

Setting the Church in Order # 5

Questions about the Eldership

Int.

1. Aim: To answer questions that people have about the eldership.
2. Tit. 1:5
3. There are many questions that people have about the eldership
4. Some of these answers will be my own opinion based on what the Bible teaches in regard to these matters. There are some things or situations that the Bible does not specifically address. So we must use our best judgment in matters like this. We may disagree on matters of opinion!

Discussion

I. QUESTIONS THAT HAVE TO DO WITH MARRIAGE

- A. Does a man have to be married?
 1. Yes!!!
 2. 1 Tim. 3:2
 3. But what if a man works with other people and his job includes working with children? Would that not qualify him?
 4. No!!! The Bible says he must be married. No Exceptions!!!
 5. Some men have different opinions about this. Questions Answered, by Lipscomb and Sewell - p. 204

B. What if the man has been married but his wife is dead ?

1. The qualification in 1 Tim. 3:2 says "the husband of one wife".
2. If he is single he would not be qualified to serve as an elder.
3. An elder is a married man.

C. What if he has remarried after his wife died?

1. If it is a scriptural marriage then he would be qualified.
2. Marriage lasts only while we live. Rom. 7:2
3. A second marriage, after the death of the first wife, would not disqualify a man.
4. He is married and he has only one wife.

D. WHAT if the wife dies after a man has been selected as an elder?

1. Should he resign immediately or could he continue to serve?
2. The Bible does not specifically tell us what to do.
3. In my judgment it would depend on the situation with the congregation.
4. If his resigning would suddenly put the congregation in a situation where there would be no elders it might be better to wait until more elders could be appointed.
5. On the other hand if there were several elders and the eldership would continue without him, then he should resign.
6. An elder must be a married man.
7. Remember there are some who have other opinions about this matter.

E. What about a man who has been divorced?

1. Could a man who has been scripturally divorced serve as an elder?
2. Of course it would have to be a scriptural divorce or he would not be a faithful Christian.
3. Matt. 19:9 teaches that the only reason for divorce and remarriage is for the cause of fornication.
4. Now could a man be qualified to serve as an elder if he has been divorced ?
5. I do not think that it would be wise.
6. There could be some problems that would arise about him having to answer questions about the first marriage.
7. There could be problems with the children. He may not have full custody of the children. He would not have control of them and he could not rule well his own house if they did not live with him.
8. What if his wife has been divorced ?
 - a. The same problems could be present.
 - b. There could be a second set of children in a second marriage. Then would he be responsible for those children of a previous marriage?
9. It seems that the best situation is to appoint men to serve as elders who have only one wife, and have not been divorced.

II. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHILDRENA. What if a man has only one child?

1. A man who has one child has children.

2. Eph. 6:4 "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath:"
 - a. Would that apply to one child?
 - b. Of course it would.
3. Col. 3:20 "Children obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord."
4. 1 Tim. 5:9,10 "If she have brought up children". Would it not count if she had only one child? Here he is talking about the widows that can be cared for by the church.
5. 1 Tim. 3:4 "having his children in subjection with all gravity"
6. Tit. 1:6 "...having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly"
7. The word "children" is plural and it includes the singular "child"¹
 - a. Suppose that the verse said "child". Could a man who had "children" qualify?
 - b. We have three children. If I introduce them to you do I have to say of each one, "This is our child, Tabitha", "This is our child, Hannah", and "This is our child, Larry" ? Or could I say these are our three children, Tabitha, Hannah and Larry?
 - c. Children stands for "child" as well as "Children" .
 - d. The qualification has more to do with quality than quantity.
 - e. The principle is not whether a man has one child or a dozen children.
 - f. The qualification concerns a man's ability and experience in ruling well his household, for "...if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God." 1 Tim. 3:4,5

¹ What is the Church of Christ? By V.E. Howard p. 51 copyright 1979 Central printers and Publishers, West Monroe, La

B. What about a man who has had 1 or more children who were faithful but have now died?

1. The Bible does not specifically mention this.
2. If he has had children and they were in subjection with all gravity, and not accused of riot or unruly, then he would have been qualified.
3. If he meets all the other qualifications, and his child or children are already dead, then I do not see that this would disqualify him.
4. He has shown his ability in raising the children.
5. This is my opinion.

C. What if the children were faithful while at home but they go astray after they leave home?

1. That depends upon the circumstances.
2. If a man has several children and only one strays while the others remain faithful he would still have faithful children.
3. If the man upholds his own children's error or condones in them what he condemns in others, he disqualifies himself.
4. If the unfaithful children are also notoriously unruly or are sufficiently visible to the congregation to reflect constantly on their father's name and reputation, that also would have to be considered.
5. If an elder does not have the confidence of the congregation he can not be an elder.
6. If he is not respected and followed, he cannot be a leader.

III. ASSORTED QUESTIONS

A. IS THERE REALLY A NEED FOR ELDERS ?

1. Yes!!!
2. God's plan for church organization includes Elders and Deacons
3. God knew what we needed and he instructed us to have elders as the overseers of the church.
4. We cannot improve on this situation!!
5. When we have men who meet the qualifications they should be appointed and ordained as elders.

B. How old must a man be to serve as an elder?

1. The Bible does not give an age.
2. The "Novice" or new Christian would not qualify - 1 Tim. 3:6
3. He must be old enough to have children that are old enough to be Christians.
4. He cannot be a babe in Christ, regardless of his age.
5. There would also be something involved in how long a man has been a member of the congregation.
6. Just because a man was an elder at another congregation does not mean he can come in and be an elder at a new congregation. He has to learn the people and the people have to learn him and respect him.

C. Must a man desire the office ?

1. 1 Tim. 3:1
 - a. If a man desire
 - b. What is his ambition? Does he want to promote himself or the cause of Christ?
 - c. Does he want to dictate to the church or guide the church in its God-given responsibilities?
2. A man cannot serve as an elder without the desire and ambition.
 - a. He cannot serve well if he has to be coerced or begged to serve.
 - b. If he is unwilling to lead and do the work he cannot be an effective elder.
3. But some men may desire the office but for wrong reasons
 - a. If he wants to be an elder just to be a boss, or to have authority, or just to be in the center of attention then his motives are wrong.
 - b. That kind of desire is a disqualification
 - c. Anytime a man gets mad, or creates a problem over not being chosen as an elder, he demonstrates that the church was correct in not choosing him.

D. Can any man live up to the qualifications for elders ?

1. YES !!!!
2. A man does not have to be perfect to serve as an elder.
3. He is required to be blameless. 1 Tim. 3:2 Tit.1:6-7

E. Can a preacher serve as an elder?

1. Yes!!
2. 1 Tim. 5:17 They who labor in the word and doctrine
3. 1 Pet. 5:1 Peter served as an Elder
4. Should a preacher serve as an elder if he is qualified?
 - a. That depends on the congregation and the needs
 - b. If there are enough other qualified men to serve then it probably is not necessary for the preacher to also serve as an elder.
 - c. If there are not enough qualified men and appointing a qualified preacher as elder with the other men who are qualified helps then it is best to do so.
5. There are two situations in which a preacher as an elder would excuse himself from the decision:
 - a. His salary
 - b. His tenure
6. A man who is a preacher and an elder can be a good situation and be good for the church.

F. Does a man serve as an elder until death ?

1. It depends on several things:
 - a. His health
 - b. His mental ability
 - c. His life
2. If an elder is involved in sin then he must resign or be asked to resign by the other elders and or the congregation.

- a. 1 Tim. 5:19-20
 - b. If a man knows he is unqualified he does a great service to the congregation by resigning voluntarily.
3. If he is in failing health and cannot do the work then he will want to resign.
 4. Illustration: One congregation has an understanding among the elders that when they reach a certain age [70 or 75 ?] the men resign. Even if they are in good health they want to resign while they have the ability to make that decision. Their last years are spent in a slower less demanding way with the church. They leave the work to younger men.

G. Can we have paid elders ?

1. Yes - 1 Tim. 5:17-18
2. Elders could be supported to work for the church full time.
 - a. He could visit
 - b. Teach classes
 - c. Assist in many ways with the work
3. There is wisdom in having paid elders:
 - a. It takes a great amount of time to do the work of an elder.
 - b. If an elder were paid by the church and he worked for them full time he could do so much more and be so much more effective.
 - c. The church would grow and multiply.
4. It is just as scriptural to have paid elders as it is to have a paid full time preacher.

CONCLUSION

1. These are some of the many questions that can be asked about elders and their work and qualifications.
2. These are my answers based on my understanding of the Bible.
3. There is room for differences on some of these matters, and I'll not be disturbed with you if you have a different view. I pray that you will have the same toward me, even if I have a different view than you on some of these matters.
4. Heb. 13:1 "Let brotherly love continue"
5. Eph. 4:1-3

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