

Setting the Church in Order # 2

Qualifications of Elders

Int.

1. Aim: To discuss the selection process for appointing elders.
2. It is God's plan for the church to be organized with Elders and Deacons
 - a. In every church. Acts 14:23
 - b. In every city. Tit. 1:5
3. The qualifications are given in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-10
 - a. Some have suggested that these lists are nothing more than guidelines to be used in selecting elders and not to be followed exactly.
 - b. But a man who is serving as an elder must possess all these qualities.
 - i. If he can be without one of these characteristics then many questions arise!
 - ii. How many does he have to possess?
 - iii. Which ones are essential and which ones are not ?
 - iv. Who decides this ?
 - c. A man must possess all the characteristics to be scripturally qualified to serve as an elder.
 - d. But this does not mean he is perfect
 - i. There is a big difference between possessing certain qualities and being perfect
 - ii. A man might be vigilant, but not to perfection. So it is with other qualities.
 - iii. Now a man is either married or not married. He is either a father or not a father.
 - iv. But other qualities he may possess but not to perfection and he will continue to grow and develop these qualities.

Discussion

I. QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

- A. The qualifications can be divided by positive and negatives. The positives outnumber the negatives more than 2 to 1.
- B. Negative Qualifications of Elders
1. **Not a Novice** - I Tim. 3:6
 - a. Not a new convert or beginner
 - b. Green lumber does not make a good house
 - c. Spiritual maturity is necessary
 - d. A novice might become puffed up with pride----
 - (1) Because of the high position - Because of the authority involved.
 - (2) In this case he would fall into the same condemnation as that into which the devil fell
 2. **Not soon angry** - Tit. 1:7 "Not quick tempered" = NKJV
 - a. Not easily irritated or provoked
 - b. A man who is quick to "fly off the handle" will make rash statements that will hurt others and cause some to stumble.
 - c. An elder must be calm
 3. **Not self-willed** - Tit. 1:7 -
 - a. Not stubborn, pleasing self - wanting his own way
 - b. III John 9 -Diotrephes was this kind of man
 - c. Must be considerate of others and their feelings

4. **Not given to wine** - I Tim. 3:3
 - a. Does not use strong drink - Alcohol controls a person - enslaves
 - b. An elder must not use strong drink in any manner

5. **Not a brawler** - I Tim. 3:3 "Not quarrelsome" NKJV
 - a. Not a quarreler or one who disagrees in a loud ugly manner
 - b. Avoids disputes and misunderstandings
 - c. An elder must not be quarrelsome, or abusive and overbearing

6. **No striker** - I Tim. 3:3 "Not violent" NKJV
 - a. Not ready to fight, quick on the trigger
 - b. One who is quarrelsome, ready to fight, a violent person
 - c. Not one who carries a chip on his shoulder.

7. **Not greedy of filthy lucre** - I Tim. 3:3 "Not greedy for money" NKJV
 - a. Not wanting money so bad he will be dishonest
 - b. Does not seek gain by dishonorable means
 - c. An elder should not be a person whose aim is money and material gain.

8. **Not covetous** - I Tim. 3:3
 - a. "No lover of money" - ASV
 - b. A man whose heart is set on making money does not have enough time nor desire to be an elder of the church
 - c. A covetous eldership will make a covetous church, and a covetous church is a dead church. [The Eldership, J.W. McGarvey, p.59]

C. Positive qualifications of Elders

1. **DESIRE THE OFFICE** - 1 Tim. 3:1

- a. They have an enthusiastic eagerness to serve
- b. Spiritual ambition to do this great work.
- c. Word Desire = means to seek or reach after
- d. You cannot draft a man to be an elder or deacon
- e. The desire is not motivated by concern for personal honor and gain, but by genuine love for the opportunity to serve the cause of Christ.

2. **Husband of one wife** - 1 Tim. 3:2 -

- a. Forbids:
 - (1) Celibacy - not married
 - (2) Polygamy - multiple wives
 - (3) A woman
- b. Must be married - not single - A woman would not be qualified to serve as an elder
- c. Must have one living wife - not two or more
- d. A man who is married to a second woman, with the first having died, is still the husband of one wife.

3. **Having faithful children** - Tit. 1:6

- a. Faithful believers - Christians
- b. "Having children that believe" = ASV
- c. Not accused of riot or unruly

- d. Children - one or more
 - e. Grown children who are away from home are now responsible for their own lives. If they go astray after leaving home it would not necessarily disqualify the man.
4. **Ruleth well his own house** - I Tim. 3:4-5
- a. Whole family - his household and the ones in it.
 - b. He is able to make decisions, and to bear the responsibility for them.
 - c. To be over - preside over
 - (1) Wife in subjection
 - (2) Having control over his own children
5. **Of Good behavior** - I Tim. 3:2
- a. Orderly = ASV
 - b. Good manners, courteous, not rude but polite
6. **Vigilant** - I Tim. 3:2
- a. Cautious, awake
 - b. Keen to see and do what is right and good
7. **Sober** - I Tim. 3:2
- a. Use good common sense
 - b. Of sound mind, wise, sane, discreet, self-controlled
 - c. Not silly or childish

8. **Patient** - I Tim. 3:3

- a. Gentle, mild, longsuffering
- b. Able to bear up under strain
- c. It takes patience and longsuffering to lead people
- d. Kind, considerate, easily approached

9. **Temperate** - Tit. 1:8 "Self controlled" NKJV

- a. Self control
- b. Control of tongue, temper
- c. If one cannot control himself then he will not be able to lead others

10. **Just** - Tit. 1:8

- a. Fair, no respecter of persons
- b. Renders to each his due
- c. Impartial in his dealings - 1 Tim. 5:21

11. **Gentle** - I Tim. 3:3 NKJV

- a. Peaceful
- b. Not harsh, coarse - but polite and peaceful

12. **Holy** - Tit. 1:8

- a. Dedication to serving God
- b. Free from wickedness - Tit. 2:11-12

13. **Lover of good men** - Tit. 1:8 "lover of what is good" NKJV

- a. Mutual respect for good people
- b. Loves good people and appreciates them

14. **Given to hospitality** - I Tim. 3:2

- a. Generosity to strangers or guests
- b. Able to meet other people - encourage them
- c. An elder must have a genuine and sincere interest in helping others.
- d. An elder must take the lead to be hospitable - to be concerned about the needy, the widows, and the orphans.

15. **Apt to teach** - I Tim. 3:2 - "able to teach" NKJV

- a. An elder must have the ability to teach, and be qualified to impart knowledge of the truth to others.
- b. He must have an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the whole scheme redemption and be able to communicate it to others.
- c. A man cannot feed the flock if he cannot declare the truth to others.
- d. This ability varies with the individual, it is relative.
- e. Elders do not have to do all the teaching, but they must do some of it.

16. **Holding fast the faithful word** - Tit. 1:9

- a. Stands fast for truth
- b. Demands sound doctrine
- c. Able to protect the flock from false teachers

17. **Blameless** - Tit. 1:6

- a. Not guilty of evil
- b. An evil charge cannot be sustained
- c. Does not mean perfection

18. **Of Good report among them without** - I Tim. 3:7

- a. Respected by those out of church
- b. To be a leader one must be respected by all people who know him - even those out of the church.

D. Qualities of his wife - 1 Tim. 3:11

1. Grave = Dignified, Serious-minded
2. Not a slanderer = false accuser, saying no evil of others, not gossips
3. Sober -
 - a. Temperate
 - b. Self controlled
4. Faithful in all things

E. Thoughts about qualifications of the men:

1. These characteristics for an elder are things he must have in order to perform effectively in the work of an elder.
2. One appointed who does not have these traits would have difficulty in doing the work of an elder.
3. The church would suffer if unqualified men are appointed!!!
4. We are not to appoint men with the idea of that they will become qualified with time. They are to possess these at the time.

II. SELECTING ELDERS

A. How do we select elders?

1. No specific details given in the New Testament
2. No step by step procedure is given
3. These are matters of judgment
4. Any method of selection may be used that does not violate a scriptural principle.
5. The peace and unity of the church must be preserved.
6. 1 Cor. 14:40 "Let all things be done decently and in order."
 - a. In selecting elders, perfect order should prevail
 - b. Needs to be done in an orderly decent way.
7. Rom. 14:19 "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."
8. 1 Cor. 10:31 "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
 - a. This simple law forbids all selfishness and party spirit.
 - b. Any act that is not in perfect harmony with the welfare of the church and the glory of God is prohibited.

B. God intended that the church should choose the elders & deacons

1. The church, under Christ, is a self-governing body.
2. In Acts 6:3 when the church at Jerusalem needed some men to serve as deacons Peter instructed them: "Look ye out, therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."
 - a. These men were selected by the church
 - b. "Look ye out, ... among you...."

3. 1 Cor. 16:3
4. 2 Cor. 8:18,19
5. When the members choose those they want for their leaders, they are much more likely to follow them!!!

C. Thoughts about the selecting of elders:

1. This is not a political office:
 - a. Men are not running for elders
 - b. No campaigning, like for political offices
2. The Passage in Matt. 18:15-17 does not apply to the selection process for elders
 - a. This is referring to a personal trespass that a brother commits against another.
 - b. In selecting elders we are to look at each man being considered.
 - c. If in our judgment the man does not meet a certain qualification then we state our judgement about it.
 - d. This does not mean that we have been offended by the man and need to go to him and talk about this privately to him.
 - e. It is instead a lack of maturity or some other problem with the life of the man.
 - f. For example if the man does not have not "have a good report of them that are without" -- that does not mean that the man under consideration has offended me and I must go to him. But instead it is a lack of his being a good example and having a good report to those without.

CONCLUSION

1. The appointment of elders in the Evans Church of Christ is a very important time in the history of this congregation.
2. We need to be organized according to the scriptures - with elders and deacons.
3. In Acts 14:22-23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church.
4. In Tit. 1:5 Titus in ordaining elders was setting in order the things that are wanting.
5. Let us choose and appoint elders in obedience to the pattern revealed in God's Word.

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