



Aspiring Elders

[I Peter 5:1-3, I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9]

- 1] **LIVE:** Communication - The Journey [Acts 20:28-35]
- 2] **LOVE:** Character - Shepherd [I Peter 5:1-3]
- 3] **LEAD:** Commitment [I Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-8]

“Ambition seeks to gain and wield power for the sake of self. Aspiration, on the other hand, cares less about the position than about becoming worthy of it” - Swindoll

[a] Integrity - Personal Discipline

[b] Spiritual Maturity - Godliness [I Tim. 3:6-7, Heb.13:7]

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Hebrews 13:7

[c] Giftedness - Leadership/Teaching

[I Timothy 3:2,4, Titus 1:9]

Discussion Questions

1. Read Acts 20:28-31. What statements of Paul stand out to you? Why did they stand out to you? What could God be showing you through Paul's speech?
2. Read I Peter 5:1-3,5. What's your initial reaction to these expectations of church leadership? [focus on Paul's explanation of the right motivations as leaders - guidance in providing oversight, as well as, being godly examples for people in the church].
3. Read I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 3:8-9 What attributes of an elder on the list stood out to you? Do you feel there are any additional qualifications we should use when selecting leaders for the church today?
4. Read John 4:24, Col.1:28-29 and I Peter. 5:2-3 Pray for the church to worship in spirit and in truth, and for leaders to shepherd with humility as godly examples – striving present everyone mature in Christ.

Acts 20:28-35 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore **be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.** ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ **In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**”

I Peter 5:1-3 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, [1] exercising oversight, [a] **not** under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; [b] **not** for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ [c] **not** domineering over those in your charge, but [2] being examples to the flock. . . .

Timothy 3:1-7 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone **aspires** to the office of overseer (episkopos), he desires a noble task. (motives that are pure) ² Therefore an overseer must be

- 1] above reproach [**blameless/without accusation**]
- 2] the husband of one wife, [**one woman man**]
- 3] sober-minded [**non-intoxicated state of mind - clarity**]
- 4] self-controlled [**sound judgment**]
- 5] respectable, [**modest/dignified - orderly life**]
- 6] hospitable, [**greek word means loving the stranger**]
- 7] able to teach, [**see also Titus 3:9**]
- 8] ³not a drunkard, [**not overdependent on any substance**]
- 9] not violent but gentle, [**does not allow emotions to fuel interactions**]
- 10] not quarrelsome, [**resists violence - physical or verbal**]
- 11] not a lover of money. [**right attitude toward wealth**]
- 12] 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? [**leader - children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination - see Titus 2:6**]
- 13] ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [**spiritual mature - keeps his pride in check**]
- [14] ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders (unbelievers), so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. [**good reputation**]

Titus 1:8-9 . . . 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.

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Brief Notes on I Timothy 3:1-7

Four Erroneous Qualifications when Choosing Leadership (Swindoll):

- 1) Popularity (Personality) 2) Posterity (Tradition) 3) Politics (Leverage) 4) Prosperity (Perspective)
- 2) "The nature of the qualifications set out and the broad concern for the leaders' reputations suggest that respectability of the sort that would sustain or establish the church's credibility in society was uppermost in mind." (**Towner, The Letters . . .**)
- 3) While Paul did not define the duties of an elder, Lock believed that he implied several duties: presiding (exercising discipline [v. 5] and leading worship [context]), teaching (v. 2), control of finances (v. 8), and representing the church to Christians elsewhere (v. 2) and to the unsaved world (v. 7). (**Lock, The Pastoral Epistles**)
- 4) Paul did not say that each congregation of Christians required at least one elder to be a church. Moreover, there appears to have been more than one elder in some churches (e.g., Acts 20:17; Phil. 1:1), but not necessarily in all. "**Elder**" was an official position of leadership in the church that carried with it pastoral responsibility (1 Pet. 5:1-2).
- 5) "Elder" also describes the maturity of those who normally hold this position, primarily spiritual maturity. "**Overseer**" describes the major responsibility inherent in the position, namely, oversight of the church. "**Pastor**" describes the gift and work necessary to fulfill this position, the gift and work of a shepherd. (**Constable -[C]**)
- 6) *The elder's responsibilities in the church are quite parental, so he should have proved his parenting ability in the home before he receives larger responsibility in the church (cf. Matt. 25:14-30). The home is the proving ground for church leadership (v. 5). [C]*
- 7) **Good interview questions concerning the elder and his family:**
 - Are the kids respectful, the home well-ordered?
 - Are the parents attentive, involved, and supportive of each other and their children?
 - How is the communication?
 - Is an atmosphere of spiritual development being fostered?
 - Is Jesus Christ openly discussed and revered?
 - Is the Word studied?" (**Swindoll**)
8. As we study the qualifications of an elder, it becomes clear that two things were important to Paul: (1) The man could not be guilty of doing something seriously wrong, and (2) other people had to perceive his conduct as proper for a Christian. (**Constable**)

Brief Notes on Titus 1:5-9

(5) "It is ... impossible to determine how many elders would have been selected in every town (meaning 'in the house church of each town'); but the general rule would probably have been a plurality of leaders." (Towner)

(6) While the churches in Crete appear to have been young, the fathers in them were old enough to have believing children. The elder must have his children under control. The context seems to limit the children to those who are still living at home and are not yet adults, assuming the elder had children. (Knight/Towner, NICNT)

(7) above reproach. Not marred by disgrace. (Calvin)

(9) "A pastor needs two voices, one for gathering the sheep and the other for driving away wolves and thieves. The Scripture supplies him with the means for doing both so that the person who has been correctly instructed in Scripture will be able to guide those who want to learn and refute those who are enemies of the truth." (Calvin)

"Did the Church Borrow Leadership Structures from the Old Testament or Synagogue?" [Merkle & Schreiner. *"Shepherding God's Flock."*]

"What we know about elders in the OT and in the synagogue to show that Merkle and others are correct to conclude that the office of elder is an almost entirely new position."

"The evidence in the Old Testament indicates that ancient Israel and its neighbors recognized the authority and standing of older males. That is to say, Israel was not the only society that had elders. We read of elders of the house of Pharaoh and of the land of Egypt (Gen. 50:7; cf. Ps. 105:22), of Midian and Moab (Num. 22:4, 7), of Gibeon (Josh. 9:11) and of Gebal (Ezek. 27:9)."

"As to the terms used to describe elders, Merkle observes, "The noun [zaqen] is derived from the Hebrew term 'beard' [zaqan], a relationship that is attested in most Semitic languages."

"F. C. Fensham writes that an "elder" is "An elderly person; also, an authority, or a person with judicial office. It is commonly accepted that the origin of this latter meaning is to be sought in the ancient patriarchal family institution of the Hebrews."

"Kenneth Aitken explains, "The office of elder has its roots in the tribal structure of early Israelite society. Elders were the heads of the families and the leaders and representatives of the tribes. They exercised a patriarchal authority based on kinship and the wisdom of experience."

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“Wegner observes, “It appears that as far back as the Egyptian captivity, the Israelites were led by elders (Ex. 3:16), and it is commonly accepted that this concept originated in the Hebrew patriarchal family institution.”¹³ We repeatedly read of the elders of Israel or of the people (Ex. 3:16, 18; 4:29; 12:21; 17:5; 18:12; 19:7, etc.).¹⁴ The elders are listed with heads of tribes (e.g., Deut. 5:23; Josh. 24:1) and with officers (Deut. 29:10; 31:28) and judges (Josh. 8:33; 23:2). Moses gave the Torah to the priests, Levites, and elders (Deut. 31:9).

The elders feature prominently in the narrative when seventy of them ascend the mount with Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu (Num. 24:1, 9, 14). Exodus 24:10 says, “They saw the God of Israel,” and 24:11 calls them “the chief men of the people of Israel.” The only time individual elders are named in the narratives is when Eldad and Medad remained in the camp when the seventy were given some of the Spirit that was upon Moses (Num. 11:16–30, see 11:17, 26). The seventy were[...]

“Various prophetic texts indicate that when the Lord judged his people he held the elders responsible for the failures of the “people (Isa. 3:14; Jer. 19:1; cf. Lam. 1:19; 2:10; 4:16; 5:12; Ezek. 7:26; 8:11–12; 9:6; Joel 1:2, 16; 2:16). This reality indicates that the elders were both representative of and responsible for the people.”

The synagogue “function [ed] as a gathering of elders for the purpose of administering justice.” The elders would “direct the activities of the synagogue.”

“Emil Schürer writes, “the ‘elders’ were not looked upon as officials in the technical sense of the word. They were the representatives and advisers of their community, but not officials with specific functions entrusted to them.”²² Sanders states, “According to Philo, Sabbath instruction was led by a priest or elder”

Pre-Christian Elders in the New Testament

“What we see the pre-Christian elders doing in the Gospels matches the role they have played in the Old Testament, particularly the instructions of Deuteronomy, where they are given responsibility to uphold the Torah. Along these lines, Chilton and Yamauchi note, “Offenders could be judged before the elders in the synagogues and flogged forty stripes save one by the hazzan (Mark 13:9; 2 Cor. 11:24). Apostates could be excommunicated (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2).”²⁶ In their actions against Jesus, the elders think (wrongly) that they are upholding Torah.

“The elders play a similar role in the book of Acts. When Peter and John are arrested for “proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2), the “rulers and elders and scribes gathered” to hear the case against them in Acts 4:5, and Peter addresses them in 4:8. Peter and John report back to the church what “the chief priests and elders had said to them” (4:23). Elders and scribes seized Stephen (6:12; cf. 7:58; 8:1; 22:5). The elders play a similar role later in the book with respect to Paul: the forty plus who conspire to kill Paul report their plan “to the chief priests and elders” (23:14). The “high priest Ananias accuses Paul “with some elders” (24:1; cf. 25:15).”

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ELDERS IN THE CHURCH [What's the difference between OT and NT Elders?]

1] The first and most significant difference between old and new covenant elders is the simple fact that whereas membership in the old covenant was based on familial descent, in the new covenant this is not so. [The reason no qualifications are explicitly stated for OT Elders probably comes down to the fact that no qualifications were felt to be needed. The requirements of the covenant were already there.

The first difference, then, between the old and new covenant elders is that whereas an Israelite man with much common grace who did not know God might be an elder in old covenant Israel (and if the elders of Jesus' day had known the Father they would have known Jesus, John 14:7), the new covenant church consists of those who have been born again by the Holy Spirit and thereby know God.

2] We find another difference between old and new covenant elders in these lists of qualifications, most prominently in the requirement that new covenant elders of churches be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2) and "able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). The change here arises from the fact that while the Torah was entrusted to the priests, Levites, and elders (Deut. 31:9), the priests and Levites seem to have been particularly charged with the responsibility to teach (e.g., Lev. 10:11; 1 Kings 17:27; Ezra 7:10). This is not to say that elders never taught in Israel: all fathers were to teach the Torah to their children (Deut. 6:7), but they don't seem to have a more formal teaching role. In the new covenant church, however, the teaching of the scriptures to the people of God is specifically entrusted to the elders in a way that we do not see in the Old Testament. "There are no more Levites. Jesus is the high priest, and all believers constitute God's royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Moreover, the elders are specifically called to refute those who contradict (Titus 1:9), to shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28), and to do this under Christ the chief-shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), building on the foundation of the church laid down by the apostles (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:10-17).

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What is the Old Testament's Major Contribution when it comes to Elders?

"Focusing on the word "elder" to the exclusion of more thematic issues could keep us from seeing the massive continuity between the Old and New Testaments regarding the righteous sufferer who shepherds God's people."

"Far more significant than the contribution of a term to New Testament vocabulary is the typological pattern that the Old Testament provides for New Testament conceptions of leadership. The pattern of leadership the Old Testament contributes to the New can be summarized in the phrase: the suffering righteous shepherd."

"Jesus himself is the ultimate fulfillment of the typological pattern of the suffering righteous shepherd. The apostles whom Jesus sent also partook in their share of Christ's sufferings. In fact, they seem to understand themselves to be fulfilling the appointed messianic woes, an amount of suffering that must be completed before the return of Christ.³⁸ As the Apostle Paul appoints elders in every church in the book of Acts, he tells them that the path into the kingdom goes through many tribulations (Acts 14:22-23). Similarly, Peter calls Christians to follow in the footsteps of Jesus by suffering for doing what is right (1 Peter 2:18-25). In addition, the section on church leaders in 1 Peter 4-5 includes the exhortation to "rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:13)."

Beale has argued that the churches needed elders precisely because of the tribulation, affliction, and persecution that they would face. Thus, the elders of the churches will shepherd the flock of God through the messianic woes, continuing the pattern of the suffering righteous shepherd."

"Did the early church get their concept of leadership from the Old Testament?"

1] "Absolutely. The pages of the Old Testament are full of righteous sufferers, many of whom were either literal shepherds or figuratively shepherded God's people."

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Elders in Acts

Acts 4:5 [Peter and John before the Jewish Council] On the next day their rulers and elders [Jewish Elders], and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem

Acts 4:8 [Peter speaks to the Jewish Council] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders . . . [Jewish Elders],

Acts 4:23 [Peter's report to the church about the expectations of the Jewish council] When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders [Jewish Elders], had said to them.

Acts 6:12 [Stephen's Arrest] And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes [Jewish Elders], and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council.

Acts 11:30 [Sending of Relief to Jerusalem] And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 14:23 [Elders appointed in the churches] And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 15:2 [Paul and Barnabas encounter the Judaizers] And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

Acts 15:4 [Paul and Barnabas' report to the church] When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.

Acts 15:6 [Jerusalem Council] The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.

Acts 15:22 [The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers] Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.

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Acts 16:4 [The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers]

As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

Acts 20:17 [Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders]

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

Acts 21:18 [Paul visits James in Jerusalem]

On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

Acts 22:5 [Paul speaks to the Roman Tribune after being arrested] . . . as the [high priest and the whole council of elders] can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

Acts 23:14 [Some Jews plot to kill Paul] They went to the [chief priests and elders] and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul.

Acts 24:1 [Paul Before Felix at Caesarea] And after five days the [high priest Ananias came down with some elders (Jewish Elders)] and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul.

Acts 25:15 [Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice] . . . and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews [Jewish Elders] laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him.

Qualifications for the Evaluation of Elders and Deacons - J. Hampton Keathley, III [bible.org]

As a summary statement for all that follows in the qualifications, Paul says an elder is to be a man who is above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7). His lifestyle is such that no one can legitimately accuse him of conduct which is unbecoming a mature believer. However, this does not mean he is perfect or without room for improvement. Why? Because none of us are perfect (Phil. 3:10-14; Ps. 143:2). Generally speaking, an elder is to be a model of Christian maturity and the qualities of these passages are marks of maturity which normally characterize the qualified man. Note that these qualities may also be seen from the standpoint of a man's fundamental relationships—to God, His Word, self, family, others including the outside world, and things.

AS TO GOD AND HIS WORD

(1) Not a new convert (1 Tim. 3:6). Not a neophyte, novice, one newly converted. Does he truly know the Lord and has he shown definite progress in spiritual maturity?

(2) Devout (Tit. 1:8). Does he demonstrate a definite commitment to know, love, and walk with God?

(3) Holding fast to the faithful word . . . able to exhort . . . and refute . . . (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9). Is he a student of the Bible? Is he stable in the faith, sound in doctrine and practice? Does he know the Word well enough to teach it to others? Is he able to use the Word of God to exhort people with sound doctrine and to refute those who are antagonistic to the faith or the truth of Scripture?

AS TO HIMSELF

(1) If a man aspires to the office of overseer (1 Tim. 3:1). Based on biblical criteria and motives, does he have a strong desire to serve the Lord and the body of Christ as an overseer of the flock, or does he feel constrained by necessity (cf. 1 Pet. 5:2, "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God")?

(2) Temperate (1 Tim. 3:2). In the everyday situations of life does he tend to react according to biblical principles so that he remains under God's control? Is he Spirit-controlled and disciplined rather than self-indulgent?

(3) Prudent (1 Tim. 3:2). Is he prudent or biblically minded to the extent that he walks wisely according to the wisdom of Scripture?

(4) Not quick tempered (Tit. 1:7). Does he have a short fuse? Is he emotionally stable and in control of his feelings?

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AS TO HIS FAMILY

(1) Husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6). Literally, a one-woman man. He is a man totally devoted and faithful to his own wife so that he is not distracted by other women? (See the Addendum on this controversial clause.)

(2) One who manages his own household well (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6). Does his wife love, respect, and follow his leadership, and are his children believers, under control, respectful of authority, and responding positively to God?

AS TO OTHERS

(1) Hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). Literally, "a lover of strangers." As he is able, does he share his home with others in order to minister to their needs?

(2) Able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Is he able to communicate the Word of God to others? Is he able to handle those who disagree with him in a patient and gentle manner? Have others recognized in him the ability to teach and communicate the Word at least in small group settings?

(3) Not self-willed (Tit. 1:7). A self-willed man is a self-centered man who demands his own way because he cares only for himself. As a servant, an elder must seek to please God and care for others. Is he able to set aside his own preferences in order to promote unity and care for the needs of others?

(4) Loving what is good (Tit. 1:8). Literally, "a lover of goodness." He is a man who is devoted to that which is good or beneficial either in things, deeds, or people (Ps. 15). Does he take advantage of opportunities to do good to all men (both Christians and non-Christians) in order to build them up rather than tear them down?

(5) Not pugnacious or a striker, i.e., anger out of control (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). Does he show a tendency to be either physically or verbally abusive? Has he shown a disposition to use a position of leadership to bully or push people around?

(6) Uncontentious (1 Tim. 3:3). He is not a quarrelsome person who struggles against others for self-seeking reasons such as jealousy or selfish ambition. He may strongly disagree, but he will state his case without being contentious.

(7) Gentle (1 Tim. 3:3). This word in the original Greek text refers to strength under control, like a powerful, but gentle horse. Does he handle others in a gentle, patient, and gracious way? Is he yielding, showing a mellow gentleness, or is he heavy-handed, insisting on the letter of the law?

(8) Just (Tit. 1:8). In his relationships with others, is he able to make just decisions, those that are wise, fair, impartial, objective, and honest according to the principles of Scripture?

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(9) Respectable, orderly, balanced (1 Tim. 3:2). Is he respected by others because his life adorns the Word of God? The basic idea of this word is orderly. It describes a man whose behavior is good and blended harmoniously in a balanced manner.

(10) Having a good reputation with those [who do not know Jesus yet]? (1 Tim. 3:7). Does he have a good reputation among unbelievers because he has a life-style of unquestioned integrity.

AS TO THINGS

(1) Free from the love of money (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). Does he have his priorities straight? Is he seeking his significance, security, and primary satisfaction from material wealth? Is he involved in dishonest business practices? Is the amount of salary he receives the most important thing about his occupation? Is he seeking the office of elder for personal gain?

(2) Not addicted to wine (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). Is he free from any form of substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc.) or any kind of addiction which might take control of his life, cause belligerent and irresponsible behavior, and cause weaker Christians to stumble (Rom. 14:13-21)?