

## 1 TIMOTHY 3:2-7

In the local church in Ephesus there was the problem of false teaching that was distracting the church from its mission of preaching the gospel and making disciples.

Paul writes to Timothy and the big message is... "Sort out the church for the sake of the gospel!"

The first way he is to do that is by fighting for the gospel – including silencing false teachers, leading the church in praying for all people, and teaching the church how to display the gospel.

The second way is by appointing appropriate leaders.

"Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil."

Two areas to consider:

### A. An Elder's Life ('above reproach')

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

2. Elders are to be 'Above reproach'.

Chief concern is their reputation – conduct that can be observed.

He is to be an example.

"Are there people in the church who think you should be an elder? Why do they think that?"

"Are there people outside the church who would be surprised to hear that you were an elder?"

3. The concern is about the elder's reputation in 4 areas:

#### Family Life

Husband of one wife – marital faithfulness (emotionally and physically) and sexual purity (excludes polygamy, adultery, practising homosexuality, addiction to pornography, flirting).

It doesn't necessarily exclude a man who has been divorced (and remarried) – factors to consider would be the circumstances of the divorce, the message this communicates to the church, and the unity of the local church.

Manages family well – leadership in the home, children under control, bringing children up to know and love the Lord, caring concern for them.

#### Personal Life

Sober-minded – temperate, passions and emotions are under control, particularly in decision making.

Self-controlled – way they react to situations (especially when it doesn't go their way), particularly outward actions, not prone to angry explosions.

Not a drunkard – and any other addictions.

Not a lover of money – contentment with what God has given them, generous, not covetous.

## Community Life

Respectable – what do other Christians think of him?

Hospitable – helping those in need, welcoming, spends times with different people in the congregation, open up homes.

Not violent – can be linked to drunkenness, you can be an elders if you are getting into fights.

Gentle – particularly in the midst of conflict, in correcting those who disagree with you.

Not quarrelsome – avoids arguments, seeks to build unity, not divisive.

Well thought of by outsiders – their witness to outsiders, bad reputation will affect the credibility of the gospel.

## Spiritual Life

Not a recent convert – need time to be instructed and cared for before they are given the responsibility to do this for others,

### **B. An Elder's Doctrine ('able to teach')**

1. Elders must be able to teach the truth.

They need to have both the knowledge of the truth and the ability to communicate it.

This is not limited to just the preaching from the pulpit – able to teach not able to preach.

2. Elders must also be able to refute error.

Protecting as well as feeding the sheep.

### **C. Application**

1. We need to watch our life and doctrine.

2. We need to be praying for one another.

3. We need to be praying for God to raise up men who not only have the desire but also the qualifications to be elders.

4. We must provide opportunities for prospective elders to teach.