

Qualifications

In the lessons we have been looking at, we have discussed some of the things that are involved in the local congregation's divine instruction from God to be scripturally organized under the authority of Elders.

We looked at the qualifications as given for Deacons. We want to emphasize, at this point, that in choosing either Elders or Deacons, we will all be required to make judgments, assessments, of the men presented by the Elders for consideration. An important observation is that we are all given, by God, the right to develop our own opinions and judgments based on what we see in the scriptures. The emphasis is that since, in the process of choosing Deacons or Elders, each member of the congregation will be making judgments on the various men that may be put forward, we all need to exercise scriptural caution in our judgment, remembering that they are judgments, our opinions, and may not necessarily be held by anyone else. Remember a discussion we have had on more than one occasion concerning the number of cups used in the Lord's Supper. Some conclude that many are OK and some conclude that only one should be used, since the scriptures are not definitive, either decision is a judgment and should be viewed as such and respected as such by both sides of the opinion. It is only when that opinion begins to be bound as doctrine that sin occurs.

John Kennedy once made this statement,



“Ask not what your country can do for you, Ask what you can do for your country”

I would amend that to say...



“Ask not what more God can do for you, Ask what more we can do for God”

The point here was that God has done everything man needs to be complete in his relationship with God. In our Basic Christianity class, a while back, we looked at 2 Peter 1:1-7, and we noted Peter's conclusion in...

2 Peter 1:8-11



8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. **10** Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; **11** for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

When we think about what God can do for us, we truly need to understand that God has already given man all the things he needs to live a righteous life now and to inherit a home in heaven when Christ comes again. There is just no point in...



Asking what more God can do for us

God has already done everything He is going to do. This then brings us to the second half of the statement,

“Ask what more can we do for God.”

1 John 4:19

19 We love, because He first loved us.

There are a couple of points in this thought that we want to emphasize...

A) God depends on His children to fulfill His wishes in His Church.

That means, among other things, filling the functions of the various offices He has established. This is a principle...

B) Obedience is based in love

Christ says it this way in...

“That if we love Him we will keep His commandments.”

While it obviously is not a commandment of God that every man be an Elder or Deacon, I don't think we can argue that it is ***not*** His desire that every man who meets the qualifications should or would desire to serve Him.

While there are principles of procedure that the scriptures indicate, there is no ceremonial ritual attached to the appointment of Deacons or Elders seen in the scriptures. In Acts chapters 6 and 7 we see some of the principles of the selection process when 7 men were chosen to facilitate the problem of the Grecian widows being neglected and how the congregation chose the 7 to present to the Apostles for consideration to fulfill the task of working for the congregation and the Lord. The Apostles then did their due diligence in examining these men before presenting them back to the congregation for consideration. The process of selection and examination must always be applied in accordance with all the scriptures teach about how we are to deal with each other, that if anyone has something against one of the men selected, as to why they should not be appointed, Christ teaches that we should go to that person privately and in love and try to resolve whatever issues there may be, only when that option fails, should the Elders be brought in, and if that doesn't work, in the final step, the congregation.

In this lesson we are going to be looking at the qualifications of an Elder as seen in ...

Titus 1:5

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,

1 Tim 3:1

1 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

First, I think it important to point out that in every instance where Elders are mentioned, except for the occasion where the term is referenced towards an individual, it is plural, indicating that there is always a plurality of men occupying the office in the local Church. The scriptural organization of the Church is that there be more than one man in the office.

That said, Paul tells Timothy to seek out those men who would willing to fulfill God's desire for Elders in every Church, weigh them against the qualifications, and appoint them to the position of authority in the local congregation as an Elder.

As we prepare to look at the qualifications proscribed by God we need to remember that these qualifications are not necessarily absolutes. By that I mean that many of these things don't have an absolute degree to be met, they are subjective in nature. Not all of them, but the context of the qualification tells us how it should be viewed. The idea of blameless speaks to the condition someone stands in in their relationship with God. You are either forgiven or you are not. It does mean that we agree with them on every point or that on a personal level we don't like them. The idea of vigilant on the other hand speaks to degrees in a manner of speaking. In our judgment one man may appear more vigilant than another, the idea of degrees, does this make one man more qualified than the other or does it disqualify the one. The truth is that all of the above might be true and that is where our judgment comes into play. Our responsibility is, to the best of our ability, weigh what we see in each man against the qualifications and decide if they would lead the congregation in the soundness of the truth, the way of the Lord, and if we could subject ourselves to them.

5 With this understanding, let's look at the qualifications as seen in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3...
The Bishop or Elder must be;

6 1) Blameless;
Anepilepton
A person against whom no evil can be proved; one who stands before God having been forgiven of his sins and who no longer engages in them.

7 2) The husband of one wife.
The term means "A one woman man", scholars all agree that this means he should be a married man, but not a polygamist, a practice common at the time especially among the Gentiles.

8 3) Vigilant;
Neephaleon, from nee, not and pino, to drink. It means watchful; the idea being that as one who drinks is apt to sleep, the who abstains is more likely to keep awake, and attend to his work and charge. A Bishop has to watch over the church, and watch for it; and this will require all his care and circumspection.

9 4) Sober;
Soophrona, prudent, or, according to the etymology of the word, from soos, sound (healthy), and phreen, mind, or a man of a sound and healthy mind, especially in

regard to the scriptures; having a good understanding, and the complete control of all his desires.

- 10** 5) Of good behavior;
Kosmion, orderly, decent, grave, and correct in the whole of his appearance, carriage, and conduct. While the preceding term, *soophrona*, refers to the mind; this latter, *kosmion*, refers to the external manners.
- 11** 6) Given to hospitality;
Philoxenon, literally, a lover of strangers. One who is ready to receive into his house and give relief to everyone in need.
- 12** 7) Apt to teach;
Didaktikon, one who is capable of teaching; not only wise himself, but ready to communicate his wisdom to others.
- 13** 8) Not given or addicted to wine;
Paroinon
This word not only signifies one who is inordinately attached to wine, a winebibber or tippler, but also one who is imperious, abusive, insolent, whether through wine or otherwise.
- 14** 9) No striker;
Pleekteen
This means not quarrelsome; not ready to strike a person who may displease him; no persecutor of those who may differ from him; not prone, as one wittily said:
To prove his doctrine orthodox By apostolic blows and knocks?
- 15** 10) Not greedy of filthy lucre;
Aischrokerdee
This means not desirous of base gain; not using base and unjustifiable methods to raise and increase his revenues.
- 16** 11) Patient;
Epieikee
Meek, gentle; the opposite to *pleekteen*, a quarrelsome person, where meekness and patience do not reign, gravity cannot exist, and the love of God cannot dwell.
- 17** 12) Not be a brawler;
Amachon
Not contentious or litigious, but quiet and peaceable.
- 18** 13) Not be covetous;

Aphilarguron

One who seeks the office not for the purpose of obedience to God, but for the sake of pride or glory, and would also apply to the one who has an inordinate desire for anything.

19 14) One who rules his own house well;

Tou Idiou Oikou Kaloos Proistamenon

One who properly presides over and governs his own family. One who has the command, of his own house, not by sternness, severity, and tyranny, but with all gravity; governing his household by rule. This appears to be a maxim of common sense; no family can be prosperous that is not under subjection, and no person should govern a family but the head of it, the husband, who is, both by nature and the appointment of God, the head or governor of his own house.

20 The picture Paul paints for Timothy and Titus in his description of the qualifications for an Elder is of a man who desires to fulfill the desires of God in the organization of the Church. A man who stands blameless in his relationship with God having been forgiven of his sins, a one-woman man who has himself under control according to the scriptures. A man who is careful in his conduct and demeanor, using common sense and the wisdom of God to live a devout and just life and is seen that way by his brethren and the world. Someone who sees a need and addresses it to the best of his ability, while at the same time, is someone who can discern falsehood and has the ability to refute it and teach sound doctrine. Someone who is not addicted to wine or strong drink, this is a man who understands that the only controlling factor in his life must be the truth that is God. The Elder in Christ's Church is a loving and compassionate man who is seeking unity and not looking for a fight, but is gentle and loves what is good. To this end he is peaceable and not quick tempered. He is not wrapped up in the things of this world, not loving money nor looking for immoral or sordid gain. He is someone who seeks to do the will of God in all things, which is seen in his management of his own house and children, who are respectful and obedient to both him and God, being believers themselves. The Elder is not a new convert, but has established himself in his faithful obedience to the true word of God and in his teaching that word to others.

<i>Timothy</i>	<i>Titus</i>
Above Reproach	Above Reproach
Husband of one wife	Husband of one wife
Temperate	Self-controlled
Prudent	Sensible
Respectable	Devout
Hospitable	Hospitable
Able to Teach	Able to exhort in sound doctrine / Able to refute those who contradict
Not addicted to wine or strong drink	Not addicted to wine
Not Pugnacious	Not pugnacious
Gentle	Loving what is good
Peaceable	Not quick tempered
Free from the love of money	Not fond of sordid gain
Manages his own house well	Not self-willed
Keeps his children under control with dignity	Has believing children, under control (not accused of dissipation or rebellion)
Not a new convert	Holding fast the faithful word in accordance with the teaching
Have a good reputation with those outside	Just

Brethren we have a wonderful privilege and opportunity to show forth the love of God in our obedience to His desire for the organization of His Church here in Oakdale. I would encourage us all to take seriously this responsibility with love in our hearts and God's truth as our guide.