Amen. We're all imperfect in our ways. And I'm sure, you know, you can come to my home. Don't say anything about my stuff, and I won't say anything about yours. And I'll complain about my kids' stuff all day.

So while hospitality is an earmark of the Christian's faith, believers are also discouraged from taking a meal or extending hospitality to certain people as well. Hospitality is such an important thing in our lives.

We should show it and have hospitality with believers and unbelievers, but there are people that you shouldn't. 1 Corinthians 5 tells us that to not have a meal or extend hospitality to unrepentant believers.

[13:34] Well, that seems kind of harsh, doesn't it? Well, no. No, it doesn't. You have unrepentant believers need to understand the consequence of their actions and decisions to not repent of their sin.

So, Paul says, don't do it. 1 Corinthians 5, 11. You're not to extend hospitality to teachers of false doctrines. 2 Timothy 3, 5 and Titus 3, 10-11, which we'll get to in six months.

And you're not to extend hospitality to intentional deceivers, 2 John 7-11. So there are people, you should seek to have an opportunity for hospitality for believers and unbelievers at all times.

But there are those that you need to be particularly careful of. I've heard of stories of people who say, oh, well, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, they come to my door and they have something to share with me.

So I bring them in and give them, you know, some coffee and tea and bread and whatever and, you know, we sit and talk and share the gospel with them. Well, that's all good and dandy for one.

[14:48] All right, but how many times are you doing that? Are you doing it every time? And are you giving them the opportunity to share with you their false teaching? Just things to think about. I'm not saying you're wrong if you do that or not.

I've engaged in conversations with the same Jehovah's Witness several times until he stopped coming around. That's kind of discouraging. So hospitality is no small matter in the church and it's a doctrine that's worthy of deeper study and application.

And now we could spend weeks on just this alone. But think about this, for instance, at what point of doctrinal deviation do we draw the line of being hospitable? Now, if there's something as far as doctrine where we're not to be hospitable with someone, well, where is that?

Where does that lie? And in what capacity can we engage an unrepentant believer? We want them to repent. We want them to come back into fellowship with the church.

So in what capacity can we engage them? How can we have these conversations if we're not showing hospitality? And here's one.

[15 : 58] How does it relate to the discussion on immigration and people who are in our country illegally? I didn't hit a nerve there, did I? Hot topic in our country, right?

Illegal immigration and our illegal immigrants and they need to go and so on and so forth. Well, where does hospitality fall in there for the believer? How should we view it?

What do we think of it? Erwin Lutzer, give a quote from him, says, hospitality is a test for godliness because those who are selfish do not like strangers, especially needy ones, to intrude upon their private lives.

They prefer their own friends who share their lifestyle. Only the humble have the necessary resources to give of themselves to those who could never give of themselves in return.

It's a test of godliness because those who are selfish do not like strangers to intrude upon their private lives. Positive number two, you must be a lover of good.

[17 : 08] So he must be hospitable and he must be a lover of good. An elder ought to have a strong affection for the things and people who are genuinely good. He should not simply be passive and philosophical in his love for good, but he should embody it and be zealous to see that what is good, to see that what is good flourish in and out of the church.

An elder, particularly in a believer, generally should desire to see good flourish. We should desire to see good happening both in and out of the church.

You might be saying, well, duh, don't we all love good and hate evil? Well, maybe you might say that tongue-in-cheek, but what's your definition of good?

What's your definition of evil? And where are you compromising? Where are you making the compromise in your definition versus what God has clearly stated? Must be a lover of good.

Matthew Henry says, it is the design of Christianity to sanctify us in Christ. Then he goes on to quote Titus 2.14, He gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and purify us to himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

[18 : 29] J.C. Ryle says, a zealous Savior ought to have zealous disciples. Are we zealous for good? I mean, not passively sitting back like, oh, that's a good thing to happen, or I'm so glad to hear that, but we're actually out there in the trenches doing it.

It's one of those things that I think comes up year after year in our youth group leader meetings and such. We want to be involved in the community. We want to have a ministry to people outside of the church, but what does that look like?

How do we do it? And how do we instill and cultivate this zealousness for good in the young people that God has entrusted to us in bringing up and to know him?

It's a conversation we're having even now. So what does that look like? Philippians 4a says, finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there's any excellence, and if there's anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

And I'm going to take it a step further, not that I'm adding the scripture, not just think about it, but do them. Do these things. Be zealous for good. Be a lover of good. Those who lead the church should be known as those who embody the zeal for good works to the glory of God.

[19 : 48] They both encourage it and do it. Number three, they must be self-controlled. Must be self-controlled. This could also be translated as sensible or prudent.

King James, I think, puts sober. The revised standard, I actually like the way they put it, master of himself. It's someone who's not rash or foolish, but who's in control of his passions and desires.

He has control of the things he thinks about and does. He does not allow circumstances or the immorality or foolishness of others to distract him and gain his attention and interest.

You must be self-controlled, a master of yourself. Romans 12, 3 says, For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought, but be sober-minded concerning yourself.

Recognize you're a weak individual. Apart from Christ, you are dead in your weakness.

[20:55] You're not as strong as you think you are. 1 Corinthians 10, 12, and 13 say, Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he'll not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

There's never, never, a situation in your life that you have engaged the temptation and given into it to carry out sin where God has tempted you beyond your ability to endure it.

He's always given a way of escape. I say it this way. He always, in the time of temptation and testing, there's always an escape hatch that God has given you to get out with.

Thing is, people don't like the escape hatch. They'd rather go in the way that they shouldn't go, give in to the temptation that they shouldn't give in to. It must be self-controlled.

[22:04] I think it's forth. It must be upright. This word upright, *dikaios* in Greek, it's used by Paul here to reference a human ethical quality.

It's more frequently translated righteous, particularly when speaking of God, 2 Timothy 4.8, or a believer in Romans 3.10 and 5.7. Thus, the word usage here alludes to a commitment to that which is just and equitable.

It's a commitment to righteousness. It's a commitment to do the right thing. The elder who is just or righteous or upright is a man who reflects the just and fair character of God.

He's a man whose life is approved by God. Fifthly, must be holy. This is not referring to someone whose position is superior to another.

Rather, it refers to one who reverences and worships God with their life. And you pair that with the one beforehand, must be upright.

[23:17] So you got upright and holy. And they describe conduct appropriate toward people and God. And that's Luke 10.27. And anybody who's seen a spidge sweatshirt knows what Luke 10.27 says.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. That's what Jesus commands and expects of His followers and His disciples.

Love the Lord your God with all your mind, strength, heart, everything you've got, and love your neighbor as yourself. The two great commandments, right? It's like 1A and 1B.

And that's what God calls us to. Holy and upright. Loving God and loving people. Paul testifies to his own example among the Thessalonians as being, in 1 Thessalonians 2.10, you are witnesses. And God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. Paul's saying, look, you witnessed this and God has witnessed this, that we conducted ourselves in holiness and righteousness and we were blameless in our conduct toward all of you.

[24:36] We so quickly want to adopt the quick card of, well, I'm a sinner. And we give ourselves excuses for the way we act or react or the way we speak and what we say.

Oh, well, I can't be blamed for this because of this, that, and the other. And that's what the world is looking for is a bunch of excuses to live life the way they want to, to say things the way they want to say them and they don't want to be held accountable.

And that's what people are looking for. They're looking for a way to get out of accountability for their actions. But Paul is saying, look, we were intentional about the way we lived among you.

You are our witnesses and so is God that this is the case. A Christian now cannot achieve sinless perfection in this life. That cannot happen.

So, let me take that burden off you if you thought you were putting that on. But every sin is to be confessed and acknowledged. 1 John 1, 8, 9, but if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and that the truth is not in us.

[25:42] You say you don't have sin? No, you're a deceiver and a liar. You're not being honest. But, if we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That's a promise from God. That word confess, Greek word *homologeo*, literally means like, if you were to bring a literal definition to it, to say the same thing. So, if you say the same thing about your sin that God says about your sin, that is a true confession.

It's not, it's not just saying, sorry, oh, I'm sorry. Sorry that I offended you. Sorry that I hurt you. No, it's like, it's recognizing, man, I truly offended you and hurt you and that was wrong.

And I was wrong. That is what a confession looks like. Biblical confession. It's acknowledging the wrongness and acknowledging also that God says it's wrong and I own that.

And by God's grace and mercy, not only elders, but all believers could be cleansed from all unrighteousness. And like Paul, they can live holy and righteous lives pleasing the Lord and being an example to others.

[26:56] these are not impossible things to live up to. These are not impossible standards to live up to. It's only impossible apart from Christ. But in Christ it's not.

Rather, with God, all things are possible. And then finally, the sixth and final one must be disciplined. The word disciplined here quite literally means self-control, which we've already had. Having power over self, that's kind of the same thing. So you see a very important aspect here of being careful about what you do and say and that you are accountable for it.

The elder lives an exemplary life on the outside because he submits to the Holy Spirit's control on the inside. A believer, and you've had these, you've known these, right, in the course of your life, people in the church who are exemplary.

You look at them like, man, they are an awesome believer. Their life just seems so perfect. They never do anything wrong. And this is not a knock on them. You know, it's like, man, they've got it together.

[27:58] They're doing everything right. Well, the only reason why that can happen is because they are submitting to the Holy Spirit and the word of God day after day.

And so you see worked out in their life what God's doing internally for them. And an elder who does not continually monitor their own life an elder who does not continually confess their sin to the Lord and keep their conscience clear, they're not fit to lead God's people no matter how outwardly righteous their life may appear to be.

No matter how outwardly righteous their life may appear to be. And that's an act, by the way. It's not real. They can't do these things. They should not be in leadership.

2 Corinthians 1.12 for our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God and supremely so toward you.

There's another Paul just gloating on himself, ain't he? Just puffing himself up, putting himself on a pedestal, isn't he? No. He's already referred to himself as the chief of all sinners, the worst of them all.

[29:20] He's just, what he's doing is setting an example that it's possible to do this. It's not easy. It calls for a lot of self-denial, taking up your cross each day, right?

Following Christ. It's not easy, especially, you know, when you talk about things you have weaknesses in. For me, for the longest time, anger. Like, I would blow up.

I still have my moments. I had a short fuse. By the grace of God, it's gotten a little longer. I think it's actually gotten quite a bit longer. But you don't know that me.

You don't know that Ken Barada, but I do. So it takes time and work and persistence, but you can do it. We have to be mindful of the fact that God's basic standards are not higher for pastors and elders than for other believers.

What God is calling here, like these are listed out specifically for an elder, but it's for all people. It's for all believers, those who are in Christ. Matthew 5, 48, you therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

[30:33] That's all people. That's all followers of Christ. 1 Peter 1, 15 and 16, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct. Since it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy.

God has set a standard for all believers to be holy and to be perfect as he is. He set the example in Christ and he's given examples like Paul and others throughout church history and throughout this history now, modern history in the church.

We have examples of people. Some of them are more well known than others. A lot of them are not known well at all. I can think of people, I can name you names of people, you'll be like, I don't know who that person is.

You're right because they were at West Endicott Baptist Church where I was growing up and who I saw living out that life. And you can maybe even name people here who are no longer here. If you've been here forever, and the people before you who passed on were here even more forever than you, and you can say, man, that person and this person, we got names of them all around this

building.

I don't know these people, but a lot of people do. Our minutes, church meeting minutes, no. And these people were apparently made an impact so in the church and in the community that they were worth remembering or mentioning in remembrance.

[31:55] So we have them all around us. Not all of them are Billy Graham. Some people know Billy Graham. In fact, you'd probably have to talk to some young person who doesn't know Billy Graham, right?

And even they may know Billy Graham. But the point is this. That's not everybody, right? Most of the people that we see living out this life are in our midst.

And to be hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, it's to possess qualities that do not come naturally to us. No one can be truly upright or holy in the sight of God until they've received divine pardon from Him.

Romans 3, 10-12, None is righteous, no, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they've become worthless. No one does good, not even one.

This is the Word of God about us. No. No one in their natural self does good. In fact, Romans 3, 23 says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

[33:00] We are all sinners. We've all offended God in some way. In and of ourselves, we are selfish people who seek for our own good above all else.

And we are dead in our trespasses and sins and we follow the prince of the power of the air according to Ephesians 2. But, Romans 5, 8, God shows his love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Though we were offensive to a holy God, he sent his son out of love and concern for us to die on a cross, to take the penalty for our sin, to shed his blood.

And Romans 10, 9, tells us that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. And that's where it starts.

That's where these different characteristics and attributes given for elders and for all people who are in Christ starts. It starts by recognizing that you are a sinner and that if you stand before God on judgment day, you're going to have to give an account for your sin and you're going to have to pay for it yourself.

[34:15] But God, because of his love with which he loved us, sent his son Jesus to die and take the penalty of our sin. And if we confess and call on him for salvation, we will be saved.

And we will stand before God in judgment still. And in our own flesh, we stand guilty. But when we've called on Jesus and we put our faith and trust in him, his righteousness is put on us.

And so when God sees us, he sees the righteousness of Christ and he says, you may enter in. You may enter my glory. But if he looks at us and he doesn't see the righteousness of Christ, depart from me.

I never knew you. Father God, I thank you for your word. And I thank you for this challenging part of scripture that causes us to reflect in our own lives, to reflect on our own character, how we're living. And Lord, I just pray that for those here who know you, if they see a weakness in an area, Lord, that they would call on you, they would confess, they would repent and seek to walk close to you, Lord.

[35:31] And those here who don't know you, this is the first time they've heard this, Lord. Lord, I pray that you'd impress on their heart their need of a savior to know that the day is going to come when this life is over that we will stand before you in judgment.

And if we have to give an account and we have to pay the penalty for our sin, we stand condemned and we don't stand a chance. but because of your love, because you sent your son to die as the substitutionary sacrifice, he's the one who took the penalty and wrath for our sin.

And if we call on him for salvation, we can be made righteous through his good works and through his good work on the cross. Lord, thank you for saving me, a rotten sinner, and thank you for making me every day more in the image of your son.

In Jesus' name, amen.