

THE DEAREST PLACE ON EARTH (4)

Elders – who should be one?

A. Introduction

1. The Lord Jesus, the head of the church, instructs each local church to appoint a plurality of elders to feed, know, lead, protect, care for, and love the flock under their care.

2. Who should be an elder?

7 things to look for.

B. A Saved Man

1. The first question should always be: 'Is this person a Christian?'

There are number of local churches in this country which are being led by people who are not even Christians.

2. Has this person repented and put their trust in Christ? Is there evidence of this in their lives?

C. A 'Man' Man

"Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control." (1 Timothy 2:11-15)

"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17)

1. The Bible teaches that there should be male leadership within the local church.

This does not mean that women are inferior to men – they are equal in creation and salvation.

This does not mean that women are not very good at leading or teaching.

This does not mean that all women must submit to all men (only to husband/elders).

This does not mean that women have nothing to contribute to the life of the local church.

Men, we must appreciate, affirm and value the work of the women in the church.

2. Male leadership is rooted in creation.

Adam was created first, placed in the garden with the task of naming, working (with Eve's help) and protecting the garden from evil.

The fact that there was a serpent in the garden suggests that Adam wasn't doing his job properly – he failed to protect his wife. God held the man responsible for sin's entrance into the garden.

The responsibility for keeping the serpent out of the church is the job of the elders (who fulfil Adam's role in the church).

When women usurp the men's task, we have a repeat of what happened in the garden.

Women are not saved by childbirth (that would mean that infertile or single women would be excluded). Rather a sign that Jesus has saved them, and that they are continuing in faith, love, holiness and self-control is they will embrace and submit to what Jesus says their God-given role is.

3. Since Paul says that elders lead and teach the church (1 Timothy 5:17), women are not to be elders (1 Timothy 2:11-15).

4. There is no special position called 'The Pastor's Wife' or 'Elders Wives'.

D. A Called Man

1. Internal Call

"The first sign of the heavenly calling is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work." (Charles Spurgeon)

"A preacher is not a Christian who decides to preach ...he does not even decide to take up preaching as a calling... preaching is never something one decides to do. What happens rather is that he becomes conscious of a 'call.' There must ...be a sense of constraint. This is surely the most crucial test....I would say that the only man who is called to preach is the man who cannot do anything else, in the sense that he is not satisfied with anything else." (Martyn Lloyd-Jones)

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)

"Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task." (1 Timothy 3:1)

2. External Call

The church (elders) identify other elders.

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." (2 Timothy 2:2)

"He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek." (Acts 16:1-3)

E. A Qualified Man

"Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap." (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

"An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless— not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (Titus 1:6-9)

“...serving as overseers— not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3)

1. There is more instruction on the qualifications for eldership than on any other aspect of biblical leadership.

2. With only a couple of exceptions, all the qualifications are demanded of all Christians.

Elders are to model the character and conduct that God desires for all His children.

3. ‘Above Reproach’

‘Blameless’ not sinless perfection.

Being the kind of man whom no one suspects of wrongdoing and immorality.

4 areas:

In Family Life

Husband of one wife (one-woman man).

Marital faithfulness.

“The Greeks and the Romans of the day generally tolerated gross sexual sin. Polygamy was practiced by both Greeks and Jews. Marriage was undermined by frequent divorce, widespread adultery, and rampant homosexuality.” (Phil Ryken)

What about men who have been divorced (and remarried)?

“Divorce is not the ultimate sin, nor is it the unforgiveable sin, yet it may disqualify a person from ministry precisely because it destroys so much of a person’s credibility.” (Don Carson)

“The circumstances of the divorce matter.” (Richard Phillip)

Two other factors to consider:

What message will this communicate to the church and to the wider community?

How will the unity of the church be affected?

Manages family well.

“the children’s behaviour, not their eternal state.” (Alexander Strauch)

“This doesn’t mean that the kids of a pastor (or elder) should always be perfect, sweet little angels, but rather that they should be under the loving control of parents whose discipline nurtures within them a healthy fear of God.” (Darrin Patrick)

In Personal Life

Temperate, self-controlled, not given to drunkenness, not a lover of money.

In Community Life

Respectable, hospitable, not violent but gentle, no quarrelsome.

Well thought of by outsiders.

Avoids favouritism.

"I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism." (1 Timothy 5:21)

In Spiritual Life

Not a new convert.

Spiritually growing.

"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." (1 Timothy 4:16)

Are there people who would say you should not serve in any church's leadership? And why would they say this?

4. 'Able to Teach'

Knowledge of the truth.

Ability to communicate the truth.

Not limited to public teaching from the pulpit.

A defender of the faith.

F. An Examined Man

1. Before an elder is appointed they should be examined.

"Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands." (1 Timothy 5:22)

"Deacons, likewise... They must first be tested." (1 Timothy 3:8, 10)

2. Things to be tested:

Desire and calling.

Qualifications.

This will be done in the first instance by the eldership, but should also be done by the members too (they may have information about a prospective elder that the elders do not have).

"The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden." (1 Timothy 5:24-25)

G. An Appointed Man

1. Elders were formally installed into office by the laying on of hands and prayer.

"Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you." (1 Timothy 4:14)

"Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands." (1 Timothy 5:22)

H. A Dependent Man

1. Elders need God's help.

2. Elders need God's forgiveness.