

Qualifications for Eldership

by Phil Beach Jr.

The sermon emphasizes the importance of biblical guidelines for eldership and outlines several qualifications for an elder, including blamelessness, hospitality, and teaching ability.

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Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:1

Topics: "Eldership", "Church Leadership"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. teaches on the qualifications for eldership as outlined in Scripture, emphasizing the high standards set for leaders in the church. He explains that eldership is not confined to local assemblies but extends to overseeing the body of Christ universally. The sermon delves into specific qualifications from 1 Timothy, Titus, and 1 Peter, highlighting the importance of character, self-control, and the ability to teach and guide others. Beach stresses the need for elders to be examples of Christ-like behavior, demonstrating love and hospitality to all, and maintaining a good reputation both within and outside the church. Ultimately, he calls for a return to biblically sound leadership to combat the compromises of the current age.

Transcript

This is going to be a teaching that is found in the scriptures regarding what an elder is, the requirements that scripture speak of regarding becoming an elder. The Bible has some very, very specific guidelines regarding eldership, and we want to look into these particular guidelines, and then begin to go through each one of the specific qualifications that the Bible mentions regarding eldership. And in doing this, we're hoping that the Lord will make his word real to us and help us to see the high standards that the Word of God sets for places of leadership in the church.

Now, I think that it would be important for us to immediately make the statement of understanding regarding eldership. When we are mentioning eldership, we are not necessarily suggesting that it is an eldership that is necessarily under the auspices of a particular assembly. But we have to understand that when God speaks of elders, he's speaking of overseers of his body, and the body is not limited to a local fellowship.

The body is not limited to a particular denomination. When God anoints and raises up a man or a woman to be an elder, that does not only qualify them to be able to help in a local fellowship, but that qualifies them to be able to see and understand and minister to all believers everywhere that they go. I do not like

the idea of limiting the gifts and work of God to a particular fellowship, although within local fellowships, God will raise up local elders and local pastors.

But we have to get away from the idea of that which is being controlled by a local fellowship. If God places a call upon a person's life and they begin to pursue the ministry of eldership, then it goes far beyond the local church. Elders should be able to go to supermarkets.

They should be able to go to gas stations. They should be able to function in the world, and that gift of eldership should be functioning. It is an ability, as we will see, it is an ability to understand people, understand God, and be able, by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit and the skill of the Word of God, to be able to help and assist and oversee in the affairs of the souls of men.

You see, an elder is not someone who just bears a title within the church, but an elder is someone who can go out somewhere and be concerned about a sinner, and be able to help that sinner be led to the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, we're going to be deriving our text from 1st Timothy chapter 3, verses 1 through 7, then we're going to be looking into Titus chapter 1, 5 through 9, and then 1st Peter chapter 5, 1 through 4. God has appointed leadership in the church, and Ephesians chapter 4, before we look into the specific scriptures that speak of elders and the qualifications, we just want to lay a foundation, and it is my belief that in this particular hour that we are living in, it is a very, very important need for good, biblically sound elders to begin to raise up in order to point God's people back to the Lord Jesus Christ, back to the Word of God. Unfortunately, we're living in a day where there's compromise on every hand.

We compromise in all manner of different things. There's political compromise, there's all kinds of national compromise, and we have to make sure that we don't compromise the Word of God. Now the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4, verse number 11, and he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Now in verse number 12, we see the particular purpose for which God calls the ministry of eldership or leadership. It is to perfect the saints, perfect their faith. It is to prepare them for the work of the ministry, and it is to edify and build up the body of Christ.

And also in Acts chapter 20, verse number 28, Acts chapter 20, verse number 28, we find that Paul addresses elders. You see, oftentimes in the Scripture, the responsibility, a very high responsibility, was placed upon elders and leaders. Acts chapter 20, verse number 28, Paul speaking, and this is what he says to the elders at the church in Ephesus, take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.

So elders were appointed by the Holy Ghost, and they were recognized by the Apostles themselves. We find this in Titus chapter 1, Titus chapter 1. In Titus chapter 1, verse number 5, Paul speaking to Timothy, he says, for this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee. So it was part of the New Testament idea to ordain elders, to recognize elders, to work with elders in order that the church of God may be properly led to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there's basically three words that are translated in English that all have the same meaning. The three words are elder, bishop, and overseer. All of those three words basically have the same meaning.

An elder in Scripture, when it's referring not to the age of a person, as some instances an elder is referred to an older person that has a hoary head, gray hair, but in the incidences where the elder is in relation to a place of oversight, the word elder normally denotes the dignity of the office. It denotes the character of the office, whereas when the word bishop is used, it denotes the duties of the office. It denotes the duties of the office.

So let's now, since we have just a little foundation, there's so much that we could lay as a foundation, but I think that we'll get a lot more as we just look into the actual qualifications in 1st Timothy. We'll begin in 1st Timothy chapter 3, and we're just going to begin to read, and as we read we're going to explain in detail each one of these particular qualifications. Paul speaking now regarding an elder, this is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work.

So there of course the office of a bishop is inferring an elder and all of the duties that would be involved in eldership. That is the office of a bishop, and Paul says he desires a good work. Now there a good work suggests a very profitable and a very rewarding work.

If you give yourself wholly to something, then you will indeed reap some kind of fruit, and when men and women give themselves wholly and aspire to places of leadership in the church, various different places of influence, then they desire a good work. They desire a wholesome work. I'm reminded about Suzanne, I didn't even tell her this, that my sister had come to visit, and my sister had made a comment that Suzanne's testimony and example in the nursery has so impacted my sister's life, and she says oftentimes when she's out there she'll say something like this, now this is going on and this is going on, and I know that if Suzanne was here this wouldn't be going on, but she hasn't yet quite learned and she herself has said how to do what she knows needs to be done in order to keep order in the nursery.

So that's what it means when you aspire to a place of influence. It's a good work because you are inevitably in a silent way without even recognizing it, you're influencing other people's lives, pointing them and showing them an example. Verse 2, a bishop then must.

You see, because a bishop, because an overseer or an elder is in a place of influence where people are going to see them, they're going to study them, they're going to watch them, because of that, Paul says, he then must be blameless. Now blameless is a very unique word that Paul chose and the inference is very powerful, and I don't think that we should water it down one bit, because I think Paul was really trying to get this point across. The word blameless means perfectly free from accusation or liable charge by an adversary.

Perfectly free from accusation or liable charge by an adversary. Irreprovable, having no opportunity to be seized upon by liable charge of guilt. The idea here is to be blameless, is to be free from being seized upon.

You know, when a man is not blameless and there's something wrong with him, that wrong will one day seize upon him, and it will take hold of him, as we have seen recently in the religious world. So the idea here is not being liable to any charge that would be hurled against you by an adversary. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.

The husband of one wife simply here means not having two wives, not having three wives, but having one wife. There's quite a bit of argument in this particular scripture regarding the exact meaning of it, but what we believe this means is simply you're not to be involved in polygamy, many wives. The next qualification,

and of course I'm reading from the King James Version, is vigilant.

The word vigilant is the ability to exercise self-control. The ability to exercise self-control. Next we find sober.

Now sober is another very, very detailed word that is going to, I'm sure, be a blessing. The word sober suggests to be discreet, one who has a sound mind, a person who limits his own personal freedom and abilities with proper thinking, demonstrating self-government with proper restraint on all the passions and desires within him, one who voluntarily places limitations upon his freedoms and desires. Now that's what the word sober is charged with, and that's one of the qualifications that Paul said is for an elder.

I'll read that one more time. Sober, so powerful, discreet, one who has a sound mind, one who limits his own personal freedom and abilities with proper thinking, demonstrating self-government with proper restraint on all the passions and desires he may have, one who voluntarily places limitations upon his freedoms and his desires. Next we find that an elder must be of good behavior.

Now the word here behavior is cosmos, which means order, so the implication is a man of orderly, decent behavior, orderly, decent behavior. A man can't be out of order and be in a place of leadership because his lack of order will create a lack of order in others, and then he ends up defeating the purpose for which he aspires, and that is to be an example. An elder must also be given to hospitality.

Now to be given to hospitality implies loving strangers. This word, the etymology of this word comes from two different words, to love, and then the second word is stranger. So the idea is to be given to hospitality is to love strangers, or in other words, don't get clicky in your relationships.

Don't be clicky. An elder, a leader must have the capability of preventing little personal followings, and little personal pet peeves, and private little parties with people, and the elder must have an eye to see a stranger, one who is not familiar, whether he's a believer or an unbeliever, and the elder must have that God-given ability to break away from the comfort and the security of familiar fellowship, and delve into the life of somebody he or she doesn't know. Hi, who are you? My name is Phil.

Are you new? Well, tell me about it. Being loving toward all people, including strangers, it implies the absence of clicky, familiar friendships. When people limit their fellowship to those who they have gotten to know and have become comfortable with, and overlook others, it is a mark against their character in relation to qualifying them for a place of leadership in the church.

How blessed it is, and I don't know how many of you ever visited another church. You probably have, but isn't it great when you go into a church, and you're a stranger, and someone of elder quality comes to you, reaches out his or her hand, and says, hi, my name is so-and-so. What's yours? And takes an interest in you.

I like that. Must be given to hospitality. Able to teach.

This is true if your eldership will involve the teaching of the Word of God, but I am persuaded that there's many other different ways to teach than just preaching a sermon. Apt to teach simply means the ability to instruct somebody. The ability to instruct somebody, and you know as well as I do, that not only is there biblical instruction in relation to doctrine and sound teaching, but there's also the instruction that we're involved with every day in interacting with people.

An elder must be able to instruct people as they fellowship with the people. Doesn't mean they have to sit down and say, all right, we're gonna have a Bible study in Romans chapter 7, but you have to have an instructive lifestyle, a teaching lifestyle, a lifestyle that is teaching and training people. I don't want to get ahead of myself, but wait until we delve into 1 Peter chapter 5, where Peter suggests that elders must be examples to the flock.

It was the most interesting discovery I've made in a long time. When we look into what that means, it is so encouraging, and so it was so challenging to my own life, but we won't get into that now. Apt to teach, not given to wine.

Not given to wine means not placing yourself in a situation where you have the potential to become drunk with liquor or wine. Not given to wine. Do not place yourself in a situation where the possibility arises where you become vulnerable to drunkenness.

As an elder, that's a no-no. No striker. A striker is one who strikes, a brawler, a riotous person.

I have met people who have desired to be in places of leadership who, when I got around them long enough, I realized there was tendencies of riotousness in them. Riotousness, areas where there was rebellion, and areas where there was unnecessary desires to want to stir up trouble regarding non-essential things. A person can't have those riotous striker tendencies and be an elder.

Not greedy of filthy liquor. Not greedy of filthy liquor. Now, what I did in this particular portion of scripture is I put together all of the different implications in that one statement, and this is the sentence that I came up with.

To be greedy of filthy liquor is the shameful and disgraceful state of being given over to the greedy pursuit of money for personal gain alone. That's powerful. It almost characterizes our society today, doesn't it? Not greedy of filthy liquor.

The shameful and disgraceful. Notice the Bible implies such a state as a shameful, disgraceful state, and how the world has painted this as an acceptable, prominent place. Isn't that ironic? The shameful and disgraceful state of being given over to the greedy pursuit of money for personal gain alone.

Not a brawler, not covetous, but patient. Here we find that the scriptures imply for a person to be fair, fitting, a moderate person seasoned with gentleness, dealing with facts and facts alone. When it says being patient, not a brawler, not a covetous person, it implies somebody who is level-headed, gentle, and doesn't run wild on misgiven information, but deals with facts.

Judges based on evidence. Someone who analyzes the situation properly, who gathers the facts together, and is patient, and level-headed, and gentle, and makes his conclusions, and his statements, and his analysis based on facts, and not on misgiving information, or on heresy, or anything like that. Someone who deals with facts alone.

Isn't there a need for us to come back to facts, glorious truth, and make our observations based on truth? One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. Sometimes our children defy gravity, don't they? I don't think that's what the word gravity there means, but sometimes it seems like they defy gravity. An elder must rule his house well, and that's self-explanatory, really.

Verse number five, Paul basically explains what he's saying, for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? So the house must be in order. Now, we know that there are certain situations that could be in the home that are not necessarily the direct result of a character flaw within the parents, and in those exceptions there may be an ability to work through certain problems in the home, and yet maintain the office of an elder. But generally speaking, I scripture here is referring to a disorderly house that is being created by disorderly parents.

That we can't have, but there is the possibility of having something occur in the house that is not the result of the parents, and in such cases we have to be sensitive, and we have to be understanding. Verse number six, not a novice. The word novice actually means a newly freshly planted plant.

So an elder cannot be a novice, a young convert. A freshly planted plant with no deep roots, one who lacks experience, less being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. One thing that a novice is very vulnerable to, and very susceptible to, is pride.

Pride is a pernicious sin that lurks within our hearts, and it's only through the deep, deep working of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in the life of a believer, where pride can be dealt with in a way that it doesn't become a trouble in the life of the believer. And you who have been saved for any length of time know that it takes some time for God to deal with your pride. It takes many, many dealings of God, and most of us all here are still being dealt with regarding our pride, and we thank God for that, because that means we're truly His, right? What father having a son doesn't correct? So when God deals with you about your sin, thank Him for it.

Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. A good report, this actually means bearing witness and having a testimony. The implication here is that the unbeliever who knows you must be able to testify to the fact that you're an upright person.

Now they might not like your religion, they might not like it that you don't laugh at their dirty jokes, they might not like it that you don't go out and dance till four o'clock in the morning, they might not like it that you don't hop around on your mate, they might not like it that you don't go out and get drunk, they might laugh at you and criticize you for it, but when it comes to their opinion of your character, they say, oh hey, the guy's good. I mean, he doesn't do anything wrong. That's what Paul said you need if you want to rise up in a place of leadership in God's kingdom.

That's good, isn't it? I like that. The testimony of the sinner, testifying to the fruit within your life. Now that's the qualifications in 1st Timothy, and now let's go to Titus.

We'll go to Titus chapter 1, Titus chapter 1, and begin in verse number 5. Some of these are the same things that Paul mentioned in 1st Timothy, and when they are, I'll simply make mention of it, but won't need to repeat the definition. Others are new, and the objective of this study is to gather together all of these qualifications and then meditate upon them, and pray and ask God to develop these within our hearts, we who aspire to be in places of leadership in the kingdom of God, and oh, I tell you, there's a great need for men and women to begin to aspire places of leadership. Titus chapter 1, excuse me, beginning in verse number 5. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.

If any be blameless, now the word blameless there is the same word that Paul used in 1st Timothy chapter 3, so we won't go into that. The husband of one wife, that also is the same as in Timothy chapter 3. Having

faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. Faithful children are children worthy to be believed.

Children worthy to be believed. In other words, the children of elders must be so disciplined, and so corrected, and so instructed, that their general lifestyle is one that is believable by those who look at them. Believable in that they do possess respect, they possess the desire to obey and submit to authority, and because of this, they're believable.

Not accused, the Bible says the children must not be accused, which means incrimination against a person. They cannot be incriminated and accused continually of legitimate accusation, riot, extravagant squandering of any extreme. The children must not be riotous, they must not be extravagant.

You know, if you let a child follow his own heart at all times, the child will become extravagant, and they will squander. They will find extremes to everything. Children must be restrained, and that's the job of parents, particularly elders, and this is where we lovingly correct and instruct our children, so that they don't follow this prodigal course.

And then, of course, unruly. This is the last qualification for elders' children. Unruly is the state of not being subject to authority.

Disobedient and continually disorderly. Disobedient and continually disorderly. For a bishop must be blameless.

That's the same as 1st Timothy chapter 3. Not self-willed. Self-willed simply means set on doing your own thing and going your own way at any cost. That's all that self-will means.

Set and determine to do your own thing. You cannot be self-willed and be in leadership. You have to be flexible.

You have to be willing to have things many times go in ways that you would like to see them go differently and not put on a scene. You know, when people throw tantrums when they don't have their own way, it cannot be in the house of God. It cannot be.

We have to learn to be flexible and not self-willed. Not soon angry. To be soon angry is to be susceptible to becoming irritable easily.

If you become irritable very easily, that's a bad quality. That's a bad characteristic. And only by the grace of God.

Aren't there lots of things that can make us irritable in this world? People, personalities, people let you down, people say one thing, they do another. It's so easy to be soon angry. But that's an area of sin in our life that has to be overcome if we aspire to places of leadership.

Listen, I know it's very easy to want to get angry over a lot of things. People make you irritable. Circumstances make you irritable.

I mean, you could probably list ten things right off the bat that make you irritable. Well friends, find the grace of God so that you're not an irritable person. Learn long-suffering.

Learn how to be wronged and not get irritable about it. Learn how, learn how to face the crisis of someone letting you down. Breaking their word and not get angry.

You say, sounds nearly impossible. It is nearly impossible. But with the grace of God and the working of God in us and through us, these things can be dealt with.

Not soon angry, not given to wine, same thing as we read in the other chapter, 1st Timothy 3, don't put yourself in a place where you'll get drunk. No striker, that's the same thing again, a brawler. Not given to filthy lucre.

The shameful, disgraceful state of pursuing after money for the sole interest of personal and self-gain. These things must not be named among those who aspire to be in leadership. But rather, an elder must be a lover of hospitality.

Same again, one who loves strangers, one who goes beyond his familiar fellowship and reaches out to someone who is different. You wanna, I just want to throw this in real quick. Do you want to really grow in your character? Do you want to really be stretched in your character and really enter into the depths of Christ's love and his compassion? Find people that are different than you and make friends with them.

I noticed that 98% of Christians have friends who are just like him. You know why? So that, so that the friendship doesn't wrong, rub you the wrong way. If you're a quiet person, you find a quiet person and you just talk quietly one to another.

But if you're a quiet person, find someone who's always talking and learn to love that person. I mean, if you're a real elegant, neat person, find a slob and make friends with him. And don't correct him.

And don't try and tell him how much of a slob he is, but accept him for what he is. Did you ever notice that? Did you ever notice that Christians are always hanging around people just like him? They have things in common and nothing ever goes wrong. Go beyond that realm.

Reach out. God is bigger and greater than what you are and what you're like. Find the love of God for someone totally opposite from you.

Do you think God loves people that are different than you? Some Christians are sure he doesn't. Some Christians are sure that the best people in the world are the ones that think just like them, and talk just like them, and act just like them, and have the same ideologies as they do. I mean, that's where God's at.

Let the neat man find a slob. Let the educated man find an unlearned man. Let the patient, quiet man find an impetuous, sanguine, jumpy kind of person, and let him make friends, and let him find the common denominator of love that overlooks the differences of personality and joins the heart together.

You find me a church where people are intermingling in one with another, and I'll show you a church where the love of Jesus Christ is exploding. You find me a church where people don't quibble over personality differences, and I'll find, I'll show you a church where people are growing up in the Lord. But you find me a church where you got all these little cliques, and everybody just stays within their little old crowd, and you've got babes in the Lord.

Now listen, God isn't angry with them, and he doesn't get mad at them, he doesn't scream at them, and it's not right to do it, and you shouldn't be critical and judgmental if you see people like that. What you should do is you should set an example and show them the better way. Don't try and correct them, but show them how you go find the stranger.

Show them how you go to the diner with somebody that's completely different than you. You know, I got exposed to this when I went to Bible school. God showed me an area of sin and insecurity in my life, and Suzanne and Norman will know the teacher.

I'm a very unlearned person. I am not educated. I do not have great education.

I've not excelled. All I am is a piece of clay, and I depend on God, and I didn't do too well in high school. I never read a book until I got saved, and then it was the Bible.

Never read a book in its entirety. Never. My whole life.

My daughter has read more books than I did when I was 17 years old, and she's six. So see, that's the kind of person I was. I was comfortable as an unbeliever with people who, you know, sort of, hey, what's happening, dude? Oh, you know, nothing much.

Kind of like, you know, you don't speak sentences. You sort of speak jargon. Like, what's happening, dude? Oh, you know, not much.

Just hanging out, sort of, at the pizza parlor. It's a drag. You know, we had our own world.

I didn't go around the, you know, the students that had glasses and slick hair. You know, I didn't understand them. It's like they were educated.

Someone like Norman. Someone like Norman. It's like, man, if I knew Norman before I was saved, it's like, man, I can't handle him.

I probably wouldn't be mean to him. I'd just sort of like, man, he's weird. I can't relate to him.

I mean, he speaks with real sentences. You know, he uses words that I can't even, I can't even pronounce them, let alone understand their meaning. So this was, this was the kind of person I was.

When I got saved, God put the love of God in my heart, and he put the love of Jesus in there, and I would fall in love with a guy like Norman, but I still had that insecurity lurking in my life. And God used a teacher at my, at the Bible school where I attended to show me this great insecurity. And the teacher was Brother Daniel Pelletier.

Brother Pelletier was an English teacher. And if anybody intimidated me, it would have been an English teacher, an English major. Because an English major does everything so perfectly.

And their speech is so well thought out. And their adjectives are so perfect. And their verbs are so filled with action.

So here I was, a student, just 18 years old, and I was sitting in Brother Pelletier's class, listening to him talk. And I was getting smaller and smaller and smaller. And this area of insecurity was growing bigger and bigger and bigger.

And I didn't know what to do. I was afraid of that man. I was afraid.

And you know, the first time he asked us to write our testimony on paper, my testimony wasn't filled with great words. You know, it was, hey, praise God, I'm saved, you know. And I handed it in, and I was imagining in my mind, he's going to, you know, because it was for English.

He wanted to see how well we did in writing. I thought he was going to hand it back to me, and he was going to have red all over it, and he was going to take me aside and tell me how terrible my writing was, and how I had a lot of work to do. But you know what the guy did? He had just a few little spelling corrections, and he had in big red, beautiful testimony, should turn it into a sermon.

And it's like I said, wow, beautiful testimony. This English major is not looking at my inferiority to him as far as education, but he sees what I really am. And then a beautiful relationship developed between me and Brother Danny, and I realized how God is able to deliver a person from all of these tendencies to want to find people that are like you.

And in Christ, you can have fellowship with everyone, no matter how different you are from them. That was one of the very specific dealings that God wrought in my life. Now, because of the grace of God, I'm comfortable in front of a scientist, as well as a street person, because I am what I am by the grace of God.

Uncle Ernie, when I first met him, I just got saved. He was another one that I was afraid of. He appeared to be so smart and so educated, and I didn't want to really be with him.

He's a scientist, almost a scientist, or pretty close to it. He's in our family. But see, the Lord can bring all that down, and now when we get together, I love to sit and talk with Uncle Ernie.

See, lover of hospitality. Then we have lover of good men, and that's found in verse number eight. To be a lover of good men means to love and care for people, not just in word, but in deed also.

To love good men is to respect, honor, appreciate in word and action. Expressing your love through real practical ways. Sober, verse number eight.

An elder must be sober. Sober is the same as we mentioned in 1st Timothy chapter 3. Sound-minded. Just.

A just man is a very simply a man who does right. You know, you have a lot of people who talk it, but they don't walk it. Did you ever hear that? Don't just talk it, brother.

Walk it. Well, that's what a just man is. Someone who does what is right.

An elder must do what is right. A lot of people can say it real well, but then you follow them around for a week, and boy, they don't do it the way they say it. There's a whole difference there.

That can't be. There can't be that discrepancy. There's got to be a an agreement with our speech and with our lifestyle, with our action.

Holy. He must be holy. The word holy there suggests no mixture.

Unpolluted. Not filled with wickedness. Temperate.

Temperate is a word that denotes having strength to be self-controlled in all things. Temperance. Listen here.

Temperance is strength. You know, the world looks at a temperate person as a weak person. The world sees a temperate person as a weak person, and looks at somebody who has no self-control as a strong person.

But let me tell you something. God's Word teaches the exact opposite. A temperate man is a strong man.

The Bible says in Proverbs, and I'm going to paraphrase this, a man who has control over his own spirit, that's a temperate man, is stronger than a man who takes a whole city. A temperate man. Holding fast the faithful word.

To hold fast is to cling to it. To grab hold of it and not let go. Once you grab hold of the Word of God, don't be easily shaken from it.

Elders can't be easily shaken. You know, about every two years a new doctrine comes floating over the market of Christianity. But an elder must hold to the Word of God and not be easily shaken.

Not be easily swayed by every wind of doctrine that comes up the pike of Christianity. Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine. Now we're closing in Titus, and then we're just going to go to Peter for a few minutes.

But we want to bring this out because this is a very important quality that an elder must have. That he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. To exhort and convince.

This is what this means. To bring to one's attention by convicting someone of error. Listen, through showing them the truth.

Titus chapter 1 verse number 9. That's alright, no problem. Now listen, to exhort and convince is to bring to one's attention by convicting someone of error through showing them the truth. We have a lot of people who want to try and point out error.

But they never offer the truth in its place. The true elder can exhort and convince through handling the truth in such an effective way. The truth is what does the work and converts people and corrects them from the error of their way.

One of the most precious qualities of an elder is handling the word of God properly. Dividing it according to knowledge. Using it with the love of God to enlighten people.

That's a wonderful quality to have, isn't it? Now let's go to 1 Peter. Well I think this is good training because we are praying about starting a Bible institute. And if we do start a Bible institute and some of you would want to attend, this is how the classes will be conducted.

We will teach the word of God. Please be in prayer about that because boy, that has become a very intense cry of our heart. We really believe God wants us to believe Him for a Bible school where we can train and instruct people and see people equipped for the ministry so that they can go forth by the Holy Ghost and be a light for Jesus.

1 Peter chapter 5 and this is the last section we will be looking into regarding qualifications for elders. Let's begin reading in verse 1 and we'll start at verse 2 in our study into the words. The elders which are among you I exhort who am also an elder and am a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

Feed the flock of God which is among you. Now to feed the flock of God means to shepherd and tend. And this is what it implies.

To guide, to guard, to fold the flock, bring in the flock, and to lead them to suitable nourishment. So when the Bible says feed the flock of God it means to shepherd them, to tend to them, to guard them, to guide them, to fold them in, and to lead them to suitable nourishment. And in my notes here I have in parenthesis Jesus.

Do you think Jesus is the suitable nourishment that you and I need? So to feed the flock of God is to be able to bring people to Jesus Christ and to intelligently instruct them in the word of God so that they can become students of the word themselves. Feed the flock of God which is among you taking the oversight. Taking the oversight is to look upon, to observe daily, to look closely at.

And of course in Hebrews chapter 13 verse number 17, Hebrews 13 17, the Bible specifically tells us what elders are to be looking at. Not the color of a person's shoe or the hairdo but their soul. Let's turn there real quickly that we might get the impact of this scripture.

Hebrews chapter 13 verse 17. Thank you. Obey them that have the rule over you.

Now the word obey there, just to throw this at you here because I did a little study on this too, the word obey there means to trust. Don't ever ever believe when somebody tells you you are to unconditionally obey a pastor no matter what he tells you. That is totally incorrect.

That's why the reformation occurred. You know because people were blindly following the clergy and they weren't following the word of God. You're to trust and obey elders when they are faithfully bringing you the word of God because it's not them you're obeying, it's the word.

So the word obey there means to trust them. To believe what they're saying. Only if they're preaching and teaching the word of God.

Then you better obey them. Because if you don't it's not them you're disobeying, it's the word of God. But here's what the Bible says.

Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves for they watch for your souls. Now in 1 Peter we said that the Bible says the elder is to take oversight, to look upon, to observe closely, to look after. What are they to look after? Right here it says they watch for your souls.

The elder is to have an eye, a spiritual eye, watching after people, their souls, their spiritual life. Praying for them. Sensing struggles that they might be going through.

Sensing possibly something the enemy is doing. And by the wisdom and gentleness of God and by the word of God helping them. Bringing them back to the word.

Bringing them back to Jesus Christ. Leading them to the living water where their thirsty soul can drink and be satisfied. Isn't the word precious? 1 Peter, go back to 1 Peter chapter 5. Taking oversight thereof not by constraint.

Oh my friends, there has been so much constraint in the day that we live in. The word constraint means to force unwillingly, to compel. To force unwillingly, to compel.

So we are to look after the flock but not force them or compel them to do anything. Actually the idea there by constraint is to force people to do something against their will for your own advantage. Now that's where we get into the money issue.

Preachers are fleecing the flock for money. Using persuasive words, playing with people's emotions in order to make them feel obligated to give to their dreams. This is very displeasing to God.

Not by constraint, but willingly. Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Filthy lucre, the same.

A ready mind is a willing attitude. We should have a willing attitude to help people. A willing attitude.

Neither as being lords over God's heritage. Now to be a lord over God's heritage is to exercise authority over someone with the intent to control them. To gain dominion over people by force or manipulation in order to control them.

You can't be a lord over God's people. But rather, and this is what I was talking about way in the beginning when I said wait till we get into what the word example means. This is good.

This is like the cream on the cake tonight. It blessed me so much. See, Paul's comparing here.

Don't be a lord. Don't try and control people. Don't try and intimidate them.

But rather, be an example. Now the word example means to be a model and an example of what is not yet apparent. Listen, we are to reflect what we want others to become.

That's what the word example means. So when we are examples over God's flock, we are exemplifying in our character what has not yet been realized in their character. So that by example, by living example, they see what they ought to become.

Now is that an awesome responsibility? You want to teach people about the love of God. You better be full of it. You want to teach someone about the patience of God.

It better come forth in what you do. The elder is to be an example. One who models what is not yet apparent in those who are looking to him.

Showing what they should be. That's what Paul meant when he said follow me as I follow Christ. Paul said, what you have heard in me, what you have seen in me, what I have said to you, what you have learned from me, do.

And the God of peace will be with you. Now can you say that? Can you look at your husband or your wife and say, whatever you've seen in me and heard me do and saw me do, you do it and God will bless you. That's what he's saying here now.

We should have such an example that men can look and women can look at our lives, we who aspire to be elders, and say, wow, I want to be like that. I want to be like that. And verse number four is our closing tonight.

The good elder, who through prayer and waiting on God and searching the scriptures, allows God to build these character traits in them. This is what the good elder has to look forward to. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

May God help each and every soul that longs to have a place of leadership, to prayerfully and tearfully go through these sections of scriptures and pray that God will build these qualities in our life so that we can be above reproach in Christ, tending to his flock with a clear conscience, knowing that Christ himself is

upholding us. Amen? Amen.

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