

## **CHOOSING OUR LEADERS (3):**

### The Qualifications and Selection of Elders

#### **I. WELCOME / PRAYER / REVIEW**

A. Part 1: Overview of Church Govt. God and Christ have ordained that the local church be governed by a Team (or Board) of qualified elders, whose main duties are to minister the Word of God, oversee the flock, and govern the affairs of the church.

B. Part 2: Nuts and Bolts of Biblical Eldership: The local church is a three-legged stool, in which the elders equip and oversee the people, the deacons assist in the administration of benevolence and mercy, and the people serve in various ways according to their unique gifts and callings. / The Board of Elders is a team of qualified men, differing in spiritual gifts, but equal in decision-making authority; it may contain vocational pastors, will usually have a leader, and must be ever diligent to maintain a spirit of service and brotherhood. / The goal of the elders is to make all decisions according to the will of Christ, the Head of the church; this is known through close study of the Word, prayer, fasting, and consultation and consensus—not only among the elders, but also with the congregation as well. / Because bad shepherds can infiltrate both the flock and Elder Board, it is appropriate to put in place wise safeguards. These include careful attention to the qualifications of elders, congregational approval and annual re-affirmation of elders, congregational control of finances and property, and strong commitments on the part of the elders to teamwork, church discipline, unanimity, a servant spirit, and—in the event of conflict—to mediation, arbitration, and reconciliation by peacemakers outside the church.

C. Moral: Since the health of the church depends on the caliber of its leadership, it is vital that the congregation choose its elders with great care; that they be QUALIFIED to fill this holy office.

#### **II. WHY ARE QUALIFICATIONS SO IMPORTANT?**

A. There is a big scriptural emphasis upon the qualifications of elders and deacons. Why?

B. Three Reasons (Alex Strauch)

1. Because God is entrusting to elders the care of his most treasured possession: His people. Therefore, they must be qualified to *do* so. (Titus 1:7)

2. Because God means for his people to learn from the example of the elders. Therefore, they must be qualified to *be* so. (1 Pet. 5:3)

3. Because close attention to qualifications can prevent corrupt or incompetent men from becoming elders; or it can secure their dismissal if, at a later time, they prove to be so. (Acts 20:29-32)

### III. THREE KEY TEXTS ON THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

#### A. 1 Timothy 3:1f

**3** It is a trustworthy saying: If any man aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a good work. **2** Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, *and* able to teach; **3** not given to drink, not pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, and free from the love of money; **4** one who governs his own household well, keeping *his* children in submission with all dignity **5** (for if a man does not know how to govern his own household, how can he take care of the church of God?); **6** *and* not a recent convert, lest, being inflated with pride, he fall into the *same* judgment as the devil.<sup>1</sup> **7** Moreover, he must be well spoken of by<sup>2</sup> those outside *the church*, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

#### B. Titus 1:5f

<sup>5</sup> I left you in Crete for this reason, that you might set in order the matters that were left undone, and appoint elders in every city, as I commanded you. <sup>6</sup> A man is qualified if he is blameless,<sup>6</sup> if he is the husband of one wife, and if he has trustworthy<sup>7</sup> children who are not accused of dissipation or insubordination. <sup>7</sup> For as a steward of God's possessions, an overseer must be above reproach: not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to drink, not pugnacious, not greedy for dishonest gain, <sup>8</sup> but hospitable, zealous for what is good, sensible, upright, devout,<sup>7</sup> self-controlled,<sup>8,9</sup> *and* holding firmly to the trustworthy word just as it was taught to him,<sup>9</sup> so that he is able both to exhort and encourage with sound doctrine, and to refute those who speak against it.

#### C. 1 Peter 5:1f

**5** Therefore I exhort the elders among you, I who am *your* fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory *yet* to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> Shepherd the flock of God among you, serving as overseers, not under compulsion, but willingly, according to God; not out of greed for material gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not as lording it over those allotted to your care,<sup>1</sup> but becoming<sup>2</sup> examples to the flock; <sup>4</sup> and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that never fades away.

### III. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS

#### A. Gender: Male (See 1 Tim. 3:1, 2, 5)

**12** but I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. **13** For Adam was formed first, then Eve. **14** And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being completely deceived, became a transgressor. **15** Nevertheless, she will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with sound judgment and self-control. – 1 Tim. 2:12f

*While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. – Baptist Faith and Message*

#### B. Age: Older, mature believer, not a new convert (1 Tim. 3:6)

## C. Spiritual and Moral Character (Dominant Theme in These Texts!)

### 1. Positive: He must be:

- Above reproach, blameless (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6)
- The husband of one wife (i.e., not a polygamist; maritally faithful, sexually pure) (1 Tim. 3:2)
- Temperate (1 Tim. 3:2)
- Sensible (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8)
- Respectable (1 Tim. 3:2)
- Hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2)
- Gentle (1 Tim. 3:3)
- Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)
- Zealous for what is good (Titus 1:8)
- Kind to all (2 Tim. 2:24)
- Patient when wronged (2 Tim. 2:24)

### 2. Negative: He must NOT be:

- Given to drinking (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- Pugnacious, quarrelsome, contentious (Titus 1:7, 2 Tim. 2:24)
- Greedy for dishonest gain (Titus 1:7)
- A lover of money (1 Tim. 3:3)
- Self-willed (Titus 1:7)
- Quick-tempered (Titus 1:7)

## D. Abilities: He must be able to:

### 1. Teach (1 Tim. 3:2, 2 Tim. 2:24)

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy word just as it was taught to him, so that he is able both to exhort and encourage with sound doctrine, and to refute those who speak against it. – Titus 1:8-9

### 2. Govern / Manage his own household well

He must be one who governs his own household well, keeping *his* children in submission with all dignity (for if a man does not know how to govern his own household, how can he take care of the church of God?). – 1 Tim. 3:8-9

He must have trustworthy<sup>7</sup> children who are not accused of dissipation or insubordination. –Tit. 1:6

### 3. Serve as a Role Model for the Family of God

Not as lording it over those allotted to your care,<sup>1</sup> but becoming<sup>2</sup> examples to the flock.—1 Pet. 5:3

## D. Proper Motivation

### 1. Positive: He must:

- Aspire to the office of elder, and desire it (1 Tim. 3:1)
- Serve freely, eagerly (1 Pet. 5:2)
- Operate in a humble, servant spirit (1 Pet. 5:2)

<sup>25</sup> But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and that *their* great men wield authority over them. <sup>26</sup> But among you, it shall not be so. Rather, whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant; <sup>27</sup> and whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— <sup>28</sup> even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” – Mt. 20:25f, 23:1-12, Luke 22:24f

### 2. Negative: He must NOT:

- Serve under compulsion (1 Pet. 5:2)
- Serve out of greed for material gain (or power, personal glory, etc.) (1 Pet. 5:2)

## E. Reputation

Moreover, he must be well spoken of by those outside *the church*, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. – 1 Tim. 3:7

## F. Gifts and Calling

<sup>11</sup> And He Himself gave some *as* apostles, some *as* prophets, some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. – Eph. 4

<sup>28</sup> Watch out for yourselves and for the entire flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, *with a calling* to shepherd the church of God that He purchased<sup>11</sup> with His own blood. – Acts 20

## IV. SELECTION OF ELDERS

### A. The Usual Procedure (Acts 6, 14:23, 1 Tim. 3:10, 22)

As a rule, the existing Board of Elders appoints a new elder after close consultation with the congregation in a process that involves nomination, examination, voting, and appointment, followed by installation and prayer.

### B. A Proposed Procedure for IBC

1. The congregation approves a new constitution, which (hopefully) stipulates that a Board of Elders will lead the church. The first order of business under the new constitution will be to select one or more elders.

### 2. Meeting # 1: Nomination

After prayerful review of NT teaching on the qualifications of elders, members may feel that they would like to nominate one or more men to serve as elders. They may do so at this meeting. / If the nominee(s) is present in this meeting, he may accept or decline the nomination, or ask for time to pray about a final decision. / Between this meeting and the next, members may personally contact any candidate who has accepted nomination, in order get a clearer picture of his qualifications. Also, they can talk to people who know, or who have worked with, the candidate, for the same reason.

### 3. Meeting #2: Winnowing and Formal Examination

At this meeting, nominees who have decided against serving as an elder may say so. This will winnow the field. / At this meeting (or series of meetings) the members may ask candidates any question they wish concerning their Christian experience, biblical knowledge and convictions, sense of calling, motivation, spiritual and moral qualifications, gifts, abilities, family life, and reputation in the community. / At this meeting, it may also be wise to ask the candidate under discussion to leave the room, so that the congregation may briefly share relevant information or insights about him. / Between this meeting and the next, members may continue to visit with candidates, or inquire about them.

### 4. Meeting #3: Final Vote

At this meeting the members will vote by secret ballot for one or more candidates. Since IBC is a small church, it is suggested that that the top 3 candidates receiving over 51% of the vote should serve as the new Board of Elders. / If no one receives over 51% of the vote, it is recommended that the existing leadership team begin a search for a qualified Christian leader who could secure such a vote and serve, essentially, as a church-planter for our new congregation.

## VI. A FEW WORDS ABOUT DEACONS (Acts 6, 1 Tim. 3:8-15)

### A. Scripture:

**8** Similarly, deacons *must be men* of dignity and respect, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not eager for sordid gain, **9** *but* holding to the mystery of the faith with a clean conscience. **10** And these too must first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, having been found to be above reproach.<sup>3</sup> **11** In like manner, *their wives* must *also* be dignified, not malicious gossips,<sup>4</sup> *but* temperate and sober-minded, faithful in all things. **12** Deacons must be *the* husbands of one wife, governing *their* children and their own households well. **13** For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high<sup>5</sup> standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. – 1 Tim. 3

### B. Deacons neither teach nor rule, but do carry (limited) authority

### C. Duties of (Acts 6)

### D. What about deaconesses?

Note: The elders teach and rule, the deacons oversee benevolence, and the PEOPLE serve as ministers both within and without the church. There is PLENTY of room for various ministries and committees within a church, and PLENTY of room for both men and women to

lead and participate in them. The goal: “every member ministry”.

## VII. CONCLUSION

A. The Need: A healthy, well-balanced church, governed by a team of biblically qualified elders, chosen by a wise, discerning, and appreciative congregation

B. A good example: A House Church on a Hill

[http://www.worldmag.com/2016/04/house\\_church\\_on\\_a\\_hill](http://www.worldmag.com/2016/04/house_church_on_a_hill)

C. Concluding admonition from Alex Strauch

“A biblical eldership is a biblically qualified team of shepherd leaders. A plurality of unqualified elders is of no benefit to a local church. I agree fully with the counsel of John Zens, editor of the journal *Searching Together*. He writes, ‘Better to have no elders than the wrong ones. The local church must in all earnestness insist on biblically qualified leaders, even if such men take years to develop.’” – *Biblical Eldership*