

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ELDERS IN EVERY CHURCH (PART 2)

God has given specific characteristics that those who will be appointed as elders (shepherds, oversees) must possess. Following Biblical models (Acts 1:15-26; 6:1-7), members of a local church should look out among themselves to see who possess the various characteristics required by God, so they can be appointed to the work (Titus 1:5)! In the first part of this study, we looked at general, family, and ability characteristics required of elders. Now we will consider the personal characteristics God requires for elders to be appointed in every church.

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7; TITUS 1:5-9

Remember that these two passages contain the specific characteristics God has required of those who should be appointed as elders, though other passages are also applicable (e.g., Matthew 5:3-12; Romans 8:1-11; Galatians 5:16-26; 2 Peter 1:3-11; Ephesians 4-5; Colossians 3, etc.). Each of these characteristics is presently required of the one who will be appointed as an elder. Therefore, you can treat each as a “yes” or “no” question about those being considered, with each requiring a “yes” response. While there is judgment involved in each characteristic, opinions must be dealt with appropriately (Romans 12:16; Ephesians 4:1-6) and comparisons with others must be avoided (2 Corinthians 10:12).

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

First, he must be sober-minded (1 Timothy 3:2). He remains clear-headed and avoids anything that could impair his judgment. This includes intoxicating substances and distracting worries of this world (Luke 21:34). He keeps his mind watchful and focused so he can make sound decisions in his own life and in his dealings with others (1 Peter 5:8).

Second, he must be sensible (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). He is a man of a sound mind and good judgment. He is calm, even-tempered, cautious, and careful. He consistently sets an example of someone whose mind is focused on serving God and seeking God’s will (Titus 2:2).

Third, he must be self-controlled (Titus 1:8). He is a man who has mastered himself (Galatians 5:23). He

does not allow his desires, impulses, emotions, appetites, and passions to become his master concerning how he conducts himself. He chooses to do the will of God rather than following other things which would pull him away from it (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Fourth, he must be respectable (1 Timothy 3:2). His life is orderly and arranged in a way that pleases God. There is dignity and appropriateness in the various ways he conducts his life (e.g., his speech, relationships, character, habits, decisions, etc.). Therefore, his inner life (as in the previous characteristics) has produced an outer life that pleases God.

Fifth, he must be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). He is a man who loves to show care for others (even strangers, as the Greek word means “loving strangers”). As one who will be a shepherd of people, he has demonstrated a selfless, loving, and sacrificial spirit that serves the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of others (1 Peter 4:9).

Sixth, he must not be an excessive drinker (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). He is a man who controls himself and does not lose his mental faculties through intoxicating substances (e.g., wine). He does not stay near things that would harm his sobriety and negatively impact his service to the Lord (Proverbs 20:1; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 4:3).

Seventh, he must not be a bully (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). He is not an aggressive or violent person. He is not ready to strike or fight others, never being willing to use physical force or intimidation against others to get his own way (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Eighth, he must be gentle (1 Timothy 3:3). He is fair, reasonable, and mild in his temperament and conduct toward others, though he is also firm in standing for truth (2 Timothy 2:24-26). He is patient and considerate in his dealings with others. This helps make him an approachable man who will deal with others fairly.

Ninth, he must not be quarrelsome (1 Timothy 3:3). He is not a man who is looking for fights and arguments as one with a combative spirit. Although this does not mean he always gives in or never disagrees with others (Matthew 10:34-39), he seeks to live peaceably with everyone as much as possible (Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:17-21).

Tenth, he must not be arrogant (Titus 1:7). He is not a man who is focused on having his own way. Although he should hold strong convictions in his faith (Titus 1:9), he does not make his preferences

and judgments the controlling factor or insist on his own way above all (Romans 12:16). He is willing to listen, consider others, and submit to God above all else.

Eleventh, he must not be hot-tempered (Titus 1:7). He is not easily angered or easily provoked to anger (Proverbs 22:24; 29:22). He demonstrates control over his spirit and emotions rather than being controlled by them (Proverbs 25:28). So, he responds to frustrating and difficult situations with patience and self-control (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Twelfth, he must not be greedy (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). He is not motivated by earthly wealth as a covetous person (1 Timothy 6:6-10). Although he may have wealth, he has not acquired it in dishonest or dishonorable ways and has not made accumulating it his focus (Matthew 6:24). Nor does he shepherd God's flock from greedy motives (1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Thirteenth, he must love what is good (Titus 1:8). He does not merely avoid things that are evil because he believes he must. Rather, he has a great fondness and affection for all things that are good and right with God (Romans 12:9). Furthermore, he is a great friend to everything and everyone good, as defined by God (Psalm 119:63).

Fourteenth, he must be righteous (Titus 1:8). He is a man who (because he loves what is good) is devoted to doing whatever is right in God's sight. He lives according to God's standards of righteousness that are identified in the pages of Scripture (Titus 2:11-14). Furthermore, he treats other people fairly and rightly according to God's standards (1 Timothy 5:21).

Fifteenth, he must be holy (Titus 1:8). He is deeply devoted to God, not one who is just moderately interested in following God and doing right. He has a deep respect for God that manifests itself in a life committed to God's holy and righteous ways. He is committed to a life of faithfulness that seeks to live according to God's will (Romans 13:11-14; 1 Peter 1:13-16).

CONCLUSION

God has identified the characteristics listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 as essential qualities elders must possess. Clearly, God recognizes that each of these characteristics (general characteristics, family characteristics, ability characteristics, personal characteristics) is critical for the work shepherds will accomplish. Congregations of God's people who desire to be shepherded in the way God has designed should, therefore, look out among themselves and identify men who possess these, so they can be appointed to the work of an elder!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What passages should be considered when selecting those who will serve as elders?

How should a consideration of these characteristics be approached?

What must be true about a man's mind and self-discipline?

What must the connection between a man's inner and outer life be?

What must be true about a man's service toward other people?

What must be true about how a man treats other people?

What are some things a man must not be?

What must be true about a man's relationship with what is good and right?