

We aim to reconcile people unto God through Christ

SERMON TITLE:	ELDERS IN THE CHURCH #2
PREACHER:	ROELOF KWANT
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Career trained Elders go to Bible School, complete a Theological degree or diploma. Upon completion of the degree he presents himself as a pastoral candidate and sends his resume to a number of churches needing a pastor. A church who is looking for a pastor, interviews him and if he is acceptable to the board, he is hired to serve. He becomes the leader of the church because is the one who is theologically trained. He is the one who prepares the sermons every Sunday, visits the sick, performs baptism, wedding and funerals.

After a few years of ministry the board decides that the pastor is no longer called for ministry in this particular church because he is not performing to their expectations. Or the pastor receives a call from another church and the process starts all over again.

The early church did not call or recruit a person from a distant seminary. Seminary training is very important but does not necessarily prepare a person for ministry. We will encourage people who want to be in full time ministry be theologically trained but the process of training starts in the local church. He must prove himself faithful with the little responsibilities before hi is given greater. The process of character development is more important than functional knowledge. If we do have a need to call someone from "outside" as a leader it will be advisable to have them go through training within the context of the local church before they are released to serve as a leader.

In the New Testament elders we found in the local church and developed into leaders over a period of time on the basis of their willingness to serve and their moral and spiritual maturity. They were spiritually growing believers chosen based on their character and maturity. Paul expresses this concern over and elders character and stressed the fact that he needed to watch over himself and that his life was to be and example for others to follow.

The qualifications of an Elder are listed in

1 Timothy 3:1-7

¹Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Titus 1 :5-9

⁵The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint^[a] elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶An 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. ⁷Since an overseer^[b] 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. ⁸Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹He 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.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 NKJV

These scriptures give spiritual leader a check point for their own lives. When Paul looked for leaders in the New Testament church he looked for people with these attributes spoken of as mentioned in these verses. These qualities emphasise the persons character and maturity as a Christian as well as his leadership ability. Strong leadership cannot compensate for a lack of character. The qualifications listed in these verses demand a high standard. Perfection is not demanded otherwise none of us would qualify. The term above reproach does not mean that the Elder has no faults whatsoever. Does the qualification “able to teach” mean that the elder must be able to eloquently preach? Does “not quick tempered” mean that the Elder never gets angry? The requirement is not sinless perfection, but a lifestyle of consistency and example.

We must be careful not to add qualifications that are not in His word like; wealth, social status, success, or even spiritual gifts. God values personal moral and spiritual character.

Let’s have a closer look at the qualifications;

To serve the church, an Elder

Is willing

1 Tim 3:1

If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task

It is a good thing to have a desire to serve Christ by being a leader in the church. This is not a human ambition, it is a calling from God. God creates the burden in the hearts of people gives a deep caring, loving concern for his people. Eldership in the Church is sacrificial service.

1 Peter 5:2

²Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, 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;

Is above reproach

Being above reproach does not refer to perfection. Paul is calling attention to a person reputation. How does others view this individual? What is his character? Is he free from scandals. Is it difficult to find something wrong with this person.

It is important for Elders to be above reproach because we are often targets Satan will assault leaders because it is the best way to destroy the church. When an Elder falls it has a devastating effect on the church. Integrity means having high moral standards combined with a brutal honesty about ones short comings. Elders are willing to admit that they are still growing and that they need the Lord help. They model a teachable heart.

Is the husband of one wife

The Greek word indicate that he is a “one women man” He is a person who has eyes for only his wife. He maintains a high standard of morality. This is not a verse to be used to say that a divorced person cannot be an Elder. We believe they can after thorough investigation, prayer and fasting a person could be used as a Elder in the church. Every situation will be looked at on its own merit.

Is temperate, self controlled

An elders will must be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Elders are disciplined people. They are able to control their desires and impulses. They are sober, cautious, vigilant, clear headed, yet at the same time they are filled with the joy of the Lord. They are able to discern church matters and having a sound mind make decision based on good judgement. They are not double minded and tossed to and from by every wind of doctrine. They have a well organised life and are disciplined in their stewardship of their time. Elder are hardworking and thoughtful. They live a committed and Spirit filled life.

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John 3:16 NKJV

Is respectable

The Greek word for respectable is “kosmios” from this we get the English word cosmetics. We are like the cosmetics of the Gospel. When non believers watch us they should be attracted to the Gospel and not put off.

Is Hospitable

The word simply means “fond of guests” . The Greek word for hospitable translates “to love strangers”. Elders welcome new people. Their homes are open homes where people of all kinds feel welcome. They are willing to help, to come to others aid, they enjoy fellowshiping and associating with others. It is not necessary inviting people to your house for a three course meal but hospitality simply means inviting people into your house and life. Be careful is contagious.

Has the ability to teach

Not necessarily from the pulpit but has the gift of teaching others and communicating the gospel truths to others. Some are gifted to speak to large groups and others on a one to one basis. Elders know the truth of God’s word and are able to confront and admonish other when needed. They cannot teach what they do not know.

Is not given to drunkenness

Not given to drunkenness simply means “not tarrying at wine.” They are not infatuated with alcoholic beverages.

Is not overbearing but humble

And elders is selfless. He is not self willed and arrogant. His desire is for the well being of the people in God and to let the people become all they can in Christ. He gives himself to their care. Elders are secure in the fact that they are dependent on God and thus walk in humility rather than Lording over people. Elders are examples in servanthood. Prestige and the desire to be respected is not on the agenda of an Elder. Respect cannot be demanded but should be commanded.

Prov 18:12

¹³To fear the LORD is to hate evil;
I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behavior and perverse speech.

James 3:16

¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Phil 2:3

³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves

Is not quick tempered or quarrelsome

Elders are not quick to get into verbal disputes. They do not lose their tempers or react when they are challenged or irritable. An elder is a person of peace. He is not pushy or hard to get along with. He is not contentious or moody but peaceable, pleasant and positive.

Is gentle not violent

He does not use force of character to get His way. He is not a bully in his relationships with others. He does not strike out at a person who is challenging his patience. They are willing to deal gently with a matter without compromising truth. They lead the sheep and do not drive them.

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John 3:16 NKJV

Is free from the love of Money

An Elders is not greedy. He believes money is a tool for God to se to bless others and is not to be hoarded. An Elder is not out for personal gain or profit as a result of serving as an elder. Elders are examples of how to honestly earn, spend and save money. They tithe to the local church and give generously to those in needed.

Is able to manage his own household well

And elder must first be able to father his own family well before he will be able to father the family of God. They discipline their children in a Godly but form way. Their children are not wayward. He should have strong ties with his children. They should love and respect him.