

Scriptural Elders and Deacons

Material Compiled by Brian Andrews for use at the Oak Ridge church of Christ, Q12017. References are listed in each lesson as applicable. Please feel free to use this material in any method that promotes the creation of and edification of scriptural Elders and Deacons!

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Lesson 2 – Qualifications of an Elder – Preliminary Considerations and Approach

Material:

- [*Shepherds of the Flock*](#) by Mark A. Copland: *Their Qualifications – Preliminary Considerations*, p. 9-11
- [*Qualified Overseers*](#) by David Padfield: *The Elder and His Family (Introduction only)* pp. 1-2
- [*Sermons on Local Church Government: Elders & Deacons*](#) by Gene Taylor: *The Qualifications for Elders – Introduction only*, p. 11

Key Texts:

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3

Questions:

1. Is it a requirement that a man desire the work of an elder or is willingness to serve sufficient?
2. Are the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-6 and Titus 1:5-9 criteria that must have been met at one time, continuously met, or will be met in the near future? What are the ramifications of your answer?
3. How seriously should the qualifications be taken? Are they general guidelines or must every qualification be satisfied?
4. Could something outside of 1 Timothy 3:1-6 and Titus 1:5-9 disqualify an elder or provide a reason why a potential elder should not serve?
5. True or False (if false change, add, or strike a word to make it true):
 - a. _____ An elder can be female.
 - b. _____ Some elder qualifications are relative.
 - c. _____ A church is scripturally organized when shepherded by one or more elders.
 - d. _____ Elders who meet the qualifications always use perfect judgement.

Lesson 3 – Qualifications of an Elder – Family

Material:

- [*Shepherds of the Flock*](#) by Mark A. Copland: *Their Qualifications – Familial Qualities*, p. 12-15
- [*Qualified Overseers*](#) by David Padfield: *The Elder and His Family - Discussion*, pp. 2-6
- [*Sermons on Local Church Government: Elders & Deacons*](#) by Gene Taylor: *The Qualifications for Elders – Domestic Relations*, pp. 15-16

Key Texts:

1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5; Titus 1:6-7a;

Questions:

“THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE”

1. If an elder’s wife dies while he is in office or before he is in office, does he meet “the husband of one wife” qualification?

2. If a man’s marriage ends and he marries another woman, can he meet “the husband of one wife” qualification?

FAMILY/CHILDREN

3. What is the potential elder’s “household”?

4. What does “manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive” (1 Timothy 3:4 ESV) mean? How is this accomplished (use various qualifications of an elder to guide your answer)?

5. What does “faithful” mean in the qualification in Titus 1:6, “having faithful children”?

6. How many children must an elder have?

7. How many children must be faithful?

8. How long must the children be faithful?

9. True or False (if false change, add, or strike a word to make it true):

a. _____ An elder can be a polygamist.

b. _____ As long as a man is married, he absolutely meets the “husband of one wife” qualification.

c. _____ There are no specified requirements about the wife of an elder.

d. _____ Children of elders are not important to an elder’s ability to serve.

Lesson 4 – Qualifications of an Elder – “Must be...” -- Positive Attributes, Part 1

Material:

- [Shepherds of the Flock](#) by Mark A. Copland: *Their Qualifications – Preliminary Considerations: IV & Their Qualifications – Positive Qualities: VII., p. 10-11, 19*
- [Qualified Overseers](#) by David Padfield: *The Elder and His Reputation – Discussion: I. & V., pp. 7-8, 11-12*
- [Sermons on Local Church Gov't: Elders & Deacons](#) by Gene Taylor: *The Qualifications for Elders – I. A & II., pp.11, 15*

Questions:

BLAMELESS (TITUS 1:6,7; 1 TIMOTHY 3:2)

1. What does “blameless” mean?

2. How can one be blameless?

3. Why must an elder be blameless?

REPUTATION (1 TIMOTHY 3:7)

4. How must outsiders think of the potential elder? What does this mean?

5. Why must an elder have this reputation?

6. True or False (if false change, add, or strike a word to make it true):

- _____ To be blameless, one must live a perfect life.
- _____ A single action can permanently ruin your reputation with outsiders.
- _____ Being offensive to outsiders by speaking the truth in love disqualifies a man from being an elder.

Lesson 5 – Qualifications of an Elder – “Must be...” -- Positive Attributes (and one negative or “not” attribute), Part 2

Material:

- [Shepherds of the Flock](#) by Mark A. Copland: *Their Qualifications – Positive Qualities: V., & Neg. Qual.: VI., p. 18, 24-25*
- [Qualified Overseers](#) by David Padfield: *The Elder and His Work – Discussion: I., pp. 18-21*
- [Sermons on Local Church Gov't: Elders & Deacons](#) by Gene Taylor: *The Qualifications for Elders – III & V., pp.15, 16*

Questions:

ABLE TO TEACH, EXHORT, AND REBUKE (1 TIMOTHY 3:2; TITUS 1:9-16)

1. What is the elder to use as the basis of their teaching, exhortation, and rebuking?
2. How does one “hold fast” the faithful word?
3. What does it mean to a) teach, b) exhort, and c) rebuke?
4. How can one teach, exhort, and rebuke?
5. Must an elder be willing to speak publicly? Why/Why not?

NOT A NOVICE (1 TIMOTHY 3:6)

6. When is a Christian no longer a novice, recent convert, or new believer? Does it only involve time or something else?
7. What is the warning if a new convert becomes an elder?

REVIEW

8. True or False (if false change, add, or strike a word to make it true):
 - a. _____ To be an elder, a man must also be a pulpit preacher.
 - b. _____ It is okay if an elder only has an immature, limited knowledge of scripture—just the milk.
 - c. _____ The Devil does not even try to attack the strongest in the church, such as an elder.

Lesson 6 – Qualifications of an Elder – “Must be...” -- Positive Attributes, Part 3

Material:

- [*Shepherds of the Flock*](#) by Mark A. Copland: *Their Qualifications – Positive Qualities: V.*, p. 16-21
- [*Qualified Overseers*](#) by David Padfield: *The Elder and His Work – Discussion: I.*, pp. 18-21
- [*Sermons on Local Church Gov't: Elders & Deacons*](#) by Gene Taylor: *The Qualifications for Elders – III & V.*, pp.15, 16

Questions:

TITUS 1:8; 1 TIMOTHY 3:2

1. How does a person show hospitality?
2. Why is it important for an elder to be hospitable?
3. Describe a sober-minded, respectable person in a tense situation, how do they act? Why is this valuable?
4. What does it mean to be holy and upright? How does a person act who is holy and upright?
5. What type activities is a lover of good involved in? Why is this important for an elder?
6. Self-controlled / disciplined – how does a person exhibit this trait?

REVIEW

7. True or False (if false change, add, or strike a word to make it true):
 - a. _____ An elder must have you over to eat in his house.
 - b. _____ An elder should evaluate his life to ensure he is holy.
 - c. _____ Being disciplined is something you don't have to work for, you either have it or you don't.

Lesson 7 – Qualifications of an Elder – “Must not be...” -- Negative Attributes

Material:

- [Shepherds of the Flock](#) by Mark A. Copland: *Their Qualifications – Negative Qualities: V.*, pp. 22-26
- [Qualified Overseers](#) by David Padfield: *The Elder and His Reputation – Discussion: II – IV.*, pp. 8-11
- [Sermons on Local Church Gov't: Elders & Deacons](#) by Gene Taylor: *The Qualifications for Elders – I.*, pp.14-15

Questions:

TITUS 1:7; 1 TIMOTHY 3:3

1. Be sober minded, not a drunkard – why mention the positive and negative attribute?
2. Not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome – why might these attributes be important for an elder?
3. Not quick tempered – what does this mean and how does a potential elder prove to possess this trait?
4. Must not be arrogant – describe the difference between arrogant and confident. Does an elder need to be confident? How can an elder be confident and not arrogant?
5. Not greedy for gain or a lover of money – the love of money is what according to scripture? Why is this qualification important for elders?

REVIEW

6. True or False (if false change, add, or strike a word to make it true):
 - a. _____ An elder can drink till they are tipsy/buzzed, but not till they are drunk.
 - b. _____ An elder is always found at heart of a dispute – first to the fray.
 - c. _____ A person can feel comfortable sharing difficult issues with an elder because they will listen, consider, and calmly react as needed.
 - d. _____ An elder will quickly point out to anyone who challenges them their qualifications of knowledge and experience in order to silence the opposition, to win the fight.

Lesson 8 – Qualifications of a Deacon

Material:

- [*Sermons on Local Church Gov't: Elders & Deacons*](#) by Gene Taylor: *The Quals and Work of Deacons* – pp.21-23

Questions:

1 TIMOTHY 3:8-13 (REF. 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7; TITUS 1:5-9; 1 PETER 5:1-3)

1. What does the word “deacon” mean? What does this imply about the deacon’s role? Where else is the Greek word used in scripture?
2. What differences, if any, is there between what is expected of a deacon with the word of God versus the Elder?
3. What difference, if any, is there in the number of wives a deacon or elder may have? What difference, if any, is there in the requirements of children of a deacon or elder? What are the implications of these differences?
4. Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain (ESV 1 Timothy 3:8), some of these qualifications are identical to and some are different than the qualifications of elders. What is different? Is there any practical difference or distinction? Does “likewise” provide additional insight into elder qualifications?
5. A deacon must be tested and found blameless, how is this done?
6. What does a deacon gain? Why is this important?
7. True or False (if false change, add, or strike a word to make it true):
 - a. _____ A deacon can be older than an elder.
 - b. _____ One must serve as a deacon before serving as an elder.
 - c. _____ A deacon’s qualifications imply they only serve as maintenance men for the church building.
 - d. _____ A man who is qualified to be a deacon but has never served the church, though he was given ample opportunities, will start serving if put in the role of a deacon.

Lesson 9 – The Church’s Relationship with Elders

Material:

- [*Shepherds of the Flock*](#) by Mark A. Copland: *Our Duties Toward Them*, pp. 27-29
- [*Qualified Overseers*](#) by David Padfield: *The Elder and His Work – Discussion: IV.*, p. 24

Questions:

1. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, how are we to think of and act toward elders? How do we do this?
Note: Acts 20:28 shows “those...over you” includes elders.
2. According to Hebrews 13:17, how are we to act toward elders? Why are we do this?
Note: Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2 shows those “keeping watch over your souls” includes elders.
3. Paul instructs Timothy to “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor” (I Timothy 5:17-18 ESV), what are these “honors”? When should these honors be considered (applied)?
4. Hebrews 13:7 and 1 Peter 5:3 shows elders are to be what? To what extent should this be true?
5. If we are in need, who should we call (consider James 5:14)?
6. What is key to our role with the elders (consider 1 Peter 5)?

REVIEW

7. True or False (if false change, add, or strike words to make it true):
 - a. _____ Duties toward an elder are only required when I (the reader) agree they are qualified.
 - b. _____ Elders have great qualifications, responsibility, and accountability; therefore, it is best to let elders decide everything in our lives.
 - c. _____ A person should feel comfortable sharing difficult issues with an elder because they are charged to care for those entrusted to them.
 - d. _____ Elders are omniscient.

Lesson 10 – Selection, Appointment, and Unappointing of Elders and Deacons

Material:

- [*Shepherds of the Flock*](#) by Mark A. Copland: *Their Selection And Appointment: pp. 30-33*

Questions:

1. How were Elders selected and appointed in the first century? Please cite scripture.

Deacons? Please cite scripture.

2. Based on what you found above, who should appoint the Elders? How?

Deacons? How?

3. As it reflects upon the appointment process, what considerations should the church have when appointing men to serve as Elders?

Deacons?

4. What specific models or patterns do you think would be authorized for appointing Elders?

Deacons?

5. Once Elders are appointed (i.e. there are Elders serving), does/should the appointment process for Elders change?

Deacons?

6. Is it authorized to appoint Elders without Deacons? Why? Is it wise? Why?

7. Is it authorized to appoint Deacons without Elders? Why? Is it wise? Why?

8. Can an Elder lose the position once appointed? Why? How?

Deacon? Why? How?

REVIEW

9. True or False (if false change, add, or strike words to make it true):

- a. _____ Elder is a lifelong honorary title.
- b. _____ In the absence of the elders, a Deacon may make decisions for the church.
- c. _____ There must be at least two Deacons in order to appoint any.
- d. _____ Elders and Deacons once appointed are infallible.

Lesson 11 – Developing Elders (and Deacons)

Material:

- [Sermons on Local Church Gov't: Elders & Deacons](#) by Gene Taylor: *Developing Elders*, pp.18-20

Questions:

1. Where do elders and deacons come from?
2. Many are responsible for the development of Elders. How? (list ways for each below)
Congregation

Current Elders

Evangelists

Christians

The Man's Children

The Man's Wife

Parents

Young Men

3. What can be done to develop Elders?

REVIEW

4. True or False (if false change, add, or strike words to make it true):
 - a. _____ Congregations are lucky when a boy happens to be qualified to be an elder when he grows up.
 - b. _____ Those not desiring or are unqualified to fill the office of an elder have no impact on this who do or might desire the office.
 - c. _____ The first time a man has any responsibilities in the church is when he becomes an Elder or Deacon.

1 Timothy 3:1-13 English Standard Version (ESV)

¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer^[a] must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^[b] sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

⁸ Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued,^[c] not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise^[d] must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Titus 1:5-16 ESV

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife,^[e] and his children are believers^[e] and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer,^[f] as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹² One of the Cretans,^[g] a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."^[h] ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

1 Peter 5:1-5 ESV

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."