

## Summary of Eldership (Part One)

Lloyd Shadrach, January 21, 2017

- **Elder** – “presbyterous” [Presbyterian]
- **Overseer** – “episkopous” [Episcopal] “Bishop”
- **Shepherd** – poimeno [Pastor]

Elder carries the focus of *spiritual maturity*. Overseer speaks to the *ruling capacity* of an elder. And shepherd, the *care and leadership and provision*. As one writer puts it, “**an elder is an overseer is a shepherd.**” It is *one office* not three.

*Two things are clear from the references to “elders” and the church in the Book of Acts...*

1. Leadership in the church is always, without exception, *a plurality*.
2. While God uses men to identify and appoint elders, it is ultimately the Holy Spirit identifies and appoints elders in the church.

**All encompassing, overarching requirement:** *Above Reproach* (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6, 7)

The word means literally “not able to be held.” It is *not* describing a sinless man. No one would qualify if it were. It is describing *consistency* of character, not *perfection* of character.

A man who is “above reproach” has no crack or crevices in his character, no small knobs marring his reputation that the enemy can “take hold of”. When an accusation comes against him, it has nothing to hold on to. To attack his character would be like trying to climb a greased glass wall.

A man who is “above reproach” demonstrates that life in four areas. The first is his *Personal Character...*

### 1. Personal Character

- a) **Temperate; sensible** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8) – “wineless”

This means **mental sobriety**. He is a clear-headed with a balanced emotional and mental perspective.

- b) **Prudent; self-controlled** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

It is to say this man is **serious about spiritual things**, he is self-managed – not ruled by what is outside, but inside.

- c) **Respectable** (1 Timothy 3:2) – means “to be ordered”

Follow Paul's reasoning here. The inward realities of being temperate, sensible, prudent, self-controlled expresses itself in the outward reality of being respectable (your life is well ordered).

d) **Hospitable** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

Made of two Greek words combined: "to love" and "strangers"  
Being hospitable means your heart and your home is open to others.

e) **Not addicted to wine; accused of dissipation.** (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)

The literal translation reads "not long beside wine." Someone who sits long beside wine is someone intoxicated by it. This is a prohibition against drunkenness.

f) **Not pugnacious** (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)

Pugnacious means "to strike." The elder is not combative or quarrelsome. He does not react to difficulty with violence. Instead he is...

g) **Gentle** (1 Timothy 3:3)

He is yielding, kind, and fair. This is the man who believes the best, forgets the worst, and carries no grudge, because he is...

h) **Peaceable; not quick tempered** (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)

As Barclay says, he is not "trigger happy." I think today we would say he is not prone to "road rage."

i) **Loving what is good** (Titus 1:8)

Only time in New Testament this phrase occurs. Not only loves good, but does good. Some ancient non-biblical texts: *lover of virtue*

j) **Free from the love of money; not fond of sordid gain** (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)

Paul will say the "love of money is the root of sorts of evil." The elder is a man who is not controlled by the pursuit of wealth or amassing material possessions. Nothing wrong with money, having a lot of it and what it brings...but is that the end you are pursuing...or one of the means by which you pursue greater ends.

## 2. Domestic Responsibilities

a) **The husband of one wife** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)

We need to understand first of all what this does not say...

- It does not say that a man must be married to be an elder. It only assumes that most men who serve as elders will be. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:32 commends singleness as beneficial in service to the Lord.
- He does not say that a divorced man cannot be an elder. We don't want to be guilty of reading more into this than Paul intends.

The literal Greek reads: "a one-woman man." The focus is his moral, in his marriage. There are many men who are married but are not a "one woman man." This man is faithful in thought and conduct. He is devoted in heart and mind to his wife, his one woman, and no other.

- b) **Manages his own household, children under control with all dignity/children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.**  
(1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6)

To "manage" is – to lead and care for.

"Keeping his children under control with all dignity" simply means... If you are a father, your children respect and obey you. They do not have a reputation for leading an ungodly lifestyle.

Notice that "keeping" is in the present tense indicating that this refers to children living at home. The Titus passage is literally, "having children who are faithful or trustworthy..."

Paul contrasts children who "believe" with children who are accused of drunken revelry and rejecting authority.

Therefore, the contrast is not between children who "believe." as in have placed faith in Christ, and children who have not. But rather, between obedient respectful children and disobedient rebellious children.

This qualification does not mean that your children are perfect. It does not mean that your family never goes through difficulty and challenges financially, materially, physically or with your children.

It means that an elder is a man who *manages those difficulties, who leads and initiates in and through them.* It is not the absence of storms, because we will all face our share. It is staying at the helm and navigating your family through those difficulties.

### **Why is the office of elder limited to men?**

*Some foundational principles and observations...*

1. God created us male and female, distinct and unique in gender (Genesis 1:27)
2. Men and women are equal in value and worth, while distinct in role and responsibility (Ephesians 5:22-33)
3. Equality of value and worth, yet distinct in role and responsibility is modeled in the Godhead: Christ is fully God, and submits to the Father (1 Corinthians 11:3;15:27-28)
4. The model for leadership in the church is based on biblical leadership in the home, where the man carries responsibility for servant leadership. (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
5. Because of the fall, roles of leadership by men have been distorted and harmful. It is only by regeneration in Christ and a man's dependence upon the Spirit that he leads and loves as Christ loves the church.
6. The qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy and Titus apply to men, "husband of one wife" and "manages his own household well."
7. We find no references to female elders anywhere in the New Testament.
8. There are churches and denominations, theologians, scholars and pastors who differ on this issue and we respect others in Christ with whom we differ.
9. We desire to live out God's design for leadership in the home and church with grace, humility, compassion, clarity and love.

I have always found Dr. Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* a very helpful resource regarding difficult theological/biblical issues. You may want to read his explanation from his chapter on Church leadership, which we have attached as a separate document to the Eldership, Part One message on the website. Because this issue raises so many questions, I thought this might be a good resource to help someone think through some of the questions and objections raised.

### 3. Spiritual Maturity

- a) **Not a new convert** (1 Timothy 3:6)

An elder must have a history of faithfulness that has led to a depth of maturity.

- b) **Able to teach; to exhort and refute in sound doctrine; Holding fast the faithful word** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7,9)

This is the only qualification related to giftedness.

Not a bible scholar – but one whose life is informed by Scripture, and whose influence is biblically based. The reason is that when you teach the Bible, unlike teaching math or history, you cannot separate what you teach from what you are.

- c) **God's Steward** (Titus 1:7)

A steward is under the authority and direction of the owner – this man recognizes and embraces the reality that God owns everything – he is a manager of God's goods. Why I said earlier nothing wrong with wealth...when

every bit of it is seen as God's...and every choice made with it reflects God's values and purposes.

#### **4. Public Reputation (1 Timothy 3:7)**

##### **a) A good reputation with those outside the church**

What the world thinks matters because our ultimate mission is the world. We are not gathered here this morning ultimately for ourselves, but for the men and women you live with, work with, study with and play with.

And their estimation of a leader in this church matters because it can either be a stumbling block that keeps them from the Savior or a bridge that brings them to the cross.

#### **Principles from God's model and God's measure of leadership in the local church:**

##### **1. God's measure of a leader's character, is His measure for all who follow Him.**

There is only one qualification that is not required of each one of us, able to teach. Just that one. What we are looking at is the character that God's Spirit is working to grow and mature in each one of us.

##### **2. God's invitation to trust *His leadership* through a plurality of elders is based on their proven character, not their perfect decisions.**

No one you deeply trust does everything the way you would. You don't always agree with people you fully trust. You don't always know why people you trust do the things they do, but you trust their reasons are good and right, that their intentions are grounded in God's glory, purposes and plans.

##### **3. God's invitation to trust *His leadership* through a plurality of elders whose character is proven – is His gift to most insure that their leadership is a reflection of His.**

The plurality of those whose character is proven, in mutual submission to one another, enables this leadership group to most fully reflect God's character. No leadership decision is the will one person, but many. This means their decisions are never in isolation, a safe guard God instilled because He loves His sheep, and He wants those who lead them to reflect His heart and character – and character based plural leadership is His divine design.

##### **4. God's invitation to trust *His leadership* through a plurality of elders whose character is proven is "Plan A."**

There is no "Plan B." There is no "Plan A1." From Genesis to Revelation, God has appointed human leaders to reflect and fulfill His leadership of His people. May we live it out faithfully.