

## Introduction

Organization! What a difference it makes in every realm of our life. Those who take that little bit of extra time to organize their things have a place for everything and in the years to come always find that everything is in that place. Proper organization saves time and keeps things finely tuned so that things work at optimum performance. Regardless of what we have, if we organize it, our lives become much more enjoyable when we have to deal with that area. Everyone organizes the things that are important to them. People with wisdom organize their time, money, homes, and lives. They find that a few moments each day to organize things saves multitudes of time later and minimizes mistakes.

Not only is this true of individuals, but of families, businesses and schools. The best way to ensure success is to organize all activities to get the most from them. Consultants are paid to come in to a company and assess their organization. In this way waste is eliminated and each position fine tuned to get the most from it. The better the organization, the better the output.

For this reason, God's children ought to be intensely interested in what God had to say about the organization of the church. Since everything he did regarding the church reflected his divine wisdom, he knows how to organize the church to reach its optimum potential.

*to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly (places) might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, 11 according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: Eph. 3:10-11*

It is exciting to think about how much good can be done when all of God's children understand the will of the Lord regarding church organization that will create the opportunity for each local church to be able to do the most work in the most organized fashion.

Along with this are some other important considerations. An ignorance of the Lord's will on the organization of the church has led to some very serious apostasies from the faith. God's wisdom and man's have differed greatly on this subject. Man's idea of organization has led to the demise of local church autonomy and to a central organization in which all the churches are under a man made head who exercises some control over them all. For this reason, it would be hard to find a more perverted doctrine in the Scriptures. History reveals that it was an ignorance of these Scriptures that allowed a bishop to arise above the elders, an archbishop to rise above the bishops, and finally a pope (Catholicism) and later a patriarch (Greek Orthodox) to rise above the archbishops.

For these reasons, all the members of the church need to have a full understanding of God's Will in this realm. Each local church is charged with the duty to properly organize itself. When members understand this, they will encourage all the young men and their wives to develop the necessary qualities for the church to always have qualified elders. They will also resist any attempts to pattern the organization of the church after man's wisdom.

It is my hope that this short book will be of help in accomplishing these things,

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# Contents

<u>I</u>	<u>Introduction.</u>	i
	A. How Acts reveals the Development of Church Organization.	1
	B. Defining the Terms.	4
	1. Elder	4
	2. Bishop.	6
	3. Shepherd.	8
	C. “Elder” “Bishop” “Shepherd” used interchangeably in NT	11
	D. NT Scriptures on “Elders” “Bishops” and “Shepherds”	12
<u>II</u>	<u>Qualifications.</u>	14
	A. Ability to Teach and Shepherd.	17
	B. Experience	25
	C. Reputation.	28
	D. The All Important Subject of Mercy.	30
	E. Habits	38
	F. Character.	44
	G. Domestic Relations.	56
	H. Qualifications of Wives.	77
<u>III</u>	<u>The Work of the Elders.</u>	82
	A. Implications from the terms Bishop and Shepherd.	83
	B. Paul’s Sermon to the Elders at Ephesus.	85
	C. Paul’s Discussion of the Gifts of Christ.	90
	D. Peters Exhortations to the Elders.	98
	E. The Exhortations to the Hebrews.	108
	F. Miscellaneous Scriptures.	113
	G. Conclusion.	114
<u>IV</u>	<u>Bibliography.</u>	115

# How Acts Reveals the Development of Church Organization

The book of Acts is an historical overview of the establishment and development of the church. In Acts 1:8 Jesus reveals God's plan for the church which is also an outline for the book.

*4 He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father ...  
8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8*

1. Apostles not to leave Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes upon them. Acts 1-2
2. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you Acts 1-2
3. You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem Acts 2-8
4. You shall be my witnesses in Judea and Samaria Acts 8-12
5. You shall be my witnesses to the end of the earth. Acts 13-28

Matthew also described Jesus' final instructions.

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. Mt. 28:18-20*

1. All authority had been given to Jesus in heaven and on earth.
2. The apostles were to go and make disciples of all the nations.
3. Disciples are made by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit.
4. They are to teach the disciples to observe all things Jesus commanded.
5. Jesus will be with these disciples always, even to the end of the age.

## The Apostles

The first thing Peter did after Jesus left is select another apostle to replace Judas. This prepared everything so they then waited for the Promise of the Father and coming of the Holy Spirit. Immediately after the Holy Spirit came upon them, Peter, standing up with the eleven preached the first sermon and 3,000 souls were added to them (the twelve apostles) and the church Jesus had promised to build began. Early organization of this church is seen by how she conducted her benevolent activities.

*And with great power the **apostles** gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the **apostles'** feet. Acts 4:33-37*

The disciples brought their gifts to the apostles and distribution was made. From this it is evident that in the earliest days of church organization the apostles were the leaders. This conclusion is strengthened when the first church problem arose.

*Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then **the twelve** summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Acts 6:1-4*

It is clear from the statements of the apostles that the disciples were looking to them for guidance and for a resolution to the problem. Equally clear is that the apostles responded to and solved this problem. No mention is made of any other organization in the earliest days while the church remained only in Jerusalem.

This continued with no further revelation until the eighth chapter. Through the persecutions of Saul, the church was scattered into Judea and Samaria.

*Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the **apostles**. Acts 8:1*

## **The Elders**

Though Luke doesn't give all the details, a benevolent problem similar to the one in Acts 4 arose. The Holy Spirit then revealed the permanent organization the local churches would have.

*Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the **elders** by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:28-30*

The funds were no longer laid at the apostles feet. Instead they were sent to the elders. When the church was only located in Jerusalem, the 12 apostles could easily lead and direct it. But after the persecution spread the disciples into the region of Samaria and Galilee, God revealed the need to select elders and have them direct the workings of the church. Although they are mentioned for the first time here in Acts, God made certain in the epistles that many details about the qualifications and work of the elders would be clearly revealed and understood. Now, the disciples looked to the elders for leadership.

When this famine occurred, the brethren looked to the elders for their necessities, and therefore the elders received the money sent by the disciples in Antioch. Although this was only the churches in Judea, Paul later appointed elders in every local church on his first missionary journey.

*So when they had appointed **elders** in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23*

The organization of the church was simple and easily seen in this passage. In every church Paul started on the first missionary journey he appointed elders. Though Luke did not yet reveal what these elders did, he did make it very clear that in the historical development of the churches they had elders appointed as soon as possible to complete their organization.

## **The Apostles and Elders**

The conclusion that there was a shift in organization from the apostles to the elders as the church spread out into the uttermost parts of the earth is further confirmed when the first doctrinal problem over Gentile circumcision and the keeping of the Law occurred. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, went up to Jerusalem "by revelation." It was the Holy Spirit who directed Paul to go. At Jerusalem he "laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles." He makes it clear that his first discussion was "privately before them who were of repute."

*Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. 2 And **I went up by revelation**, and **communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles**, but **privately to those who were of reputation**, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. ... 7 But on the contrary, when **they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me**, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter... Gal. 2:1-2, 7*

When we see who these people of repute were, the shift in the organization of the church becomes obvious. He went to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

*Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. Acts 15:2*

Since they went to both the apostles and the elders, it is evident that the elders had an important

role in the decision making process of the church. Even in Jerusalem, where the apostles resided, the elders were joined with them in respect and honor(those of repute). As the Spirit through Luke described that discussion, both apostles and elders are mentioned together many times.

*Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to **the apostles and elders**, about this question. Acts 15:2*

*And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and **the apostles and the elders**; and they reported all things that God had done with them. Acts 15:4*

*Now **the apostles and elders** came together to consider this matter. Acts 15:6*

*Then it pleased **the apostles and elders**, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. 23 They wrote this, letter by them: **The apostles, the elders, and the brethren**, Acts 15:22-23*

*And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by **the apostles and elders** at Jerusalem. Acts 16:4*

The elders shared in the discussion, the decisions, and in determining the decrees. It is important to see the significance. God could have taken care of the problem in Antioch by giving Paul the answer and having him write the decrees. He could have given these decrees through all the apostles. He could have commanded Paul to go to Jerusalem and as the apostle to the Gentiles, and write the decrees. But it was the **apostles and elders** who received Paul and Barnabas. It was the **apostles and elders** who gathered together to consider the matter. When the decrees were sent out it was the **apostles and the elders** who had their names set forth in the letter. And as the letter went out, it was determined by the **apostles and the elders**. How much clearer could God be? The early church was being trained to look to both the apostles and to the elders as the leaders forming the organization of the early church.

## **The Elders**

Luke said nothing further on this subject until the 20th chapter as he recorded Paul's words to the elders at Ephesus. Paul's sermon gives further insight into how elders worked together and what they did. There are now so many churches that the apostles could not be personally involved with them all. The only recorded apostle for these Gentiles was Paul. He is now hurrying to get back to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost, and to save time he sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus to the town port city of Miletus. When they arrived he began to preach to them

*For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. 17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and **called for the elders of the church**. 18 And **when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,** Acts 20:16-18*

It is in the midst of this sermon that he revealed everything we inferred from Acts 11:29-30; 14:23; and 15:1-29. Elders were appointed by the Holy Spirit to be bishops(overseers) and shepherds of the flock(church). It was their duty to tend, protect and organize the brethren in the church.

*Therefore take heed to **yourselves** and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28-29*

Luke's final words about the eldership and organization of the church further established the conclusion that God wanted the elders to take the leadership role.

*And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the **elders** were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. Acts 21:17-20*

This final visit by Paul to Jerusalem revealed Paul was directed by the elders of the church at Jerusalem on how to resolve a problem among those brethren. Though an apostle, Paul listened to and submitted to them. None of the apostles were mentioned. God's temporary arrangement of living apostles guiding and directing the church had been replaced with the permanent order of elders guiding and directing the church through the writings of the apostles and prophets(Scriptures). From this point on, the organization of local churches of Christ had elders who bishop(oversee) and shepherd(tend) the church.

## Defining the Terms

The shortest and surest method to become proficient in any subject is to become familiar with the basic terms used to describe and discuss it. In math, these fundamentals are add, subtract, multiply and divide. When these terms are mastered, math becomes simple and easy to perform.

English grammar has nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, direct objects, participles, prepositions etc. The finer points of English grammar cannot be discussed, unless the student understand these basic building blocks.

This principle applies to all the branches of learning. Basic terms must be understood in order for the teacher to speak intelligently and precisely about that subject. It is an obvious prerequisite of any subject that the terms used to discuss it are thoroughly understood.

Without this, like Alice in wonderland, words mean whatever we say that they mean.

*"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things." (Alice in Wonderland - Lewis Carroll)*

Although many today discuss with organization of the church like Humpty Dumpty, making words mean whatever they want them to mean, The Holy Spirit chose words that meant what He wanted them to mean and then clarified their meaning as they were used in the New Testament. We have to accept these words and their meanings as He chose to reveal them.

The Spirit had an exact meaning for each term and he directed the inspired writer on each term.

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 1Cor. 2:12-13*

If we truly believe this, we must do as Paul told Timothy.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2Tim. 2:15-16*

We too must give diligence and to carefully seek the meaning and use of the terms the Spirit chose. If we do so, so we will have a good working understanding of the subject. So many subjects, from baptism to the eldership are much easier to discuss and understand when the terms are clearly understood. To become a true student of church organization the terms elder, bishop, and shepherd must be mastered.

## Elder

The term "elder" is used over seventy times in the NT and about twice that many times in the OT. The term has a long history among the nation of Israel. They were the leaders of the people while in Egypt, during the wilderness wanderings and the conquest, and when Israel settled in the land. The term "elder" was a name to be associated with men of age, wisdom and authority. As with most Bible words, a clear definition of the Greek term the Spirit chose is very helpful.

*"presbuteros...[from Homer down], elder; used 1. of age; a. where two persons are spoken of, the elder:...b. univ. advanced in life, an elder, a senior:... 2. a term of rank or office; as such borne by, a. among the Jews, a.*

members of the great council or Sanhedrin (because in early times the rulers of the people, judges, etc., were selected from the elderly men):... B. those who in the separate cities managed public affairs and administered justice:... b. among Christians, those who presided over the assemblies(or churches)..." (Thayer, Joseph Henry; Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament p 535-536)

Elders, among the Jews, were the rulers of the people, prominent men who took the lead in directing and controlling affairs. The elders of a city corresponded to our councilmen, just as we now call them "city fathers". The elders of the people were their representatives and rulers in the government and management of affairs pertaining to the public welfare. As an official term, therefore, this word expresses the idea of a government by men of age, prominence, experience, wisdom. (Hayden, W. L. "Church Polity" Kansas City: Old Paths Book club, 1894, p 51)

The Title Elder, which is most frequently used by the Apostles, and which is still the most popular of these titles, obtained an official signification among the Jews long before its adoption into the Christian Church. Originally it designated the older men, or heads of families in Israel, who exercised a patriarchal government over their posterity: See Ex. 4:29; 19:7. In the days of Christ it had become the title of the rulers of the Jewish synagogues, and of one of the classes composing the Sanhedrim. Reliable information in reference to the functions of the office among the Jews is quite meager; but it is sufficient to justify the assertion that those who enjoyed the title exercised authority in some capacity. When it was adopted, therefore into the Christian Church, it brought with it at least this general idea, that those to whom it was applied were rulers in the church. The exact nature and limits of their authority it could not of course designate. (McGarvey, J. W. "A Treatise on The Eldership" Dehoff Publications 1870 p. 20)

1. Elder, (Grk., *presbuteros*), as an official title, is of Hebrew or rather of patriarchal origin. Literally, it means an old man, or one who is older than another. But wisdom is to be acquired only by age and experience. And hence we find that the sentiment has prevailed in all ages and in all countries that Rulers, both civil and ecclesiastical, should be men of age and experience. The Greeks had their *gerousia*, (*geron*, an old man,) and their *presbeia*, (*presbus*, or *presbutes*, an old man,) their council and their Assembly composed of old men; the Romans had their *Senatus* as we have our Senate, (*senex*, an old man;) and the Israelites had their..., or Courts and Councils, composed of men distinguished for their age, wisdom and experience. (Milligan, R. "The Scheme of Redemption" Gospel Advocate Company 1975; p 322)

The first use of the term elder in Israelite history occurred when Moses was sent to the children of Israel to speak to them of their deliverance by Jehovah.

*Go and **gather the elders of Israel** together, and say to them, 'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt; Ex. 3:16*

*Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all **the elders of the children of Israel.** Ex. 4:29*

Elders were already an established part of the Jewish nation, it is clear that it must have been a practice that dated back into the patriarchal age. From this time forward the term was used often in the Scriptures to refer to those men who by reason of age and wisdom have gained the respect of those in the city where they lived. God later told Moses to select seventy of these elders and officers and appoint them to help him rule and organize Israel.

*So the Lord said to Moses: "**Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them**; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. 17 Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone. Num. 11:16-17, see also 11:24-25*

God made it clear that it is His intention this office continue as long as Israel is a nation.

*'Now if the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done something against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which should not be done, and are guilty; 14 when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a young bull for the sin, and bring it before the tabernacle of meeting. 15 And **the elders of the congregation** shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the Lord. Then the bull shall be killed before the Lord. Lev. 4:15*

It appears that it was God's intention to continue this form of government among the Jews. They were always to have elders who watched over them as judges and officers.

The elders were given a prominent role in the affairs of their nation. The Scriptures gave them

many duties.

Delivered the murderer to the avenger of blood(Deut. 19:11-13),  
Cleared a city from the guilt of a slain man's body when the murderer wasn't found(Deut. 21:1-9).  
Parents brought their rebellious sons to them for judgment to be passed(Deut. 21:18-21).  
Accusations of unchastity of a new wife were taken to them(Deut. 22:13-18).

Thus elders played a prominent role in the daily affairs of the nation. They worked as rulers and judges who helped the people make proper decisions regarding social, ethical, and moral matters. They retained this position throughout all Israel's changes in government.

Under Joshua:	<u>Josh. 23:2-6; 24:1,31</u>
During the judges:	<u>Judges 21:16; I Sam 4:3; 8:4-5</u>
During the kings:	<u>2Sam. 17:4; I Kings 8:1,3</u>
After the kingdom divided:	<u>1Kings 20:7-8; 21:11; II Kings 23:1</u>
During the Babylonian captivity:	<u>Ezek. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1</u>
After the captivity:	<u>Ezra 5:5; 6:7,14; 10:8,14</u>
During the life of Christ:	<u>Mt. 21:23; 26:3-4; 27:1; Lk 7:1-3</u>

After reading these passages, it is clear that Israel was familiar with the term "elder" and the responsibilities that came with this title. Elders cared for the physical, spiritual, moral and ethical needs of the people they were leading. They were judges making decisions affecting all the people of the city or nation. Therefore when Jews entered the church, unless they were taught by the Holy Spirit to expect a different meaning continue to see these men as doing what they had always done. There are no such explanations! The term passed from its use in Luke(7:3-5; 9:22; 20:1-2; 22:52; 22:66), to its use in Acts, without any explanation, clarification, or elaboration. Clearly the role did not substantially change.

## **Bishop - Overseer**

In Acts 20:28 in the midst of a sermon to the elders at Ephesus Paul revealed that it was the Holy Spirit who had made them "bishops." This is a Greek term with a Greek background. It was not a word used by Hebrew speaking people to describe their leaders.

*episcopos* as a Designation of Office. In ancient Greece the word *episkopos* was used in many different ways to describe those who held various official positions in respect to their office and work. In Athens in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cent. *Episkopos* is a title for state officials. ... more commonly the *episkopoi* are local officials of the officers of societies ... There is no closely defined office bearing the title *episkopos* in the LXX(Septuagint). (Kittel TDWNT Vol 2 p. 608-614)

That being so, the Old Testament sheds little light on it. Even the Septuagint does not translate any office in Judaism into *episkopos*. The translators used it a few times of God as an overseer of our hearts, and of different types of offices, but not often used.

*episkopos* ... The LXX uses *episkopos* in the same twofold way as secular Greek. On the one hand it denotes God, and on the other it has the general sense of supervisors in different fields. ... 2. Men as *episkopoi* There is no closely defined office bearing the title *episkopos* in the LXX. But the term "overseer" is freely used in many different ways. Antiochus appoints *episkopoi* as governors over Israel..." (Kittel TDWNT NT:1985)

So Greek speaking Jews in the first century were somewhat familiar with it. The term "bishop" is actually a translation of three Greek terms. They are *episkopeo*, *episkope*, *episkopos*. They are defined:

"*episkopeo* - to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after, care for: spoken of the care of the church which rested upon the presbyters 1Pet. 5:2..." (Thayer, p. 242-243)

"*episkope* - oversight, i.e. overseership, office, charge...the office of a bishop..." (Thayer, p. 242-243)

"*episkopos* - an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent;...the superintendent, head or overseer of any

Christian church;" (Thayer, p. 242-243)

A careful reading of these definitions shows that whoever held this office would oversee, guard, inspect, look after and care for the work and labor of others. They watch over men.

## **Etymology of "Bishop"**

While the older translations(KJV, ASV used the English word "bishop," only the NKJ retained it. The NASB, ESV and NIV all used the more accurate "overseer." A study of its etymology helps us understand why it was originally used in Old English, and why it is best translated "overseer."

"From Middle English *bishop*, *bisshop*, *bisshop*, *biscop*, from Old English *bisciop*("bishop"), from British Latin *bischo* or Vulgar Latin (*e*)*biscop*us, from classical Latin *episcopus*("overseer, supervisor"), from Ancient Greek (*epískopos*, "overseer"), from (*epí*, "over") (*skopós*, "watcher"), used in Greek and Latin both generally and as a title of civil officers." (Wiki-based Open Content Dictionary)

The word "*bishop*" came down through history as a derivative of both the Greek and Latin. The Greek "*episkopos*," became the Latin "*bischo*." Then, as the term moved into English, the Latin *bischo* became the English *biscop*, and finally "*bishop*." Since bishop is no longer used in secular English, and its original meaning was an overseer, the newer translations are more accurate to current usage.

The English "overseer" or "foreman" has the same basic meaning as *episkopos*.

Among the Athenians it was the title of "magistrates sent out to tributary cities to organize and govern them." (See Robinson's N. T. Lexicon, and references there given.) Among the Jews it had very much that variety of application which the term overseer now has in English. It is used in the Septuagint for the officers appointed by Josiah to oversee the workmen engaged in repairing the temple, 2Chr. 34:12, 17; for the overseers of workmen employed in rebuilding Jerusalem after the captivity; Neh. 11:5, 14; for the overseers of the Levites on duty in Jerusalem; Neh. 11:22; for the overseers of the singers in the temple worship; Neh. 12:42; and for subordinate civil rulers; Jos. Ant. 10. 4. 2. In all these instances it designates persons who have oversight of the persons for the purpose of directing their labor and securing a faithful performance of the tasks assigned them. (McGarvey op. cit., p 20-21)

Overseer (*episkopos*) is of Greek origin. It is used by the classical writers to denote:

1. Any guardian or superintendent whatever.
2. A municipal officer, or one who was appointed to oversee and take care of the interest of some particular town or district.
3. A viceroy, or magistrate, sent to superintend the affairs of conquered provinces.

It occurs but five times in the New Testament: viz., in Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7; and 1Peter 2:25. From all of which it is obvious that in its technical and official sense, as used in the New Testament, it denotes simply an officer who has been appointed to oversee and superintend the interest of some particular congregation. The word bishop is but a corruption of the Greek *episkopos*. It was introduced into the English language through the medium of the Anglo-Saxon, and has consequently the same meaning as the word overseer. (Milligan, R. op. cit., p 323-324)

The term *episkopos* occurs about a dozen times in the Septuagint for various Hebrew words meaning "inspector," "taskmaster," "captain," "president" (see Trommius, Concord. Grk. LXX. Interpr. sub verbo, and also sub *episkope* and *episkopeo*). It was used in Egypt of the officers of a temple, in Greece of overseers or guardians in general, or of municipal and financial officers. In Athens the commissioners to regulate colonies and subject states were called *episkopoi*. The Spartans sent "*epimeletai*" in the same capacity. The term was not only applied to permanent officers, but also to the governing body. (Schaff, Philip, "History of the Christian Church" Volume I Apostolic Christianity A.D. 1-100, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910, (p 492 Footnote # 1)

These quotes show how extensively the terms were used in the first century both by Jews and Greeks in a secular sense. It was used in a capacity that manifested a man as a leader, guide and inspector. They would understand this the moment they heard the term.

Consider a present day application. If God were establishing the church today, and the Holy Spirit used the word "*foreman*" to describe the leaders in the church, we would know exactly what they

meant to convey. If they did not want a foreman in the church, they would either select a different word, or they would qualify it to limit its meaning. If they did not limit it, then it would continue to convey its usual meaning. Therefore, unless there is teaching in the New Testament that teaches otherwise, these men were to rule over and inspect the work of members of the church.

## Shepherd

The term “shepherd” has a long and emotional history among the people of Israel. David was a shepherd and wrote many of his psalms based upon his experiences as a shepherd. Jacob was a shepherd caring for Laban’s sheep (Gen. 31:38-40), and Abel was a keeper of sheep (Gen. 4:2). God used the relationship of a shepherd to his sheep to describe His own relationship to his people. One is almost overwhelmed with the amount of information found in the OT concerning shepherds. Jehovah, the Messiah, and the rulers of Israel were called shepherds.

*“poimaino ...to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep;... to rule, govern: of rulers;... of the overseers (pastors) of the church...” (Thayer, p 527)*

*“poimen... a herdsman, esp, a shepherd; ... metaphorically. The presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church, Jn. 10:16; 1Pet. 2:25; Heb. 13:20... of the overseers of the Christian assemblies [A.V. pastors], Eph. 4:11” (Thayer, p 527)*

Remember, it was because Israel was a land of shepherds, and everyone understood the nature of sheep and the care and concern they needed to thrive that was the basis of their symbolic use. It was that tender care and concern with which a shepherd took care of his sheep that God used in describing himself as a shepherd.

*The Lord is my **shepherd**; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever. Ps. 23:1-6*

David knew that the Lord was the shepherd of His people and simply expressed what he did with his own sheep. David knew God was doing exactly the same thing for him in the spiritual realm. Later God used the term shepherd to describe the lack of care and concern the leaders of Israel were giving to his people and then contrasted it with what his own messiah would do for the sheep.

*‘Therefore thus says the Lord God to them: “Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean **sheep**. 21 Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, 22 therefore I will save My **flock**, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between **sheep** and **sheep**. 23 I will establish one **shepherd** over them, and he shall feed them — My servant David. He shall feed them and be their **shepherd**. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. Ezek. 34:20-24*

*He will feed His **flock** like a **shepherd**; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young. Isa. 40:11*

One of God’s rebukes against the leaders in Israel was their own lack of love and concern for the sheep.

*“Woe to the **shepherds** who destroy and scatter the **sheep** of My pasture!” says the Lord. 2 Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the **shepherds** who feed My people: “You have scattered My **flock**, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the Lord. 3 “But I will gather the remnant of My **flock** out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 I will set up **shepherds** over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the Lord. Jer. 23:1-4*

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 “Son of man, prophesy against the **shepherds** of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the **shepherds**: “Woe to the **shepherds** of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the **shepherds** feed the **flocks**? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the **flock**. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered because there was no **shepherd**; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6 My **sheep** wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My **flock** was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.” 7 “Therefore, you **shepherds**, hear the word of the Lord: 8 “As I live,” says the Lord God, “surely because My **flock** became a prey, and My **flock** became food for every beast of the field, because there was no **shepherd**, nor did My **shepherds** search for My **flock**, but the **shepherds** fed themselves and did not feed My **flock**” — 9 therefore, O **shepherds**, hear the word of the Lord! 10 Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I am against the **shepherds**, and I will require My **flock** at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the **sheep**, and the **shepherds** shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My **flock** from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.” 11 ‘For thus says the Lord God: “Indeed I Myself will search for My **sheep** and seek them out. 12 As a **shepherd** seeks out his **flock** on the day he is among his scattered **sheep**, so will I seek out My **sheep** and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My **flock**, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. 16 “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.” Ezek. 34:1-18

When Jesus came, he called himself the good shepherd.

*“I am the good **shepherd**. The good **shepherd** gives His life for the **sheep**. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the **shepherd**, one who does not own the **sheep**, sees the wolf coming and leaves the **sheep** and flees; and the wolf catches the **sheep** and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the **sheep**. 14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My **sheep**, and am known by My own. 15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the **sheep**. 16 And other **sheep** I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one **flock** and one **shepherd**. John 10:11-16*

Even after his death and return to heaven, the Holy Spirit continued to use the term shepherd to describe Jesus.

*Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great **Shepherd** of the **sheep**, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Heb. 13:20-21*

*who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like **sheep** going astray, but have now returned to the **Shepherd** and Overseer of your souls. 1Pet. 2:24-25*

The terms “shepherd” and “sheep” are used over 200 times in the OT. They show a clear picture of God’s people understood at that time. The relationship of a shepherd who loved his sheep perfectly described the care God had for His people.

The title Shepherd is still more significant than either of the other two. The Jewish shepherd was at once the ruler, the guide, the protector, and the companion of his flock. Often, like the shepherds to whom the angel announced the glad tidings of great joy, he slept upon the ground beside his sheep at night. Sometimes, when prowling wolves came near to rend and scatter the flock, his courage was put to the test: (Jn. 10:12); and even the lion and the bear in early ages rose up against the brave defender of the sheep. 1Sam. 17:34-36. He did not drive them to water and to pasturage; but he called his own sheep by name, so familiar was he with every one of them, and he led them out, and went before them, and the sheep followed him, for they knew his voice. Jn. 10:3-4. (McGarvey, J. W. p 21-22)

A relation so authoritative and at the same time so tender as this could not fail to find a place in the poetry of Hebrew prophets, and the parables of the Son of God. David's poetic eye detects the likeness between the shepherd's care of his flock and the care of God for Israel, and most beautifully does he give expression to it in lines familiar to every household, and admired in every land: (McGarvey, p 22)

Did this understanding of the term shepherd change when it was brought into the New Testament church?

*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the **flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28*

*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 **Shepherd** the **flock** of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the **flock**; 4 and when the Chief **Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. 1Pet. 5:2-4*

These verses clearly show that God intended for the elders and bishops to hold the same position in the church as the shepherds did in the Old Covenant.

In two distinct passages already quoted, (Acts 20:28; 1Pet. 5:2) the elders are exhorted to be shepherds to the church. This exhortation, or rather this apostolic command, has failed to make its due impression on the English reader, because of the very inadequate translation of *poimaino* in the common version. It occurs eleven times, and is seven times rendered feed, and four times rule. When connected with church work it is uniformly rendered feed. No doubt the translators intended by this rendering to make this version intelligible to their uneducated readers in England and Scotland, where very little is known of a shepherd's work except feeding the sheep through the long winters. but this attempt at adaptation has led to serious misapprehension; for even to this day, and in America as well as in Great Britain, the term feed in these passages has been understood by the masses as a metaphor for public teaching, and the whole work here enjoined is supposed to be accomplished when a suitable address is delivered to the saints on the Lord's day. Many an elder has imagined that the chief part of his work is accomplished when he has called together the flock once a week, or it may be once a month, and given them their regular supply of food, even when the food is given is nothing better than empty husks. And many an evangelist, miscalling himself a pastor, has labored under the same mistake. Let it be noted, then, and never be forgotten, that the term employed in these passage expressed the entire work of a shepherd, of which feeding was very seldom even a part in the country where this use of the term originated. The shepherds of Judaea, and those of Asia Minor, pastured their sheep throughout the entire year. Their duty was to guide them from place to place to protect them from the wild beast, and to keep them from straying; but not to feed them.

The apostle Paul leaves us in no doubt as to his own use of the term in question; for after the general command, "Be shepherds to the church," he proceeds to distribute the idea by adding these words:

*For I know that after my departure shall ravenous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore, watch; and remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. Acts 20:28-31*

Here, continuing the metaphor of the flock, he forewarns the shepherds against the ravenous wolves, who can be no other than teachers of error who would come into Ephesus from abroad...

Here, then are two specifications under the general idea of acting the shepherd, and they are strictly analogous to the work of the literal shepherd. It is made the duty of the Eldership, first, to protect the congregation against false teacher from abroad; second, to guard carefully against the influence of schismatics within the congregation; third, to keep watch both within and without, like a shepherd night and day watching his flock, so as to be ready to act on the first appearance of danger from either direction. (McGarvey, p 24-26)

All the duties of a literal shepherd, as understood by the people who gave the word its religious significance, are embraced in these three: 1. To keep the sheep from straying. 2. To lead them to water and pasturage by day, and back to the fold, when need be, at night. 3. To protect them against all danger by night and by day. The pastoral, or shepherd duties of the Eldership, as the nature of the title shepherd and the apostolic precepts both require correspond strictly to these three.

First then, in order to be a good shepherd, the Elder must exercise the utmost care to prevent individual sheep from straying away from the flock; and when one, as it sometimes will, eludes all vigilance and strays away, he is to be prompt and energetic in going out to search for it and bring it back. Jesus, with special reference to his own work in hunting up the lost sheep of the house of Israel, beautifully illustrates this duty by a parable. he says to those who condemned him for receiving sinners,

*What man of you, having a hundred sheep, If he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine, and go after that which is lost till he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing; and when he cometh home he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."*

What can be the meaning of this parable, unless it be that when a disciple strays away from the path of duty, the very first obligation of the shepherd, rising above all the obligations at that moment due to the faithful brethren, is to go and hunt up, and try to win back, the wanderer? He is to leave the ninety and nine, even in the wilderness, and go. (McGarvey, p. 33-35)

Each of these terms bring in a little clearer picture of what God wants in this office. As elders, they are to be men of wisdom and knowledge who are respected by the congregation. As bishops, they are to watch over and superintend others. As shepherds they are to love and care for the sheep.

## **"Elder," "Bishop" and "Shepherd" used interchangeably in NT**

Though there have been many efforts since early in the second century to make a distinction between these three terms and create more than one office out of them, they always fail when the Scriptures are carefully considered. In the early centuries, it was bishop and elder that was thought to be different. Because of this misapplication, a single bishop was elevated over the other elders and the Scriptures were wrested.

Even today such distinctions are rampant. All those who call themselves "pastors" yet do not meet the qualifications for elders in 1Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are misusing the term. "Pastor," is the Latin term for shepherd, and the only legitimate use for "shepherd" is for the elders of the church. An evangelist/preacher cannot be a shepherd unless he has been appointed an elder by the church. To speak of preachers and shepherds separate and apart from the elders would compel us to stop speaking as the oracles of God speak(1Pet. 4:11). But this we cannot do.

When we witness young men without the qualifications calling themselves elders, or bishops ruling over more than one local church we are witnessing error and apostasy. The child of God must become familiar with the use of the terms "elder" "bishop" and "shepherd"(pastor) as the oracles of God use them to avoid these errors.

"...that they did not differ at all from the (*episkopoi*) bishops or overseers (as is acknowledged also by Jerome on Titus 1:5 [cf. Bp. Lightfoot's commentary on Philippians p 98 sq. 229 sq.]) is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately, Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5,7, and the duty of presbyters is described by the terms *episkopein*, 1Pet. 5:1 sq., and *episkope*, Clem. Rom. 1Cor. 44,1;...the Title *episkopos* denotes the function, *presbuteros* the dignity; the former was borrowed from Greek institutions, the latter from the Jewish;" (Thayer, p 535-536)

"The terms Presbyter (or Elder) and Bishop (or Overseer, Superintendent) denote in the New Testament one and the same office, with this difference only, that the first is borrowed from the Synagogue, the second from the Greek communities; and that the one signifies the dignity, the other the duty. ...

1. The identity of these officers is very evident from the following facts:

- a. They appear always as a plurality or as a college in one and the same congregation, even in smaller cities, as Philippi.
- b. The same officers of the church of Ephesus are alternately called presbyters and bishops.

c. Paul sends greetings to the “bishops” and “deacons” of Philippi, but omits the presbyters because they were included in the first term; as also the plural indicates.

d. In the Pastoral Epistles, where Paul intends to give the qualifications for all church officers, he again mentions only two, bishops and deacons, but uses the term presbyter afterwards for bishop.

e. The interchange of terms continued in use to the close of the first century, as is evident from the Epistle of Clement of Rome (about 95) and the Didache, and still lingered towards the close of the second. (Schaff, Philip op. cit., Vol I p 491-493)

In various places throughout the New Testament the three terms, elder, bishop, and shepherd are used interchangeably. All three terms describe the same group of men, but each term views the men from a different aspect or viewpoint. “Taking all these together we get a proper perspective of the officers who superintend the spiritual welfare of the church.” If we think of them as men of mature age and experience, then they are the elders or presbyters. On the other hand, if we view them as the men who take the oversight, then they are the bishops or overseers. The same group can be viewed as the men who feed the church, and from this viewpoint they are the shepherds or pastors. (Williams, p. 6)

The reader will now readily understand why it is that so many titles are used to designate the same class of officers in the Christian church. They are called Elders on account of their superior age and implied wisdom and experience. They are called Bishops or Overseers, because it is their duty to watch over and superintend all that pertains to the edification and welfare of their respective congregations. They are called Pastors or Shepherds, because they are all required to have a shepherd’s care over their several (Individual *akh*) flocks: they are to watch for souls as those who must finally give an account to God...” (Milligan, p. 323)

There can be little doubt among those who take God’s word as the absolute guide (Mt. 15:8-9; 1Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 2Jn. 9), that the terms elder, bishop, and shepherd were used of the same office.

## NT Scripture on “Elders” “Bishops” and “Shepherds”

To see the scope and meaning of these terms, I have cited how they were used to describe the office in the NT church.

“elder”(*presbuterion, presbuteros, presbutes*)” is **bold and underlined**,

“bishop”(*episkopeo, episkope, episkopos*)” is **bold, double underlined and shadowed**,

“SHEPHERD”(*poimaino, poimen*) will be **BOLD, UNDERLINED AND IN CAPS**.

*Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the **elders** by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Acts 11:29-30*

*So when they had appointed **elders** in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. Acts 14:23*

*Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and **elders**, about this question. Acts 15:2*

*And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the **elders**; and they reported all things that God had done with them. Acts 15:4*

*Now the apostles and **elders** came together to consider this matter. Acts 15:6*

*Then it pleased the apostles and **elders**, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren. 23 They wrote this, letter by them: The apostles, the **elders**, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Acts 15:22-23*

*And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and **elders** at Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the*

faith, and increased in number daily. Acts 16:4-5

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the **elders** of the church. Acts 20:17

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **SHEPHERD** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Acts 20:28-29

On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the **elders** were present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. Acts 21:18-20

And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, **PASTORS** and teachers; Eph. 4:11

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the **bishops** and the deacons: Phil. 1:1

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a **bishop**, he desires a good work. 2 A **bishop** then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the **eldership**. 1Tim. 4:14

Let the **elders** who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 19 Do not receive an accusation against an **elder** except from two or three witnesses. 20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. 1Tim. 5:17-20

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint **elders** in every city as I commanded you — 6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a **bishop** must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. Titus 1:5-9

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you. Heb. 13:17

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the **elders** of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. Is any among you sick? : James 5:14

The **elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow **elder** and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 **SHEPHERD** the flock of God which is among you, **servicing as overseers**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief **SHEPHERD** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. 1Pet 5:1-4

## Qualifications

Many professions today are recognized as being far too complex for just anyone to do. Doctors who perform brain or open heart surgery, airline pilots, and multitudes of other jobs cannot be performed without appropriate training. It takes wisdom to be a doctor, and wisdom can only be gained through training, education, and experience. How much is necessary and what the minimum thresholds of competency are for each specialty must be set by those who are already proficient in that job.

Once these minimums are set, they become the standard by which everyone is judged. Tests are competency is verified, then credentials are bestowed. At that point, the person is certified to do these complex jobs. This helps ensure when we go to a doctor for treatment, we will get a doctor who knows what he is doing. Those plaques on the wall are guarantees they have the necessary education and experience to practice medicine.

No one can do any job well unless they have the necessary qualifications and skills. Most highly skilled and demanding jobs take years to perfect. We can judge the difficulty of a job by the number of years it takes to become proficient.

Using this standard, it is evident the eldership is a highly skilled job. In this case, God set the minimum standards necessary to do it. God gave these qualifications for the same reason man does. They are the bar of excellence each Christian must pass in order to be qualified to do the job well. Those without **all** the qualifications are not capable to do what God needs in this job.

Those who contemplate becoming a doctor must carefully consider the qualifications and the price they must pay to gain them. Becoming a qualified doctor does not come without dedication to hard work. It takes years of sacrifice and toil to graduate from school prepared and qualified to practice medicine.

In exactly the same way, a man aspiring to the office of an elder must look closely at the qualifications and put forth the effort and toil necessary to master them. It will require years of labor and sacrifice to gain them all. Those who desire the office of a bishop must begin when they are young. Again, the qualifications listed by the Holy Spirit are given for exactly the same reasons we give them for doctors. God wants the churches protected from unqualified men. Unqualified men should never be in the leadership role of a congregation. They would do far more damage than an unqualified doctor or airline pilot, for while these professions deal with people's lives, elders are dealing with people's souls. These qualifications are absolutely essential to do the work.

The qualities necessary to be a qualified elder/bishop/shepherd are listed in 1Timothy 3:1-8 and Titus 1:3-7. In order to see their breadth and depth, the qualifications are placed in four different lists. The first, a sequential listing of the qualifications as they are found in Scripture. The second is a combined listing of all the qualifications with duplicates removed. The third is a listing of the qualifications as positive or negative, what they should and should not have in their character. The final list groups the qualifications into categories based on similarities. Like the five acts of worship or the five steps to salvation, these lists are an attempt to offer the most helpful way to remember and master them if we seek the office.

After reading J.W McGarvey's book on the eldership, I found grouping them into categories to be very helpful in taking the 37 different qualifications listed in the Scriptures and placing them in five categories.

The qualifications for the office of an Elder are all prescribed by the Apostle Paul in the third chapter to 1st Timothy and the first chapter of Titus. They are distributable into six natural divisions, and it will simplify our investigation to examine these divisions separately. They are distinguished as they relate respectively to experience, reputation, domestic relations, character, habits, and ability to teach and rule. (McGarvey, p. 53)

This is not a perfect system. Subjectively placing them into categories can lead to objections as to which category they truly belong. I freely admit they are arbitrary. Many actually fit into more than one category. Feel free to place them in whatever category you like. Still, with all that said, the benefits outweigh the possible problems.

## Qualification listed in Timothy and Titus

### I Timothy 3:1-7

1. A Man v 1
2. Seek and Desire v 1
3. Without Reproach v 2
4. Husband of One Wife v 2
5. Temperate v 2
6. Sober-Minded v 2
7. Orderly v 2
8. Given to Hospitality v 2
9. Apt to Teach v 2
10. No Brawler v 3
11. No Striker v 3
12. Gentle, v 3
13. Not Contentious v 3
14. No Lover of Money v 3
15. Ruleth Well Own House v 4
16. Children in Subjection with all Gravity v 4-5
17. Not a Novice v 6
18. Good Testimony-Them That are Without 7

### Titus 1:3-7

1. A Man v 6
2. Blameless v 6
3. Husband of One Wife v 6
4. Children That Believe - Not Accused of Riot and Unruly v 7
5. Blameless v 7
6. Not Self-Willed v 7
7. Not Soon Angry v 7
8. No Brawler v 7
9. No Striker v 7
10. Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre v 7
11. Given to Hospitality v 8
12. A Lover of Good v 8
13. Sober-Minded v 8
14. Just v 8
15. Holy v 8
16. Self-Controlled v 8
17. Holding to the Faithful Word 9
18. Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine v 9
19. Able to Convict the Gainsayers v 10

## A Combined Listing*(with duplicates removed):*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A Man <u>1Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:6</u></li> <li>2. Seek and Desire <u>1Tim. 3:1</u></li> <li>3. No Reproach/Blameless <u>1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6</u></li> <li>4. Husband of One Wife <u>1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6</u></li> <li>5. Temperate, <u>1Tim. 3:2</u></li> <li>6. Sober-Minded <u>1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8</u></li> <li>7. Orderly <u>1Tim. 3:2</u></li> <li>8. Given to Hospitality <u>1Tim. 3:2 Titus 1:8</u></li> <li>9. Apt to Teach <u>1Tim. 3:3</u></li> <li>10. No Brawler(Not Given to Wine-KJV) <u>1Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7</u></li> <li>11. No Striker <u>1Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7</u></li> <li>12. Gentle <u>1Tim. 3:3</u></li> <li>13. Not Contentious <u>1Tim. 3:3</u></li> <li>14. No Lover of Money <u>1Tim. 3:3</u></li> <li>15. Ruling Well Own House <u>1Tim. 3:4</u></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Children- Subjection- all Gravity <u>1Tim. 3:4</u></li> <li>17. Not a Novice <u>1Tim. 3:6</u></li> <li>18. Good Testimony-Them That are Without <u>1Tim. 3:7</u></li> <li>19. Having Children that Believe <u>Titus 1:6</u><br/>Not accused of Riot or Unruly <u>Titus 1:6</u></li> <li>20. Not Self-Willed <u>Titus 1:7</u></li> <li>21. Not Soon Angry <u>Titus 1:7</u></li> <li>22. Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre <u>Titus 1:7</u></li> <li>23. A Lover of Good <u>Titus 1:8</u></li> <li>24. Just <u>Titus 1:8</u></li> <li>25. Holy <u>Titus 1:8</u></li> <li>26. Self-Controlled <u>Titus 1:8</u></li> <li>27. Holding to the Faithful Word <u>Titus 1:9</u></li> <li>28. Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine <u>Titus 1:9</u></li> <li>29. Able to Convict the Gainsayers <u>Titus 1:9</u></li> </ol> |
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## **POSITIVE**

1. A Man 1Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:6
2. Seek and Desire 1Tim. 3:1
3. Blameless Titus 1:6
4. Husband of 1 Wife 1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6
5. Temperate, 1Tim. 3:2
6. Sober-Minded 1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8
7. Orderly 1Tim. 3:2
8. Given to Hospitality 1Tim. 3:2 Titus 1:8
9. Apt to Teach 1Tim. 3:3
10. Gentle 1Tim. 3:3
11. Ruling well own house. 1Tim. 3:4
12. Children in subjection with all gravity. 1Tim. 3:4
13. Good Testimony-Them That are Without 1Tim. 3:7
14. Having Children that Believe - Not accused of Riot or Unruly Titus 1:6
15. Lover of Good Titus 1:8
16. Just Titus 1:8
17. Holy Titus 1:8
18. Self-Controlled Titus 1:8
19. Holding to the Faithful Word Titus 1:9
20. Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine Titus 1:9
21. Able to Convict the Gainsayers Titus 1:9

## **NEGATIVE**

1. Without Reproach 1Tim. 3:2
2. No Brawler(Not Given to Wine-KJV) 1Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7
3. No Striker 1Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7
4. Not Contentious 1Tim. 3:3
5. No Lover of Money 1Tim. 3:3
6. Not a novice. 1Tim. 3:6
7. Not Self-Willed Titus 1:7
8. Not Soon Angry Titus 1:7
9. Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre Titus 1:7

## **Grouped Qualifications**

### **A. ABILITY TO TEACH & SHEPHERD**

1. Seek and desire. 1Tim. 3:1
2. Apt to teach. 1Tim. 3:3
3. Holding to the Faithful Word Titus 1:9
4. Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine Titus 1:9
5. Able to Convict the Gainsayers Titus 1:3.

### **B. EXPERIENCE**

1. Not a novice. 1Tim. 3:6

### **C. REPUTATION**

1. Good testimony of them that are without 1Tim. 3:7 .
2. Without reproach/blameless. Titus 1:6
3. Given to hospitality. 1Tim. 3:2 Titus 1:8
4. No Lover of Money 1Tim. 3:3
5. Not Soon Angry Titus 1:7
6. Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre Titus 1:7

### **D. HABITS**

1. Self-controlled. Titus 1:8
2. No Brawler(Not Given to Wine-KJV) 1Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7

### **E. CHARACTER**

1. Temperate, 1Tim. 3:2
2. Sober-Minded 1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8
3. Orderly 1Tim. 3:2
4. No Striker 1Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7
5. Gentle 1Tim. 3:3
6. Not contentious. 1Tim. 3:3
7. Not Self-Willed Titus 1:7
8. Lover of Good Titus 1:8
9. Just Titus 1:8
10. Holy Titus 1:8

### **F. DOMESTIC RELATIONS**

1. A Man 1Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:6
2. Husband of one wife. 1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6
3. Ruling well own house. 1Tim. 3:4
4. Children in subjection with all gravity. 1Tim. 3:4
5. Having Children that Believe Titus 1:6
6. Not accused of Riot or Unruly Titus 1:6

## A. ABILITY TO TEACH AND SHEPHERD

1. Seek and Desire. 1Tim. 3:1
2. Apt to Teach. 1Tim. 3:3
3. Holding to the Faithful Word. Titus 1:9
4. Able to Exhort in Sound Doctrine. Titus 1:9
5. Able to Convict the Gainsayers. Titus 1:9

Elders are called upon to take careful heed over themselves and the flock (Acts 20:28), as well as tend the flock exercising the oversight (1Pet. 5:1-4). Without a deep knowledge of God's word, an intense desire to see the church properly organized, and an ability to do the things necessary to bring this about, they would be unable to do it. Both the church and the prospective elder must be deeply concerned about the depth of mastery in these realms.

### 1. Seek and Desire. 1Tim. 3:1

*Faithful is the saying, If a man **seeks** the office(position) of a bishop(overseer), he **desires** a good work. 1Tim. 3:1*

Though sometimes passed over, this is actually an indispensable quality for the church to assess. It is the foundation of zeal, commitment, enthusiasm and competence. For a man to properly "exercise oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1Pet. 5:2), he must seek and desire the office. "Seek" and "desire" are the very opposite of "constraint" and the very heart of "willingness" and "a ready mind." For these reasons, any man would be disqualified if he didn't have them since he could not do it well. We have all met people who hate their job and only go through the motions each day. Any extra work or effort is no longer in their mind. Contrast this to someone who loves what they are doing and looks forward to any extra work as a challenge and opportunity. An elder who doesn't zealously desire to do all that is required of an elder is not going to be able to do an effective job. He must "seek" it.

#### **Seek:**

*"orego:.. from Homer down; to stretch forth... to stretch one's self out in order to touch or to grasp something, to reach after or desire something... 1Tim. 3:1; Heb. 11:16; 1Tim. 6:10..." (Thayer, p. 452)*

*"orego, to reach or stretch out, is used only in the Middle Voice, signifying the mental effort of stretching oneself out for a thing, of longing after it, with stress upon the object desired..." (Vine, Vol 1 p. 298)*

Think of the following picture as an illustration of someone who is seeking. Someone drops something precious onto a ledge or into a corner and they can't quite reach it. They begin to stretch themselves out further and further to reach it. Finally they are fully stretched, but are still prepared to force it further to reach what they are striving for.

This is the essential idea behind the attitude of the man who seeks the office of a bishop. His desire for the work causes him to make "the mental effort of stretching oneself out for a thing, longing after it." It is this mental effort and longing that will be so tangible to the rest of the congregation. Note the other two uses of this term in the New Testament. This was the "desire" of the patriarchs (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc.) that led them say they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. . . . But now they **desire** a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city. Heb. 11:13,16*

The stretching they were doing toward the heavenly country was seen in their acts of sacrifice. None of them felt that they belonged any longer in this world. For that reason, service to God was their highest priority that they longed for and stretched after every day of their lives.

It's second use reveals how this same reaching and stretching can be used when directed toward

something evil. Those who are seeking for money (“*reaching after*” ASV; “*coveted after*” KJV) make it such a high priority that even their faith is left behind.

*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some **reaching after** have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1Tim. 6:10*

Again, this stretching out after money so compelling that it forced them to make decisions that led them away from the faith. Not even the many sorrows as piercing them moved them from this stretching once they had committed to it.

Both these uses help us to see the full extent of the desire a man can have for the eldership. There must be a strong and fervent reaching for it that is causing them to make decisions and sacrifices that lead them ever closer to it. They must want it badly enough to put forth the great mental effort and exertion necessary to reach it. This qualification will be seen in the effort and zeal with which they seek it. Any man who must be asked by the congregation, or begged and pleaded with to take it would not fulfill this qualification. The job cannot be done properly unless it has been sought and reached after in the manner described above. Parents, teachers, and preachers should instill this desire in the hearts of young men and women. Only in this way will the extra work and effort required of an elder and his wife be joyfully embraced and faithfully accomplished in the manner described above.

Another obvious sign of this qualification will be found in the work they are doing even before they are appointed to the office. A young man who longs to fly is going to have planes in his room, visit the airport, watch the planes and do everything he can to be flying, long before he becomes a pilot. A man who desires the office of a bishop is going to be doing all that he can even before he is appointed to the office. It ought to be evident from the way they work in the church, studying, teaching and standing for the truth, visiting the brethren to get to know them are things they are stretching themselves and reaching for.

## **Desire:**

Not only does he “*seek*” the office by reaching for it, but he also “*desires*” it. This is one of the strongest terms in the Scripture often translated “*lust*” or “*covet*.”

*“epithumeo...to keep the thumos turned upon a thing, hence [cf. our to set one’s heart upon] to have a desire for, long for; absol. to desire [A. V.] to lust after, covet, of those who seek things forbidden ...” (Thayer, p. 238)*

*“thumos,...2. glow, ardor...” (Thayer, p. 293)*

While “*seek*” is only used three times in the New Testament “*desire*” is found 18 times. It also is used both for good and evil things. For evil or good, it’s intensity is clear.

But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman **to lust** for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Mt. 5:28

I **have coveted** no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Acts 20:33

The same craving and desire some direct toward women and drives others after possessions, God asks for in the heart of a man for the office of a bishop. “*Stretch after*” and “*strongly desire*” lead us to a better understanding of God’s concern for those who want to take this office. It is a difficult job requiring their best. Only the most motivated need apply. They must hunger and thirst after it, want it with all their heart, think and meditate upon its great duties and stretch forth for it with all the intense ardor and drive of their being. These and these alone are qualified.

How can a man gain such intense desire? Where is the source of desire for responsibility? The answer lies in gratitude. Paul spent his life for the Lord in grave and difficult situations. He was beaten, he was maligned and mistreated nearly everywhere he went, but he was thrilled to do it! Every day for an entire life and the desire, longing and stretching after never ended for him.

*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which*

*are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; Phil. 3:13-15*

This desire is the heart of

*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. Eccl. 9:10*

Serving God as an elder is one the highest realms of service a man and his wife can offer. Those who look upon themselves as living sacrifices presented to the Lord and who serve Him out of gratitude and appreciation for all He has done will strongly desire the office. Only they are qualified.

## **2. Apt to teach. 1Tim. 3:1**

This qualification is summed up in a single Greek word. It is defined:

*“didaktikos, ... apt and skillful in teaching.” (Thayer, p. 144)*

*“didaktikos (derivative of didasko ‘to teach,’) pertaining to being able to teach - ‘able to teach, can teach.” (Greek-English Lexicon)*

What does it mean to be “*apt and skillful*” “*able and can*” teach. Some see this qualification as simple as just imparting knowledge, while another sees the “college professor” of bible teaching. Skillful teachers have an attribute that allows them to teach their subject well.

They have mastered the subject. What does mastery mean. First, they know as much as possible at their current maturity level about what the Scriptures say. Second, they have so applied it to their life that they have a practical understanding. We have all heard people speak of something that they have read in a book, but have never done. They can teach the facts, but can’t help anyone apply it to their life since they haven’t. For example, a good mechanic, who is also a shop teacher can give his students greater insight into the workings of a car than a teacher who simply recites facts from a book. The former is apt to teach. He can answer their questions and can speak of practical applications that make the subject vibrant. Such a man is a valuable teacher.

This is very important in the spiritual realm. Any teacher who teaches on themes he has personally applied in his own life is a joy to hear. He may or may not use good grammar, he may have few examples to liven things up, but he will teach well. This is what the Bible calls wisdom, and there is no replacement for it in one who is truly apt to teach. All of God’s children should have this wisdom. It is offered freely through prayer:

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. James 1:5*

Any Christian who has studied and gained knowledge, and through prayer and experience, has translated that knowledge into wisdom will be apt to teach. He will always have something worth listening to. He will always be able to get his point across in a clear, and understandable manner.

There is nothing in this word that implies his ability to always be easy to listen to, dynamic, eloquent or even enjoyable. Some take this qualification relating to information see entertainment. The ability to entertain or easy to hear is a wonderful quality, but no replacement for edification.

The ability to entertain has little to do with being apt to teach. It has more to do with personality and speaking ability. What should be assessed is what the man knows, and how much of what he knows he can get into the minds of others. Only the ability to put information across in a helpful way and true to the Scriptures is involved. It is unfair and unscriptural to make this qualification more rigid than God did.

Moses told God he was not eloquent and should be excused from being a leader(Ex. 4:10). But Moses didn’t need to be eloquent, he only needed to be able to express what God expected and His reasons for doing so. This Moses did many times. Therefore regardless of how eloquent he

was, he was apt to teach. This is a subtle difference, but very necessary lest we appoint a man based on eloquence or deny a man who is apt to teach but not eloquent. McGarvey had an interesting point which is worthy of consideration:

The Greek for this expression is *didaktikos*, which I prefer to render “capable of teaching.” The Elder, then, must be capable of teaching; but this expression represents a variable quantity. One might be capable of teaching some persons, and utterly incapable of teaching others. It becomes a matter of necessity, then, that before we can form a judgment as to a man’s possession of this qualification in the requisite degree, we must know who it is that he is to teach. A person capable of teaching children might be incapable of teaching adults, as one capable of teaching an academy might be incapable of teaching the classes in a college. So an Elder might be capable of teaching a congregation in one community, and not in another nearby. What is the standard, then, by which each individual candidate for the Eldership is to be judged in this respect? Undoubtedly, it is to be found in the attainments of the congregation which he is to teach. He is to be their teacher, and theirs alone; consequently if he is capable of teaching them, he has the capability required by the Scriptures. From this it appears that properly qualified Elders may possess capability of teaching in a great variety of degrees as characterizes the intellectual and religious attainments of the various congregations. Furthermore, it must be evident that each individual congregation is the best judge of the capability of an Elder to be its teacher. So long as they receive instruction from the Elder, and are satisfied with him, he is qualified according to the scriptures to teach that congregation, however much he may fall below some other Elder in the same congregation. (McGarvey, p. 62-63)

He has a good point. When a congregation selects elders it is unnecessary and even impossible for each to have the same abilities. One may be far below another in ease of listening or in teaching ability. Apt to teach is a relative qualification that must be approached with mercy. No two people will be alike. A congregation must decide with mercy and compassion how much of this ability is really necessary. They cannot be made so stringent that no one among them can reach it. They cannot be made so lax that the men are not qualified.

### **3. Holding to the Faithful Word. Titus 1:9**

***holding fast the faithful word*** which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to ***exhort in sound doctrine*** and to ***refute those who contradict***(***convict the gainsayer***). Titus 1:9

From this Scripture, we have the three last qualifications of an elder’s ability to teach and rule. As is obvious from the passage, these need to be taken as a group. There are three separate qualities here, but actually there is one that leads to the final two. As a result of “*holding to the faithful word*,” he will be able to “*exhort in sound doctrine*” and “*convict the gainsayer*” so the foundation of the three commands is seen in the word “*holding to*,” for only when they are doing that can they “*exhort*” and “*convict*.”

*“ant-echomai, ...in the N. T, only in Mid. to keep one’s self directly opposite to any one, hold to him firmly, cleave to, paying heed to him... to hold to, hold it fast, Titus 1:9”* (Thayer, p. 49)

*“ant-echomai,... to hold firmly to, cleave to, of holding or cleaving to a person,... of holding to the faithful word, Titus 1:9...”* (Vine, Vol. 2, p. 224)

Although in English, this is a single word it is a compound word in Greek. It is made up of the word “*anti*” and “*echo*.” Looking at both of them gives a clearly picture of the term.

*“echo... Transitivity. 1. to have I. q. to hold; a. to have(hold) in the hand... b. in the sense of wearing... c. trop. to have(hold) possession of the mind; ... d. to hold fast, keep... II. Intransitively... to hold one’s self to a thing, to lay hold of a thing, to adhere or cling to; to be closely joined to a person or thing... near, adjoining, neighboring, bordering, next...”* (Thayer, p. 265-268; 2192).

As we carefully look at this definition, we see that “*echo*” is a word of *possession*, of *having* and *holding*. As it moves through various contexts in the Scripture it can mean “*to hold possession of the mind*,” “*to hold one’s self to a thing*,” “*adhere and cling to*,” “*be closely joined to*.” Hence this qualification demands that everything in his life revolves around God’s word. What God told Joshua as he began his work as a leader is very helpful to fully see what God expects. He tells

Joshua to be strong and courageous in order that he may observe to do according to all the Law. He told him do not turn from it to the right or to the left.” He told him he should never stop talking about God’s word, that every word might be sifted by and conformed to it before the words come out. He told him to meditate, ponder and consider God’s word day and night. Applying it to every circumstance and event in his life. This is how one “holds fast” to the faithful word.

*Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Josh. 1:7-9*

But what about “anti?” Since the word “echo” conveys all that our English word “hold fast” conveys. How does “anti” strengthen and expand this meaning?

“anti 1. properly, it seems to have signified *over against, opposite to, before,* (Thayer’s 473)

“anti” gives the additional idea of being opposite to the word of God. Whatever the Scriptures teach, he holds himself directly opposite so that they are like mirror images. This is what Jacob did with the angel (Gen. 32:24-29). In sports like wrestling and football, the opponents hold themselves opposite to one another. Jesus used this word to warn against the power of money.,

*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will **hold to the one**, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Mt. 6:24*

When one holds fast to God, he must despise money, and when one holds fast to money, he must despise God. Thus the way one man holds fast to money, the other holds fast to God. Thus these three qualifications stem from *holding, cleaving, adhering and clinging* “directly opposite” to the truth in Scripture. This is exactly what Paul told Timothy to do.

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2Tim. 2:15*

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Tim 3:16-17*

When a man seeks and desires the office of bishop/overseer, he must be diligent to rightly divide the word of truth. Since Scripture is “*profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*” how can anyone exhort and refute without hold fast to it? Multitudes of passages and events reveal this. Cain and Abel, Noah, Nadab and Abihu, Saul, David and Uzzah, reveal the importance of “holding fast to the faithful word.” Many commands in Scripture also warn of necessity of holding to and handling aright the doctrine (2Jn. 9; Gal. 1:6-9; Mt. 7:21-24; Mt. 15:9; Rev. 22:18-19; 2Th. 2:9-10)

God’s shepherds must have a deep personal respect God’s Word. Without such respect terrible consequences will surely follow.

*and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Acts 20:30*

It is the obligation of a man seeking the office to be honest about this, and it is the duty of the congregation to assess his past teaching and life to determine the quality of this attitude. If he does not consistently place himself directly opposite the Word, hold it firmly, and comply with it, he is unfit for the job.

The elders are required to hold fast this “faithful word,” and, as a consequence, condemn everything unauthorized by it. A “thus saith the Lord” was to be the touchstone of every doctrine and every practice which Jew or Gentile might introduce, and thus, by “sound teaching,” the Elders were to stop the mouths of all in their respective congregations who taught things which they ought not. (McGarvey, p. 63-64)

When God rejected Saul and chose David, He was looking for a man after His own heart. A man who would go to the Word and seek to do things God's way. At the end of David's life, God summed up his value:

*He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.' ... 36 For David, after he had in his own generation served the counsel of God, fell asleep, Acts 13:22; 36*

This is exactly what God seeks today in this quality. If a man aspiring to the office bishop/overseer is a "man after God's own heart", "holding fast to the faithful word" so he can do all My will," he too "in his own generation can serve the counsel of God."

#### **4. Able to exhort in Sound Doctrine. Titus 1:9**

In the wisdom of God only those who can hold fast and remain locked into the word of God will be able to exhort in the manner necessary to be a bishop/overseer in the church. The ability to exhort is an important part of the work of the church. As shepherds watch over their sheep, the sheep can become discouraged, weak, scattered, hungry and thirsty. In such cases a word of encouragement, comfort, admonition, or consolation is the cure.

*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver. 12 Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear. 13 Like the cold of snow in time of harvest Is a faithful messenger to those who send him, For he refreshes the soul of his masters. Pr. 25:11-13*

God wants His shepherds to be able to do this with His word. This ability is the foundation of "exhortation"

*"parakaleo, to call to ones side, call for, summon:... to address, speak to;... which may be done in the way of **exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction**, etc. hence result a variety of senses... 1. to **admonish**, exhort;... 2. to beg, **entreat**, beseech; ...3. to **console**, to **encourage** and **strengthen** by consolation, to **comfort**;...4. to **encourage, strengthen**;...5. it combines the ideas of exhorting and comforting and encouraging;... 6. to instruct, teach..." (Thayer, p. 482-483)*

The literal meaning of this compound word is to call beside, or to one's side. Since the preposition *para-* means beside(*para-ble*), and the verb *kaleo* means to call, From this root meaning, the Greek speaking world used it for anything one can do when they have something important to say, or to be heard. Since the person wants them right beside them, it was most often used of the gentle emotions or sympathy, compassion, and love. Whatever the need is the reason for the call and when they arrive, the need is translated tenderly into words.

The word is used many times in the Scriptures most often exhort, beseech(urge), implore, and comfort. Elders need to hold fast to the word of God so they can choose the right approach to speak to those who are having difficulty. Remember God's rebuke the His shepherds in Israel :

*The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. Ezek 34:4*

If they are trying and want to do better, he needs to exhort them in sound doctrine. He has to be able to make them feel good about a chance to do better and not discourage them with harsh rebuke or lack of concern.

*Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. 4 Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." Isa 35:3-4*

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Gal 6:1*

Although many use human philosophy and psychology, God wants the bishops/overseer to use the "sound doctrine" He has provided in His word.

*“hugiano,... to be sound, to be well, to be in good health... is used of one whose Christian opinions are free from any admixture of error, Titus 1:13...the sound I. e. true and incorrupt doctrine, ...”* (Thayer, p. 634)

*“hugiano, to be healthy, sound in health (Eng., hygiene etc.), translated “safe and sound” in Luke 15:27, is used metaphorically of doctrine,...”* (Vine, Vol. 4, p. 55)

It is a sad thing when Christians use worldly thoughts to exhort God’s people. Those who seek motivation from psychologists, human wisdom and reasoning are incapable of serving as elders. How can a healthy respect be instilled in others that the Scriptures are complete and can thoroughly furnish unto all good works if they are not the first and primary source used by the man seeking to help them? Only men who are accustomed to turning *“to the word and to the testimony”* (Isa. 8:20) for answers to all problems could fulfill this qualification. If a man believes that God’s word *“thoroughly equips”*(2Tim 3:16-17) and has *“all things pertaining to life and godliness”*(2Pet. 1:3-4) it will be obvious in how he exhorts. All congregations need men who can take healthy and sound wisdom from the Scriptures and apply them to the sorrows and difficulties and spiritual needs of others in a loving and uplifting way.

## **5. Able to Convict the Gainsayers. Titus 1:9**

He must also hold fast to the faithful word in order to “convict” the gainsayers.

*“elencho,.. 1. to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted,...by conviction to bring to light, to expose... used of the exposure and confutation of false teachers of Christianity, Titus 1:9,13...”* (Thayer, p. 202-203; 1651)

*elencho* 1. Though the NT usage is simple and straightforward, outside the NT it is very complicated. In Homer *elencho* still means “to scorn,” “to bring into contempt.” Later it means a. “to shame” by exposure, opposition, etc.; b. “to blame”; c. “to expose,” “to resist”; then d. “to interpret,” “to expound”; and finally e. “to investigate.” 2. The use of *elencho* in the NT is restricted. ... It means “to show someone his sin and to summon him to repentance.” (Kittel, NT:1651)

The ability to convict and refute seeking shame(godly sorrow) and remorse is a vital need for those in sin who can still be restored. It is also needed to protect the congregation against those who would teach error and refuse to repent. This is the real importance of church discipline. It can begin with exhortation, but if they refuse to repent, it moves to convicting, refuting and exposing.

*“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Matt 18:15-17*

But this is only true for those within the congregation who are sheep. For the wolves who are seeking to destroy the sheep, the harsher side of convicting comes to the front.

*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. Rom 16:17-19*

*For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, 11 whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. 12 One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” 13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, Titus 1:10-14*

The type of people most in need of being convicted are those who teach error and will not submit to the authority of Christ. These are the “gainsayers.”

*“antilego,... to speak against, gainsay, contradict;... to oppose one’s self to one, decline to obey him, declare one’s self against him, refuse to have anything to do with him...”* (Thayer, p. 50)

Such men do not need or want to be exhorted. They need to be refuted, exposed and put to

shame. Those who are too soft take a strong stance against error and publicly convict and expose a man who is a gainsayer, are not qualified to shepherd God's people.

*For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. Acts 20:29-31*

*"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. John 10:11-14*

A shepherd needs a backbone to refute and put to shame another when they teach or practice error. Those who are so soft hearted that they cannot take such a stand or are reluctant to hurt the feelings of another would not be capable of doing this job. For the sheep would be scattered and destroyed. Note Scriptural examples of refuting a gainsayer:

*Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also the power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Acts 8:18-22*

*And when they were gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus; who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith. But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, and said, O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right way of the Lord? Acts 13:6-9*

A man must be prepared to do this to qualify for the eldership. There is nothing mean or vindictive in either of the above. In the first case, Peter seeks to help Simon see the folly of his wicked words. He even offered him the way of escape in the form of repentance and prayer. In the second case a much more serious thing has occurred. The man was seeking to turn another from salvation. Paul dealt with this in strong of terms. This is still needed from time to time and the men selected to lead a congregation must be able to do it. This is vital if a congregation is to protect itself.

The innocent sheep must be protected from such evil gainsaying wolves. The sheep are far more important than the feelings of the gainsayer. No one can hide behind emotional excuses when such a job needs to be done. All Christian need a strong enough respect for God and His truths that they will choose fidelity to them over the favor or feelings of another.

## **Conclusion:**

An elder must rule over the congregation he serves. The brethren must trust him to lead well and in the right direction. No man lacking the above qualities will be capable of doing the job to the degree God wants. Everyone who desires this office must labor and never pass up opportunities to preach and teach, fervently pray for wisdom, and appreciate the great opportunity of service to God and man which open to him by taking on this work. They must meditate upon these things until their heart burns with desire and they are stretching and reaching out for it. These are absolute necessities to qualify for the work.

## B. EXPERIENCE

### 1. Not a Novice.

*not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 1Tim. 3:6*

Some things can only be gained by experience. College students who have spent most of their life in school have heads full of facts, but in their mid twenties, with no on the job training, they are still a novice. They can understand the basics of many things, but cannot always practically apply them to circumstances in life. Wisdom takes more than a head full of knowledge, it also requires experience. As they years pass, mistakes are made and learned from, entire days are spent, but not wasted, trying to figure out a problem with no obvious solution. Day by day, inexperience is replaced with wisdom. The only way to become experienced and see how knowledge is applied to different circumstances, is to live and learn.

God was concerned enough about this principle in the spiritual realm to give this qualification. Shepherds and overseers in the church must have passed through the stages of inexperience where foolish mistakes are made. It is not enough to know the Bible, they must have the wisdom to know how to use it to solve problems and help people grow. Those who grow quickly and appear to have the qualifications must still pass the test of time. The Greek term passed into English in the term “*neophyte*”- “*neo* - new” and “*phuo* - “planting,” hence, “*not newly planted.*”

*“neophutos, an adjective, lit., newly-planted (from neos, new, and phuo, to bring forth, produce), denotes a new convert, neophyte, novice, 1Tim. 3:6, of one who by inexperience is unfitted to act as a bishop or overseer in a church” (Vine, Volume 2 p. 119)*

If we imagine a seedling just coming forth from the ground, we get the idea of a novice. A new plant is not deeply rooted and is much more prone to drought. It is small and in danger of being stepped on and crushed. It is a tender stem, that cannot withstand the wind. In short the most vulnerable time in the life of a plant is that time when it is newly planted and a seedling. There is an identical issue with newly planted Christians. Their faith which comes by hearing, needs to be strengthened and their conviction and commitment hardened through adversity and trials. To place one into the position of a shepherd before these things have occurred is dangerous to the church and the man.

There are important things that must happen before anyone can lead another. Remember, Jesus warned of “*the blind leading the blind...*” The very purpose of the gifts Jesus gave His church is to move us as quickly as possible from newly planted to established and strengthened.

*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for **the equipping of the saints** for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come 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; 14 that we should **no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine**, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, Eph 4:11-14*

By passing through the “*new birth*,” we are, for a time, like children again. Children must grow up and become adults. One stops being a child when he is no longer tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. This is what knowledge and experience produce.

*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For **everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.** 14 But **solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.** Heb 5:12-14*

This passage stresses the necessity of growth. Time alone does not lead a novice to become full grown. A newly planted tree is weak and unstable until its roots go down deep enough to support its weight and its trunk grows strong enough that it will not bend or break in the wind. Until that day

comes it is still a new plant, unable to stand on its own. Time is a factor, but not the only one. If a tree is not properly watered and fed it may never leave the newly planted stage, though it be in the ground a long time. So it is with men and the gospel. Some will leave the newly planted stage more quickly than others. No one is full grown until he is no longer tossed in the wind. Until, like a tree, he can stand strong on his own without wavering. Until he has, by reason of use, had his senses exercised to discern good and evil, has a full understanding of first principles, and eats the meat of the word of God he is a new plant. But there is more even than this:

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? 1 Cor 3:1-3*

Spiritual growth is also seen as the carnal(flesh) gives way to the spiritual. One ceases to be a novice when he can control the base and sinful emotions of the flesh. In the book of Galatians, Paul spoke of how he had done this and that all who belong to Christ have also done it.

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Gal 2:20*

*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Gal 5:24-26*

Until these lusts have been crucified, a man is still a novice. Only those who have purged themselves are meet for the Master's use and prepared for every good work.

*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 2 Tim 2:20-23*

Those who know God's word and by reason of time and experience have become both doctrinally and morally pure and wise fit this qualification. This does not mean sinless perfection, but it does mean substantial growth in the direction of self-control. To place a man into the office before this time places him in grave peril. Such a man is in danger of becoming "puffed up" and falling into the condemnation of the devil.

*tuphoomai* **be puffed up, conceited; become foolish** ... (passive of tuphoo "becloud") occurs in the NT only in the Pastoral Epistles. A new convert who was appointed bishop could become *puffed up with conceit* (1Tim. 3:6). A teacher who does not offer the sound words of tradition but instead teaches strange things "is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing" (6:4). (Exegetical Dictionary of the NT)

"*tuphoo*, ... (*tuphos*, smoke; pride); prop. *to raise a smoke, to wrap in a mist*; used only metaph. 1. *to make proud, puff up with pride, render insolent*; pass. *to be puffed up with haughtiness or pride*, 1Tim. 3:6..." (Thayer, p 633)

Being appointed as an elder while still growing out of childhood is too much for any man. It can lead to a pride and insolence that will result in a fall. Appointing such a man presents a grave danger not only to the congregation, but to his soul. Everyone needs enough time to grow up in Christ before adding the burden of leadership.

The final clause is interesting but difficult. A point of grammar must be understood whenever two nouns are separated by "of."

the noun in the genitive indicates the thing to which the action is referred, either as subject or object... The Subjective Genitive ... when the noun in the genitive *produces* the action being therefore related as *subject* to the verbal idea of the noun modified... The Objective Genitive ... When the noun in the genitive *receives* the action being thus related as *object* to the verbal idea contained in the noun

modified. (Dana & Mantey, Grammar of the Greek NT, P. 78-79).

In this case “the devil” is the genitive, and condemnation is either the subject or the object. So if it is a subjective genitive, then the devil is the subject doing the condemning. If it is an objective genitive the devil is the object of the condemnation. If the devil is the subject then the man will fall into his condemnation. If the devil is the object then that man would be receiving the same condemnation that the devil received when he fell. If that is its meaning it stands alone in the Scripture. No where else does it reveal why he is to be condemned

The more natural understanding is that the devil is the one doing the condemning. So when a novice is placed into the office of the bishop will face strong condemnation from the devil. Obviously, this is a strong warning against placing a man into the office before he is spiritually mature.

## C. REPUTATION

A man's reputation is the badge of his past conduct which he wears around those who know him. It is the assessment and attitudes toward him that his friends and acquaintances have developed as a result of previous dealings. This includes outlook, character and manner of life. It is usually an effective tool to assess a man's worth and character. A man with a good reputation has earned it. He has always conducted himself around others in such a way that they feel good about him. They trust him, they know how he will act since he has always acted that way.

God is very concerned about the reputation of those who shepherd His people. He knows that what they have done in the past is what he will do in the future. He wants the years to have proven them to be honorable. Six qualifications listed in Timothy and Titus fit under the heading of reputation. They were selected because each of them is an assessment of what others think about him as a result of past dealings. They are only determined by speaking with others.

1. Good testimony of them that are without 1Tim. 3:7 .
2. Without reproach/blameless. Titus 1:6
3. Given to hospitality. 1Tim. 3:2 Titus 1:8
4. No Lover of Money 1Tim. 3:3
5. Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre Titus 1:7
6. Not Soon Angry Titus 1:7

### 1. Good Testimony of them that are without.

*Moreover he must have good testimony of them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 1Tim. 3:7*

This is the broadest of the qualifications on reputation. Generally, the church knows only the reputation of a man as he conducts himself at the assemblies and within the social contacts we with him have through evangelism, edification and benevolence. Even hospitality generally only includes other brethren.

This qualification broadens it to his reputation among co-workers, neighbors, and acquaintances. Those people he sees while away from the members of the church. What kind of reputation has he built based on his conduct among them? This is a difficult qualification to assess. Few people other than himself has contact with them. But as much as possible these things should be investigated. What he does when he is angry, how does he conduct business, what are his habits and weaknesses. These are the types of things that those who are without can attest to. A foul mouth, dishonesty, how he pays his bills, his patience and compassion are all seen by the world. All the qualifications on character are seen by those outside.

No greater harm can befall a church than to have members within its fellowship who live one way around members and another way among co-workers and friends in the world(hypocrisy). No one can hide what they are for long. Co-workers and neighbors often see more, especially while under stresses and strains of being in the world, than the brethren. Often they have a clearer perspective of their moral standards. Even if the details cannot be gleaned their overall attitude should be sought and assessed. Almost anyone can live and act correctly while at services. Almost anyone can keep a mask on for 4-5 hours a week when they know others are watching. One of the best possible barometers of true character is to take into consideration what those who see them more often think of them.

Again honesty on the part of the man seeking the office is important. Most men know what others think of them. We know if those in the community have lost respect for us. If these can't be cleared up with an apology and repentance, then this qualification has not been fulfilled.

Younger men who aspire to the office must be careful. One temper tirade may place a badge on your chest which you will wear for years. A badge that you are a Christian who cannot control his temper and who may be a hypocrite. One temptation, given in to publicly, may ruin your reputation among those who are without, and for many years, if not forever, bar you from the eldership. This

manifests the strong need for confession. All men sin, but those who confess it are forgiven and it is forgotten. Most people will continue to respect someone if they show remorse and repentance, and then forget it ever happened.

Yet there is also a need for caution. Some in the community will never respect a member of the church of Christ. Persecution for righteousness sake is part of being a Christian. A congregation must have the wisdom to seek the difference between lack of respect for righteousness sake (persecution) and a lack of respect due to his lack of purity and righteousness. The Holy Spirit addressed this:

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 1 Peter 3:15-18*

*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. 1 Peter 4:11-16*

*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Tim 3:12-13*

It would be unfair and unrealistic for a congregation to expect its elders to have a perfect standing. There will be those who will reproach Christians for the name of Christ and fabricate and attribute evil to them. It is not these that God is concerned with in this qualification. It is those who have lost their standing for dishonorable reasons.

The danger here is that he fall into "reproach."

*"oneidismos...(oneidizo),...a reproach:" (Thayer, p 446-447)*

*"oneidizo...to reproach, upbraid, revile;...of deserved reproach,...of unjust reproach, to revile ..to upbraid, cast (favours received) in one's teeth..."(Thayer, p 446)*

When the leaders of a congregation have a deserved unsavory reputation in the world it will bring both them and the entire church into reproach. No church can grow when people look upon its rulers as hypocrites. The entire congregation will be affected. The "*snare of the devil*" is another danger.

*"pagis,... that which holds fast... a snare, trap, noose; a. prop. of snares in which birds are entangled and caught,... as a snare, i.e. unexpectedly, suddenly, because birds and beasts are caught unawares,...b. trop. a snare, i. e. whatever brings peril, loss, destruction: of a sudden and unexpected deadly peril... of the allurements and seductions of sin...the allurements to sin by which the devil holds one bound..." (Thayer, p 472)*

Satan can take an entire congregation and entrap it by means of an eldership with a bad reputation among unbelievers. This illustrates the principle that the greater good a thing can bring if done properly, the greater the damage done if it is done improperly. Having a strong qualified eldership will do much to strengthen and bring to maturity a congregation. Having an unqualified eldership with a bad reputation can do more damage than any other thing. Let each congregation beware the great issues involved in the selection and appointment of elders. A wrong selection may be just the tool Satan can use to ensnare the entire local congregation and smother its influence in the community.

## **2. Without Reproach.**

## **3. Blameless**

Though the two qualities above are different Greek words and found in different books(Timothy

and Titus), the concepts they represent are so close as to be nearly identical. For this reason, they can be considered together. The subtle differences in their definitions will be considered, but the general comments will be the same for both. A man is “*without reproach*” when there is no valid charge of sin that can be leveled against them.

*anepileptos*, lit. that cannot be laid hold of, hence, not open to censure, irreproachable (from *A*, negative, *N*, euphonic, and *epilambano*, to lay hold of), is used in 1Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14 (in all three places the R. V. has “without reproach;” in the first two, A. V., “blameless,” in the last, “*unrebukeable*,” an alternative rendering would be ‘*irreprehensible*’).” (Vine, Volume 1, p 131)

When a man’s character is assessed by the Scriptures, there is nothing to lay hold of, nothing to censure or reproach. His life morally, spiritually and doctrinally is all that can be expected of a man. This qualification must be very carefully studied. It can very easily be made so stringent that no one could ever attain it. There are no sinless men, and God isn’t asking for sinlessness.

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1Jn. 1:8-10*

But within that which is attainable through the gospel as understood by the members, the man cannot have a charge successfully laid against him and that charge be proven at the mouth of two or three witnesses to be true. If any charge of evil can be made and successfully proven, then the man is no longer qualified. The term “blameless” follows along the same line.

“*an-enkletos*,...that cannot be called to account, unreproachable, unaccused, blameless...” (Thayer, p 44)

“*anekletos*, signifies that which cannot be called to account (from *a*, negative, *n*, euphonic, and *enkaleo*, to call in), i.e., with nothing laid to one’s charge (as a result of public investigation) ... It implies not merely acquittal, but the absence of even a charge or accusation against a person. This is to be the case with elders.” (Vine, Vol 1, p 131)

Though different words, the definitions are very close. He must be unaccused and blameless because there is nothing in his life that can be brought up and a valid charge set forth. The life of the man can be placed under the truth of God’s word and all are satisfied. With all the qualifications listed in Timothy and Titus, along with all the other areas of growth found in the New Testament, the members of a congregation can find no one to accuse them of fault.

*anekletos* which, like *anepileptos* is in the N. T. exclusively a word of St. Paul’s, occurring five times in his Epistles, and nowhere else, is rendered ‘unreprovable’ (Col 1:22), ‘blameless’ (1 Cor 1:8), 1 Tim 3:10; Titus 1:6,7). It is justly explained by Chrysostom as implying **not acquittal merely, but absence so much as of a charge or accusation brought against him of whom it is affirmed**. It moves, like *amomos* **not in the subjective world of the thoughts and estimates of men, but in the objective world of facts**. ... *anepileptos* of somewhat rare use in classical Greek, occurring once in Thucydides (v. 17) and once in Plato (*Phileb.* 43 c), never in the Septuagint or the Apocrypha, ... **affording nothing which an adversary could take hold of, on which he might ground a charge...**” (Trench’s *Synonyms of the NT*)

It is here, that we must take a few moments to ponder some very important principles that apply not only to this qualification, but to all the qualifications.

## **D. THE ALL IMPORTANT SUBJECT OF MERCY!!!**

### **No One is Perfect**

“*Blameless*” and “*without reproach*” cannot be taken in the strictest sense of their definition. Without God’s mercy and the blood of Jesus Christ no one is blameless. Even with it no one is really blameless. No one has lived a perfect life. No one is living a perfect life. Everyone has weaknesses. Without the continued grace and mercy of God no one is above reproach. Everyone does things they are ashamed of. No one can honestly say they are completely blameless. They

can say that with the grace and mercy of God they are without reproach, but without that mercy and forgiveness, they are not blameless. Anyone who disagrees with this conclusion must take it up with the Holy Spirit:

*As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." Rom 3:10-12*

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1Jn. 1:8-10*

## **Judging with Mercy**

Since the qualification "blameless" is no longer absolute, but relative to God's grace and mercy, it is important to consider how God wants us to assess men and apply the qualifications. Since being blameless must be tempered with mercy, love, and compassion. The door is now open to a discussion of God's requirements for assessing and judging each other by His word in every realm.

*"Do not judge lest you be judged. 2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Mt. 7:1-2*

*Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. 37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:36-38*

*So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. Jas. 2:12-13*

Christians are commanded not to pass harsh strict judgment. They are to be merciful as the Father is merciful. They are to use a standard of judgment that they themselves want when they meet the Lord in judgment. They must realize that judgment is without mercy to him who shows no mercy. All of this is simply an application of the golden rule:

*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Mt. 7:12*

*And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. Lk. 6:31*

In assessing the character of men in light of the demands of Scripture, we must do to them as we would want to be done to us. We are to show mercy, compassion, and fairness. We are to give the benefit of the doubt, put the best possible motives on people, and believe the very best about them.

*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails. 1Cor. 13:4-7*

## **This Wisdom from Above**

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. James 3:17-18*

When we use the wisdom from above. We see the qualifications in their true light. First, we must thoroughly understand each condition to see what God is seeking. This is the first step in any selection process. Once we understand them, we must mercifully and compassionately apply them. This doesn't mean overlook the command, but using mercy, compassion, and love, we seek the "wisdom that comes from above." As we assess each qualification and each person, we are continually asking ourselves. Am I being "gentle," and "willing to yield," as I consider and

reconsider any quality in which I may have doubt? Can I honestly say that my assessments are “full of mercy,” “without partiality” and “without hypocrisy?”

## The Steps of Salvation

We have the perfect example of how we are to judge when we consider the conditions one must do to be saved. We all know that before anyone can obey the gospel, there are five things that must be done. They can be called conditions or qualifications. When the Philippian Jailer, who before the earthquake was content to leave Paul in the stocks, asked Paul “*what must I do to be saved,*” how did Paul respond? After “*they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.* (Acts 16:31-34). Did Paul wait for faith to grow, for repentance to deepen, or conviction that Jesus is Lord to broaden? No, the smallest amount of each condition was enough for him to baptize him the same hour of the night.

We all know that before anyone can obey the gospel, we must be certain they have Heard(Rom. 10:17), believed(John 8:24), repented(Lk 13:3), are willing to confess(Rom 10:9-10) and be baptized(Acts 2:38). But we are merciful, using the wisdom from above to assess each quality. If they believe, even a little, we will move to the next step. I have never met anyone who would tell them to wait a few weeks. Certainly if they don’t believe, or there is still any doubt, we would tell them to wait, but if they tell us they believe, we accept it. We do the same with repentance, and confession. We aren’t looking for the greatest degree, but the minimum where the qualification has been met.

How could we say assessing the qualifications fo elders should be more difficult that this? Since it is evident from Scripture, the smallest amounts of these four things “qualifies” them to be a Christian, how could we say give elder’s qualifications should be any different? We don’t demand they hear the whole Bible, believe the truth on every doctrine in the Bible, or learn all that the Bible says about sin so they can properly repent. We don’t expect them to know all about the Lordship of Jesus before they confess. We know we don’t have the right to do this for salvation, yet many do it for the qualifications of elders. The truth is they only need to meet the qualification, not the highest degree we could demand. The fact that the church had elders very soon after the gospel was preached, offers us a strong case that the same application of mercy and understanding that leads to salvation should also lead to an eldership.

Wise congregations look at their men with mercy and compassion. Those who have **SOME** of **ALL** the qualifications could be considered to be qualified. It is not the degree of the qualification, but the sincere admission that they possess them **ALL** that qualifies them.

## A Secular Illustration

There is one other Scriptural application we should make. Jesus was deeply concerned that men in the world would be wiser for their own generation than children of light are in the church.

*And his lord commended the unrighteous steward because he had done wisely: for the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light. Luke 16:8*

“The sons of this world” have found a simple way to assess men and appoint them to difficult tasks based on qualifications. For a doctor, they first create the qualifications necessary to do the job and a list of minimum standards. This might include the number of years of school, their grades, time spent as an intern, and the board tests that show their knowledge and experience.

Thousands of people qualify to become doctors by this method and seldom is there a problem. They don’t require 100% on all tests and assessments. Some get 90% or even less and are still allowed to practice. If men know they must show mercy and understanding of human failings in the secular realm why can’t the church do this for their elders?

A man desiring the office of a bishop will not have 100% of any qualification!. Man cannot have 100% of all the qualifications. No man ever has and no man ever will. But they did have elders.

What was the acceptable level of a qualification that allowed a man to be appointed? In mercy and good judgment, the man is assessed on the basis of all the qualifications. The church will find each man to be very qualified in some areas and weaker in others. Then the difficult part comes. Why is the man weak in these areas? Has he grown and is there expectation that he will continue grow? Does he have enough of the quality that even though weak, it is admitted by all that when mercy and compassion are applied, he does have the quality, and will continue to grow and gain more.

The danger of lowering qualifications and admitting unqualified men cannot be overlooked. No one wants this to happen. But to go to the other extreme and keep qualified men out is not the answer either. The perfect solution is in the middle. The qualifications must be looked at in the context of the perfect law of liberty where mercy glories over judgment. Qualifications can be assessed by loving merciful brethren who have set a realistic standard for the qualifications when considering the individuals. The members know these men and have seen their growth. They know their character. They see weaknesses in some areas and strengths in others. But a day comes when the weaknesses reach a level where honest merciful brethren are comfortable with them. Once that day comes, there is no reason to wait any longer.

When Paul sent Titus to appoint elders in every church, he expected the qualifications to be met. It must have been an obvious inference to Titus that he was to select the men who relative to that congregation had the qualifications necessary to fulfill the office. He might find within two different congregations men with differing abilities. He might find three men in one congregation who tower above the same three men in another congregation and yet still appoint them. The qualifications require good judgment, and they also require mercy! The men being assessed must have all the qualifications to be appointed, but the degree to which they have them will be different in every man.

All men have different abilities and attributes. They differ in teaching ability, in age, wisdom, hospitality, character, temperament, etc. Just as wise and compassionate people give young qualified doctors a chance to practice medicine and grow to become aged and experienced, wise and compassionate Christians take the qualifications and with mercy and good judgment appoint men to the office of a bishop. They don't wait for men to reach perfection before appointing them. They appoint them when they feel they have reached them to the least degree. That is all God requires in any realm.

#### **4. Given to Hospitality.** 1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8

The term "Hospitality" is defined:

*"philoxenos, (philos and xenos), ...hospitable, generous to guests, [given to hospitality]: 1Tim. 3:2; ; Titus 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:9" (Thayer, , p 654)*

*"xenos,... guest-friend...[of parties bound by ties of hospitality] ... 1. a foreigner, stranger... 2. one who receives and entertains another hospitably; with whom he stays or lodges, a host..." (Thayer, , p 432)*

The dual meaning of *xenos* has led to some confusion. The root meaning can be either "foreigner/stranger" or "guest."

*xenos, xenia, xenizo, zenodocheo, philozenia, philomelos, ... 1. Words from the stem zen- bear on the one side the concept of "foreign," "alien"(also "appearing strange" or "creating distaste") and on the other side that of "guest" ... The virtue of hospitality (philozenia)... in the NT, cf. Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2) makes the one who exercises it, (the host *zenos* Rom 16:23), the *philomelos* (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9), who practices it by *zenodocheo* (1 Tim 5:10) or "to receive as a guest"(Kittel Vol. 5, p. 1; 5381)*

Hence this man must be "given" both to entertaining guests who are in his acquaintance and strangers who are not. He must enjoy having guests and strangers in his home. This is mentioned elsewhere in the Scripture:

*Let brotherly love continue. 2 Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. Heb 13:1-2*

The story of both Abraham(Gen. 18:1-15) and Lot(Gen. 19:1-11) come to mind. They both entertained strangers, and in both cases they were entertaining angelic beings. The term translated “*entertain strangers*” is the same term as that defined above. The only difference is it being an adjective for the elder, and a noun in the book Hebrews.

*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Gal 6:10*

The man’s home should be open to those of the household of faith and others as there is need. Evangelism, edification and benevolence can all be enhanced in a man’s home. No one refusing to open his home to such things is qualified to be an elder.

*Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins: **Using hospitality** one to another without murmuring: according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; 1 Pet 4:8-10*

*Communicating to the necessities of the saints, **given to hospitality.** Rom 12:13*

From the two scriptures above it is clear that the primary idea behind this qualification is entertaining saints. Since stranger is strongly implied in the term, it should not be limited to the saints in a local church. Obviously the conditions of culture have some bearing on its fulfillment. In the first century, nice motels and RV’s did not exist. Though places could be found in which to stay while on a journey, they were not nearly as nice as someone’s home would be. The best means for traveling Christians to be cared for would be in the homes of members. This has changed considerably today. Most would rather not stay in the home of another Christian when on vacation or in travel. There are easier ways to care for such needs. But as opportunities arise, they open up the home.

## **5. No Lover of Money(1Tim 3:3).**

Elders who shepherd the flock have a special closeness to the sheep and the sheep trust and appreciate them. It can be a temptation to move from shepherding the flock as a service to God to shepherding the flock for themselves. Remember God’s complaint to the shepherds of Israel.

*“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. Ezek. 34:1-3”*

The shift from the good shepherd to the hireling is often found in this qualification.

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. Jn. 10:11-13”*

Often the “love for money” is the difference between a hireling who doesn’t care for the sheep and a good shepherd who does. The love for money is a grave temptation that has destroyed men.

*But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers... and **in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.** 1Pet. 2:1-3*

Hence his reputation must be free from the love of money.

*not covetous; NKJV  
free from the love of money. NASB  
not a lover of money. ESV*

*no lover of money; ASV  
not covetous; KJV*

A lover of money(covetous) is a man whose desire for money has too strong a hold on his judgment and decisions. This is the first of two qualifications that prohibit two different signs of greed. No lover of money is a triple compound word. *a* = *alpha privative(negation)*; *phil* = *philos a friend or love*; and *arguros* = *silver(money)*

“*aphilarguros*... not loving money, not avaricious; only in the N. T., twice viz. 1Tim. 3:3; Heb. 13:5”  
 “2. *philarguros*,... lit , money-loving, is rendered covetous in the A. V. ...  
*aphilarguros*, No. 2, with negative prefix, is translated without covetousness” in Heb. 13:5, A. V. R.V.,  
 “free from the love of money.” In 1Tim. 3:3 the A. V. has “not covetous,” the R. V., “no lover of money.  
 NOTE: Trench, Syn # 24 points out the main distinction between *pleonexia* and *philarguria* as being  
 between covetousness and avarice, the former having a much wider and deeper sense, being “the  
 genus of which *philarguria* as being the species.” The covetous man is often cruel as well as  
 grasping, while the avaricious man is simply miserly and stinting. “ (Vine, Volume 1, p 253)

A careful consideration of the definition gives us a composite of this quality. First, he does not love money, and shows no sign of being miserly or stinting in his dealings with others. It is only used twice in the New Testament, the second place is translated “*free from the love of money:*”

*Be ye **free from the love of money**, content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. Heb. 13:5*

This and this alone is enough to disqualify. Those who are stingy are not fit to be over the financial realm in the church. These are the men who will decide the type and amount of benevolence. They will decide who to support, and how much the preacher will be paid. They will be over the contribution of God’s people. God desires such men to be free and giving with their own money. Those who are miserly show too much concern for this world. God’s people must not look at this world as their home, they must be putting their treasures in heaven. To be stingy and miserly with his own possessions and money is a sure sign that he is not fit for the office. When it is hard to get a man to part with money, even when the need is great, it manifests a character far from Christ’s. Remember Jesus’ words.

*“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Matt 6:24*

The elders are responsible for the contributions of God’s people. They decide how that money will be spent. We have all heard of elders who have over hundred thousand in the bank, because they are concerned about emergencies. Sometimes this is simply a sign of those who love silver and are loath to part with it.

## **6. Not Greedy of Filthy Lucre(Titus 1:7)**

Although a separate qualification, and a different word, it is so closely tied to the previous qualification that what was said there also applies here. God’s people who generously give, need to be confident they have chosen elders with the same spirit.

*not given to filthy lucre; KJV  
 not greedy of filthy lucre; ASV  
 not greedy for money, NKJV*

*not fond of sordid gain, NASB  
 greedy for gain, ESV  
 not pursuing dishonest gain. NIV*

“Not greedy of filthy lucre” is a compound word made up of “*aischron*” which is something that is base shameful, or dishonorable, and “*kerdes*” gain (“*to die is gain*” - “*what things were gain to me*” Phil. 1:21; 3:7)

*“aischrokerdes, (aischros and kerdos) eager for base gain, [greedy of filthy lucre]: ... Titus 1:7...” (Thayer, p 17)*

1. *aischros*, base, shameful...is used of base gain, filthy(lucre) ...
2. *aischrokerdes*, greedy of base gain (No 1, and *kerdos*, gain), is used in 1Tim. 3:8 and Titus 1:7, “greedy of filthy lucre;” (Vine, Volume 3, p 25)

*aischrokerdes aischrokerdos* pertaining to being shamefully greedy for material gain or profit - ‘shamefully greedy, greedily.’(Greek-English Lexicon)

The root idea is using dishonorable or base means to gain money. This is a stronger term than simply being a “*lover of money.*” This is a desire for money that has taken such deep root that it has gone to the next level, where his desire has become base or dishonorable. Hence he will stoop to things that are base in order to make it. The most sordid levels of this emotion would lead someone to cheat or steal, or even worse to make money while causing misery to others.

Those who make money selling drugs or alcohol, those who underpay others that they might become wealthy, those who stoop to wickedness in any realm and justify it because they are making money are unfit for the office. Regardless of whether this is still in its infancy, a mere seedling that can only be barely noticed, or full grown and having taken the man captive, it is a dangerous emotion.

*But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Tim 6:9-10*

How a man makes his livelihood, and how he runs his business is of concern to God. The end never justifies the means. No one can justify working for a place whose product or way of doing business is open to question by the community or the church. Let each beware when he chooses his occupation that it not be of such nature that others would consider it an evil way of making money. A man's attitude toward money and this world's goods is of great importance to a congregation seeking qualified men to oversee its work and membership. Such activities must be above reproach.

## **7. Not Soon Angry(Quick Tempered)(Titus 1:7)**

Although this is a longer list of definitions than most other qualifications, the concepts are more difficult to grasp. I needed these definitions to draw the proper conclusions, so I share them with you. The issues are complicated because of the difference between two words translated anger and wrath. While these two Greek words are both translated *anger* and other times *wrath*, there is a difference in them that we need to understand.

*orgilos*,...prone to anger, irascible, [A.V. soon angry]: Titus 1:7. (Pr. 22:24; 29:22;...)" (Thayer, p. 452)

*orge* ... common in poetry and prose, is related in stem to *orgao* ...and thus means the "lavish swelling of sap and vigor," "thrusting and upsurging" in nature, (**a.**) the "impulsive nature" of man or beast, ... It takes on the sense (**b.**) of anger as the most striking manifestation of powerful inner passion, ... *orge* all the derivatives of the stem *org-* are used only of human wrath in the NT. ... Where *orge* itself is used thus, it is generally interchangeable with *thumos* But *thumos* is preferred for the passionate rage which boils up suddenly, Luke 4:28; Acts 19:28, even though *orge* seems by derivation to be particularly well adapted to express this. This term, however, contains an element of awareness and even deliberation absent from *thumos* (TDWNT NT:3711)

*thumos* and *orge* ...came to settle down on the passion of anger, as the strongest of all passions, impulses, and desires ...in *thumos* is more of the turbulent commotion, the boiling agitation of the feelings, ... St. Basil calls it, either presently to subside and disappear,... or else to settle down into *orge*, wherein is more of an abiding and settled habit of mind ... with the purpose of revenge; ... the more passionate ... more temporary, character of *thumos* according to Jeremy Taylor, are 'great but transient angers;' ... Aristotle, too, in his wonderful comparison of old age and youth, thus characterizes the angers of old men—like fire in straw, quickly blazing up, and as quickly extinguished ... (Trench's Synonyms NT)

The anger/wrath of *thumos* is "the passionate rage which boils up suddenly," the anger/wrath of "orge" "contains an element of awareness and even deliberation absent from "thumos." "thumos" is "the turbulent commotion, the boiling agitation of the feelings," "presently to subside and disappear" But if the *thumos* doesn't disappear, it can "settle down into *orge*, wherein is more of an abiding and settled habit of mind ... with the purpose of revenge."

Since not soon angry is a derivative of "orge," and not "thumos" it is the anger/wrath of "awareness and deliberation" with "an abiding and settled habit of mind." We have different passages that are helpful. Derivatives of "orge" are used as both anger and wrath:

*Be ye **angry**, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your **wrath**. Eph 4:26*

But later in the same book both *orge* and *thumos* need to be put away.

Let all bitterness, **wrath, anger**, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Eph. 4:31-32

When Jesus stated “*whoever is **angry** with his brother,*” He used *orge*. So what conclusions can we safely make with all this? The basic meaning of “*soon angry*” is to be quickly agitated in soul, and allow that anger to settle. Those who are “*soon angry*” become angry and then allow the sun to go down on that wrath.

Anger is a dangerous emotion, and to be a qualified elder, it must be carefully controlled. A man who becomes quickly angry, with little provocation and cannot control and remove it before it is seen would not be qualified. A shepherd spends time with his sheep, working with the weak and foolish, and must be gentle with them. One with a quick temper, and uncontrolled anger that becomes “*an abiding and settled habit of mind*” does not meet this qualification.

But before we leave this subject, we must also consider the other facet of this emotion found in “*be **angry** and sin not.*” When can a man become angry and when does it become a sin? Moses is a good example.

*So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. 20 Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it. 21 And Moses said to Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?" Ex 32:19-21*

We call this “righteous indignation” because although it taps the same emotion, it is the lawful and natural use. He saw them sinning and flaunting God’s authority and became angry enough to do something about it. This is the same wrath that God feels and will be meted out on the day of judgment. It is not wrong for a man to feel this emotion as long as it is kept within the proper limitations. Moses knew how to do this. Placed in a similar situation, but with only his own authority at stake, he had a different attitude:

*Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 So they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it. 3 (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) 4 Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. 5 Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. 6 Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. 7 Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. 8 I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?" 9 So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed. Num. 12:1-9*

Moses was too meek and humble to become angry over those who questioned his authority, but too godly and devote to witness those who rebelled against God without becoming angry. This meets the quality of not being “*soon angry.*” It is not always wrong to become angry, and it is not always wrong to become angry quickly if it is righteous indignation. But it is always wrong to become angry for the wrong reasons or to commit sin when one becomes angry.

Those who desire the office of a bishop must be stretching toward a controlled temper that can be held in check and not lost during provocation. Much of the training for this will be gained as he trains up his own children. They will give many reasons for anger in the course of raising them. If a man is wise he will use these opportunities to gain control and mastery of himself.

## E. HABITS

1. Self-controlled. 1:8      2. Not given to Wine -3:3; 1:7      3. No Brawler(violent) 1:7

### 1. Self-Controlled.

Although the obvious answer to what is “*self-control*” is the ability to restrain and control ourselves, the Greek term more than simple control. It was a word for “*power*” or “*lordship*.”

“The word group *egkrat-* takes its sense from **the stem *krat-***, which **denotes power or lordship** and which **expresses the power or lordship which one has either over oneself or over something**. The basic sense is most clearly expressed in the adjective “*egkrates*. Purely formally this may be derived from *en kratos* with its implication of **having power in oneself**, or from *en kratei* implying a status of power. *egkrates* means **one who has status of power or rule**, who has power over something, whether this power be factual or spiritual... It thus means “**to have power or dominion over all things and over oneself;**” i.e., “to be inwardly strong.” (Kittel, Vol. II p 339-342; 1468)

The stem expresses the power one possesses that gives them the right to control and force something to do our will. We have this dominion over a car while driving, since it is completely under our control. James speaks dominion in bridling the body, as we bridle a horse or use a rudder on the ship.

*If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. 3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. 4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Jas. 3:2-4*

Someone with self-control can do with their minds and body what the pilot can do with a ship, or a rider can do with a horse. Paul spoke of the control to bring every thought into obedience.

*bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2Cor. 10:5*

With self-control one has the power to be “*mastering, controlling, curbing, restraining,... controlling one's self, temperate...*” (Thayer, p 167; 1468). Thus “*every man who strives in the games exercises self-control in all things. ... But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*” 1Cor. 9:25-27

This is a qualification that only the man under consideration would truly know the extent, since it is done within the heart. The strength to keep control and mastery, curbing and restraining evil thoughts and emotions and forcefully removing them from the mind is a personal battle.

Although we all them, some weaknesses have a stronger hold than others. These are “*youthful lusts,*” are doors opened into temptation and sin in our youth that have put down roots in the mind and continue to plague us. A quick temper, greed, sensual lusts, pride, impatience, greed, jealousy became the “*sins of our youth*”(Ps. 25:7) to multitudes.

The key to self-control is not found in those areas where we have never been tempted. It is always found in the midst of weaknesses we remove. Thus it is not self-control if one is never tempted to lie and continues to be truthful. It is self-control when in early life one easily loses his temper at the least provocation but now controls it to a much greater degree.

Self-control is the ability to “*walk by the Spirit*” and “*not fulfill the lust of the flesh*” (Gal. 5:16-17). It gives the power to “*put to death members which are upon the earth*” (Col. 3:5) and “*deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world.*” (Titus 2:11-12). Only when one has “*cleansed himself*” can he become “*a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work.*” He must know how to “*flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart*” (2Tim. 2:21-22). This qualification requires candor and honesty. Only the man and his wife know how far he has come and how far he has yet to go.

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, ... 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:12-14*

## **2. Not Given to Much Wine.**

Since none of our English translations have the same words to translate the two Greek words, it is important to take the time to become familiar with them. Literally, it is “*not*” and “*beside wine*.” There is no verb or action.

“*me... a particle of negation...*” (Thayer, p 408)

“*paroinos, ... para and oinos (...one who sits long at his wine) given to wine, drunken... 1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7 [others give it the secondary sense, ‘quarrelsome over wine’; hence, brawling, abusive].*” (Thayer, p 490; NT:3943)

*paroinos* an adjective, lit., “tarrying at wine” (*para*, “at,” *oinos*, “wine”), “given to wine,” 1 Tim 3:3 and Titus 1:7, ... probably has the secondary sense, of the effects of wine-bibbing, viz., abusive brawling. (Vine’s NT:3943)

The word “*beside wine*,” was evidently an idiom in that day that had a specific meaning. Today, “*beside wine*” can be understood in a variety of ways, as is evident from how it is translated:

*beside wine* = fighting: “***no brawler.***” (KJV)

*beside wine* = to: “***not given to much wine.***” (ASV)

*beside wine* = to a bad habit: “***not given to wine.***” (NKJV)

*beside wine* = an addiction: “***addicted to much wine.***” (NAS)

*beside wine* = becoming a “***drunkard***” (ESV)

*beside wine* = habitual misuse: “***not given to drunkenness***” (NIV)

Clearly the problem with “*beside wine*” centers on “*for too long*,” but in what way or to what degree is open to interpretation. It was like an idiom to them so they had a better understanding than we do. We have similar idioms: “*hold your horses*,” (slow down and think) “*no spring chicken*” (not young anymore), “*tie the knot*” (get married) or “*under the weather*” (not feeling well). Without living in our culture, it would be difficult for people to really understand the meaning. Although it makes it more challenging to the reader, it is better to allow the reader/teacher to work it out.

Since the translations do not agree, they lead a reader to different conclusions. If it is a *drunkard*(ESV, NIV), what about social drinking? If it is a *brawler*(KJV), what about any use of alcohol that doesn’t create brawling? If it is “*not given to much wine*,” (ASV) what about a little wine? If we leave it “*beside wine*,” then every consequence is under consideration. The Holy Spirit listed some of the things that occur if one “*linger long*” at the wine:

*Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? 30 Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. 31 Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; 32 At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. 33 Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. 34 Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 35 “They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?” Prov 23:29-35*

Those who “*linger long at the wine*,” have “*woe*,” “*sorrow*,” “*contentions*,” “*complaints*,” “*wounds without cause*,” “*redness of eyes*,” “*eye see strange things*,” “*heart utters perverse things*.” “*linger long*” allows the affects of alcohol to impair the body.

How long then is too long? How long can a man sit before wine(alcohol) and still be acceptable? How much alcohol can a man use and not be guilty of being “*beside wine*?” We don’t yet have the answer. Here are some more thoughts:

*Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise. Prov 20:1*

*It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Rom. 14:21*

*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; Eph. 5:18*

*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. 1Tim. 5:23*

With these passages, we can gain a scriptural understanding of the broad term “*beside wine.*” When wine leads to a brother stumbling or to drunkenness, they are clearly “*beside wine*” and would be disqualified. The safest answer is that any use of wine beyond the stomach’s sake and frequent infirmities (medicinal use) would violate this qualification.

Though over 100 years ago, McGarvey penned these words of wisdom:

“He must not be “given to much wine.” It is not merely drunkenness that is here prohibited; if it was, we would doubtless have the word which is appropriated to the expression of that idea. Neither is the idea of *much* in the original. The term is *paroinon*, by wine, and means simply, given to wine. It doubtless contemplates a man who is given to a freer use of wine than was customary among strictly sober people even though he might never become intoxicated.” (McGarvey, p 61)

The only safe conclusion, removing all objection, is that not “*beside wine*” is absolute. He is never “*beside wine,*” because he never uses it. Although some think this is too stringent, given our translations, it is no different than what God demanded of His ministering priests under the Old Covenant.

*Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: 9 “Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, 10 that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, 11 and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.” Lev 10:8-11*

The church has the right to expect their elders will always be sober and capable of distinguishing the clean from the unclean and the holy and unholy. Those who seek the office must be able to teach all the statutes at any time. For this reason, God did not want the men seeking the office to be “*beside wine.*” Instead of seeking a deeper meaning, just take it at face value. They are never “*beside wine.*”

## **“Not Beside Wine” - A Greek Idiom?**

**Introduction:** An idiom is defined as: “a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words.” So we are not going to “beat around the bush” or “cut any corners” in today’s article, because we don’t want to “bark around the wrong tree.” We seek to “hit the nail on the head,” and might even “kill two birds with one stone.” So, “to make a long story short,” we want to give “the whole nine yards” and “let the cat out of the bag” about idioms. I hope you don’t think “I am off my rocker,” “not playing with a full deck,” or “missed the boat.” There is a “method to my madness,” and I think at the end of this article you will agree that I am “right on money.”

The problem with idioms is that no one defines them for us. We have to deduce or infer them. If you have never heard one of these idioms you will have no idea what I am talking about. “Pulling my leg” could be literal, but we understand it as someone trying to “pull the wool over our eyes.” We are always “under the weather,” but only use that term when we feel sick. As we finish our drumstick, we know “I have bone to pick with you” isn’t the drumstick. Even if we are chopping wood with a dull axe, we would understand “I have an axe to grind” isn’t that axe.

There are also idioms in Scripture. “The nations are as a drop in a bucket” (Isa. 40:15). Job was

"nothing but skin and bones" (Job 19:19-20). Jesus return will be "in the twinkling of an eye" (1Cor. 15:52). "The wicked reel to and fro and are at their wits' end" (Psalm 107:27). Peter wants every Christian to "gird up the loins of your mind" (1Pet. 1:13).

As I was working on the qualifications for elders this week, I came on the word "beside wine" (1Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). The more I thought about it the more it became clear to me that this too could be an idiom. One they easily understood, but one which we must "gird up the loins of our mind." I drew this conclusion after reading the diversity in the translations of two simple Greek words ("mé pàroinos" ("me" - not; "para" - beside; "oinos" - wine)" Why did the simple "not beside wine" become "no **brawler**" (KJV), "**not given to much wine**" (ASV), "**not given to wine**" (NKJV), "**addicted to much wine**" (NAS), "**drunkard**" (ESV), and "**not given to drunkenness**" (NIV).

Think about it. "Not beside wine" moved from fighting(*brawler*), to a bad habit(*not given to wine/much wine*) to an addiction(*addicted to much wine*), to becoming a *drunkard*, or to habitual misuse(*given to drunkenness*). It is obvious none took the phrase literally. We might sympathize with the translators, since taken literally, one would be guilty if they walked down the aisle of a grocery store "beside wine." Even eating at a restaurant, if someone at the next table is drinking wine, we would be "beside wine."

Enter the idiom(a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words). "Not beside wine" somehow inferred "too long at," or "inappropriately at" "wine." they easily deduced it, while we struggle. The extent of the "too long" or the exact problem created by being "beside wine" is now unknown to us.

Yet, seeking to give us a simple meaning has only created problems. If it is a "drunkard"(ESV, NIV), then it could allow social drinking. If it is a *brawler*(KJV), then any use of alcohol that didn't lead to fighting might be fine. If it is "not given to **much wine**," (ASV) then some will affirm that a little wine is not a problem. Only when we leave it "beside wine," does anything from a single sip to drunkenness become the possible meaning.

The best solution is to "let Scripture interpret Scripture, "speak where the Bible speaks," "be silent where the Bible is silent," and "use Bible words to explain Bible things." We must learn, "not to go beyond the things which are written" (1Cor. 4:6) and allow God to explain what occurs when one "linger long" at the wine."

*Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? 30 Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. 31 Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; 32 At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. 33 Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. 34 Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 35 "They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, I will seek it yet again" Pr. 23:29-35*

The problems of those who "linger long" are the same as those who are "beside wine." When there is "woe," "sorrow," "contentions," "complaints," "wounds without cause," "redness of eyes," "eyes seeing strange things," "heart uttering perverse things" one is both "beside wine" and does "linger long at the wine." Since "Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise" (Pr. 20:1), one is "beside wine" whenever they are "led astray by it" or "show lack of wisdom" in its use. One is clearly "beside wine" when it causes "a brother to stumble or be made weak"(Rom. 14:21).

Leaders of God's people can only be "not beside wine" when they drink no wine. "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; Lest they drink and forget the law, And pervert the justice of all the afflicted" (Pr. 31:4).

With these verses, the simple solution is also the best. We remove all doubt, when we understand “*not beside wine*” in all these contexts. One is never “*beside wine*,” if they do not drink or associate with those who do. Although some might think this is too stringent a view, given what our translations say, it is exactly what God demanded of His ministering priests:

*Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: 9 “Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, 10 that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, 11 and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.” (Lev. 10:8-11).*

*No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court. 22 They shall not take as wife a widow or a divorced woman, but take virgins of the descendants of the house of Israel, or widows of priests. 23 “And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. Ezek 44:21-23*

All Christians are priests today ministering to the Lord in His tabernacle(1Pet. 2:4-6; Eph. 2:19-22). There is never a time we don’t need to distinguish between the clean and the unclean or the holy and unholy. Never a time we don’t need to teach all the statutes. What is true of all Christians is also true of the elders. For these reasons, God did not want a man seeking the office to be “*beside wine*.” The idiom “*not beside wine*” means not beside wine either to drink it or associate with those who do. No more, no less.

Conclusion: Maybe you feel like you have “*been through the mill*” and I only have a “*bee in my bonnet*.” I don’t think we need to go “*back to the drawing board*,” and I hope you think I “*hit the nail on the head*.” Now, “*the ball is in your court*,” so “*burn the midnight oil*.” Because if you “*search the scriptures daily*,” “*give diligence*” to “*rightly divide the word of truth*,” and “*abide in My words*,” “*you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free*.” (Acts 17:11, 2Tim. 2:15; Jn 8:31-32).

### **3. No Brawler - KJV (Not Quarrelsome-NKJV Not Contentious - ASV)**

Once again we have a word with diversity and depth. Our translations used *not a brawler*(KJV) *not contentious*(ASV), *not quarrelsome* (NKJV ESV), *uncontentious*(NASB). For this reason, more dictionaries and lexicons than usual were needed. The words in bold help understand this qualification.

*amachos, (mache)* in Greek writings (from Pindar down) commonly ***not to be withstood, invincible***; more rarely abstaining from fighting (Xenophon, Cyril 4, 1, 16; Hell. 4, 4, 9); in the N. T. twice metaphorically, ***not contentious***: 1Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2. (Thayer’s NT:269)

*mache ... a fight, combat*; 1. of ***those in arms, a battle***. 2. of ***persons at variance, disputants***, etc., ***strife, contention; a quarrel***: 2 Cor 7:5; 2 Tim 2:23; James 4:1; contentions about the law, Titus 3:9. (Thayer 3162)

*machomai* (allied with *machaira* - a sword) to fight: properly, of ***armed combatants***, or those who engage in a ***hand-to-hand struggle***, Acts 7:26; tropically, of those who engage in a ***war of words, to quarrel, wrangle, dispute***: 2 Tim 2:24; ... of ***those who contend at law for property and privileges***, James 4:2. (Thayer 3163)

*amachos...* lit. *not fighting* (A, negative, *mache*, a fight, combat, quarrel,) primarily signifying ***invincible***, came to mean ***not contentious***,... (A. V., “not a brawler,” “no brawlers”). (Vine, W. E., op. cit., Volume 1, p 235)

The word is the negation(*alpha-privative*) of the word “*mache/machos*.” It describes all conflict, beginning with strife, contention, quarreling and disputing and increasing in intensity to include fighting, hand to hand combat, or even a battle. It’s root is also used for a short sword(our word *machete*). With the addition of the *alpha-privative*, all this is negated and made the exact opposite. There is no fight, no combat, no battle, no hand to hand struggle. There is no strife, no

contention, no quarrel, no wrangle, no dispute, and no strife.

In the world of selfishness, where the lusts of the flesh and eyes and the pride of live dominate the hearts of multitudes, many common activities become a competition leading to strife, disputes quarrels and fighting. When people don't get their way, or things don't go their way, it often creates anger and frustration. This is the temper tantrum of a child and the leading cause of road rage, rudeness and conflicts of every sort.

Depending on personality and character, being quarrelsome is revealed in different ways. For the powerful, it manifests itself in angry responses first seen in facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice. In others who have no power, it can be manifested in sulking or a refusal to communicate. When a quarrelsome person does not get what they want they always cause trouble. This is where the idea of "*invincible*" entered the picture. Someone who is invincible and always gets their way is never quarrelsome. But this qualification expands it so that even when they do not get their way they act as though they did. They never sulk, fight, or threaten to leave and go elsewhere.

This type of person generally makes others uncomfortable to be around. When we feel we have to watch what we say or do around someone they are "quarrelsome." People who pout, sulk, refuse to speak, or become angry, sullen and rude and storm out or threaten are contentious people. Those who graciously accept doing what others want even if they wanted something else are uncontentious and not quarrelsome for they are exhibiting "*the wisdom that is from above.*"

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. James 3:17-18*

The men who seek and desire to be elders must learn to become "*peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, and full of mercy*" It would be devastating to a congregation to have a contentious man in the eldership. A man who pouts, sulks, and becomes angry or sullen when he does not get his way would be a great millstone. He would have to be placated and allowed to always have his way. Members would not feel free to express themselves and would often be uncomfortable. Such a man would be a great hindrance as a leader in God's kingdom. Contention is a selfish and evil emotion. It degrades the one who possesses it and hinders the cause of our Lord.

## F. CHARACTER

1. Temperate	<u>1Tim. 3:2</u>	6. Not contentious	<u>1Tim. 3:3</u>
2. Sober-Minded	<u>1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8</u>	7. Not Self-Willed	<u>Titus 1:7</u>
3. Orderly	<u>1Tim. 3:2</u>	8. Lover of Good	<u>Titus 1:8</u>
4. No Striker	<u>1Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7</u>	9. Just	<u>Titus 1:8</u>
5. Gentle	<u>1Tim. 3:3</u>	10. Holy	<u>Titus 1:8</u>

*A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, **(1)temperate, (2-1)sober-minded, of (3)good behavior(orderly)**, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, **(4-1)not violent,(no striker)** not greedy for money, but **(5)gentle, (6)not quarrelsome**, not covetous; 1Tim 3:2-3*

*For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, **(7)not self-willed(not contentious)**, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, **(4-2)not violent(no striker)**, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, **(8)a lover of what is good, (2-2)sober-minded, (9)just, (10)holy**, self-controlled Titus 1:7-8*

These qualifications form the character of a man. Some of these will be natural attributes while others will have required hard work and effort. Whether natural or developed, each individual must first learn exactly what they are. Then, they must determine for themselves whether these are natural attributes already possessed needing further development, or something missing in their character that they must grow into.

One of the interesting challenges offered to the reader occurs when an author gives several synonyms in the same context. The goal of synonyms is to bring out the finer distinctions in the behavior or thinking sought. How do we respond when reading that the qualities of a good appraiser are calculating, estimating, assessing, judging and evaluating a home? Although these are all synonyms, each brings a slightly different ability to the forefront. Each word contains slight nuances or distinctions.

### 1. Temperate

The Holy Spirit has demanded that the mind and life of a man qualified to be an elder is temperate, sober minded, self-controlled, and orderly. Each of these has some similarities that overlap in meaning. But they were chosen not for their similarities, but their differences. Hence synonyms create the challenge to seek for reasons why the Holy Spirit chose it and what fine distinctions He wanted us to understand.

The real distinction of “*temperance*” is clearer to a Greek speaking person than it can be for us.

*“nephaleos ...sober, temperate; abstaining from wine, either entirely, or at least from its immoderate use:...(in prof. auth., esp. Aeschyl. and Plut. of things free from all infusion or addition of wine, as vessels, offerings, etc.)”* (Thayer, p 425 NT:3524)

*“nephaleos ...sober, temperate, abstinent in respect to wine, etc.; in N.T. met. vigilant, circumspect, 1Tim. 3:2, 11; Titus 2:2”* (Harpers Analytical Concordance op. cit., p 277 NT:3524)

*“nephaleos ... to be sober. Sober, temperate, self-controlled, especially in respect to wine. Used metaphorically, meaning sober-minded, watchful, circumspect (1 Tim. 3:2)”* (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT NT:3524)

In the definition we are given the etymology or origin and growth of the word. The original meaning had to do with being completely free from wine. Since wine is a substance that clouds both the mind and judgment, those who completely abstain are temperate and thus always sober, vigilant and circumspect. Through the passing of time the word gradually lost the focus of wine as the sole reason for clouded judgment. It then came to refer to those who refuse to allow anything to cloud their judgment. Just as a mind free from the effects of alcohol is sober and capable of seeing things clearly, so also is the mind that is free from all lusts of the flesh and eyes and all illusions the pride of life can create.

A sentry charged with the duty of watching over something might be told to be temperate. This meant he needed a clear mind. Clouding it with alcohol would not be temperate, neither would the drowsiness from too little sleep or the cares of the world leading to the choking of the word. A temperate man has removed anything keeping him from being vigilant and circumspect. While the adjective “*nephaleos*” is only used in Timothy and Titus, the verb “*nepho*” is used far more extensively and has the same basic meaning.

*You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be **sober**. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be **sober**, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 1Th. 5:5-8*

*But you **be watchful** in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2Tim. 4:5*

*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be **sober**, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 1Pet. 1:13-16*

*Be **sober**, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 1Pet. 5:8*

In all these contexts, the key to being sober is not allowing anything to obscure our view. Sleeping drinking, keeping the mind active, aware of dangers and issues are all part of being sober and temperate. Anything that keeps us from seeing what truly is and no longer allowing us to see clearly fails this quality. The church must be able to rely on its elders to watch out for them and not have their attention diverted to the things of this world. They are charged to watch in behalf of all the souls in the church (Heb 13:17). The church must ascertain that they are capable of doing it with a clear mind.

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Heb. 13:17*

## **2. Sober Minded.**

*“sophron ...a. of sound mind, sane, in one’s senses, ...b. curbing one’s desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate, [R. V. sober minded]...” (Thayer, p.613)*

*“sophron ...to behave in a sensible manner,’ 88.93) pertaining to being sensible and moderate in one’s behavior - ‘sensible, sensibly, moderate, moderately.’ (Greek-English Lexicon NT:4998)*

*sophron sophroneo sophrosune* It denotes a. “the rational” in the sense of what is intellectually sound (opp. *mania*) b. “rational” without illusion”, ... It can also mean c. “rational” in the sense of purposeful, ... 2. Another sense is d. “discretion” in the sense of moderation and self-control, ... e. “discretion” as prudent reserve, ... Another sense is f. “modesty” and decorum, Then there is g. “discretion” as discipline and order politically, ...” (TDWNT Kittel 4998)

While “*self-control*” describes our ability to remove and control things in our mind and “*temperance*” how to keep things from hindering our ability to see things clearly, this quality centers on the mind itself. If nothing is clouding his mind and he is completely self-controlled, can he *sensibly, moderately, think rationally and without illusion*? When nothing cloud his mind is he a wise man or a fool? Can we trust him to make Scripturally sensible and rational assessments and decisions?

A careful review of the definitions moves one toward the above conclusion. The word deals with someone who has a “*sound mind*,” and is thus “*sensible*,” and “*rational*.” But beneath these abilities are some important safeguards, limitations and awareness. He thinks and assesses to be certain his conclusions are “*intellectually sound*” and “*without illusion*.” Yet in order to be certain, he needs an objective standard outside of himself, keeping himself within the limits of the

modesty and decorum one finds in the Scriptures. One is “sober minded” when God is directing their paths, all their thoughts are in obedience to Christ, and they refuse to lean on their own understanding.

***Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. Pr. 3:5-7***

***For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2Cor. 10:4-6***

The mind and heart must be carefully guarded(keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Pr. 4:23). Even the most basic things can lead to folly. When anything coming from ignorance or a hard heart, judgment is not sound.

***This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; Eph 4:17-19***

Those who can make a joke out of everything, who only see the negative, or want to be so positive that they overlook or exaggerate, are not sober-minded. Paul charged Timothy to watch out for prejudice and partiality.

***I charge you in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality. 1Tim. 5:21***

A man must be able to evaluate each situation on its own merits with only what God demands in his mind. No one can allow other considerations to influence their thinking. A man seeking the law and testimony before making decisions is sober-minded. A man who listens to both sides of the argument or discussion before making a decision is sober-minded. It takes great effort to keep a mind clear of emotion. Such a man can be depended on for a fair minded sober evaluation of the facts.

***Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. Josh 1:7-8***

### **3. Orderly.**

“kosmios ... well-arranged, seemly, modest... of a man living with decorum, a well-ordered life...” (Thayer, , p 356)

“kosmios, orderly, well-arranged, decent, modest (akin to kosmos, in its primary sense as harmonious arrangement, adornment;...) is used in 1Tim. 2:9 of the apparel with which Christian women are to adorn themselves; in 3:2 (R.V., “orderly,” A.V., “of good behavior”), of one of the qualifications essential for a bishop or overseer....” (Vine, Vol. 3, p. 145)

“...It is a very favorite word with Plato, and is by him and others constantly applied to the citizen who is quiet in the land, who duly fulfills in his place and order the duties which are incumbent on him as such... keeping company as kosmios does with epithets such as these, it must be admitted that an explanation of it like the following ‘of well ordered demeanor, decorous, courteous’ (Webster), dwells too much on the outside of things; ...no doubt the kosmios is all of this, but he is much more than this. The well ordering is not of dress and demeanor only, but of the inner life; uttering indeed and expressing itself in the outward conversation...” (Trench, p 344-345)

An orderly man has a well arranged life, a well arranged mind, and a well arranged tongue. As husband, father, citizen, friend, worker, and Christian brother, all is what it ought to be. Plato speaks of it in the realm of government. He is a model citizen and never causing the authorities any trouble. He obeys the laws of the land, votes and takes an active role in helping the country run the best it possibly can. That which Plato applied to government Paul applied to his responsibilities in the kingdom of God. It is an inward attitude that impacts every realm of

responsibility that God has given.

An orderly Christian finds the way to pray without ceasing, to attend all services, and to visit the fatherless and afflicted. He has ordered and arranged his life to find time to fulfill all his Christian duties. He is a good husband and father. He finds time to play with his children and time to love and cherish his wife. He makes time to study the Bible and do all that is necessary. He gets to work on time and is a hard, dependable worker. He dresses properly for the occasion, and looks orderly. Orderly people are dependable. They get things done because they have ordered their life in such a way that they can always find time to do one more important thing. This quality will make one a great elder. He will find the time to admonish the erring and support the weak. He will be able to watch in behalf of the souls under his direction. He has learned to do the best he can with his time. There is always enough time in the day to do all the responsibilities which the Lord has given. One simply needs to order their life so that the top priorities come first.

#### **4. No Striker(Not Violent)**

“plektes...bruiser, ready with a blow; a pugnacious, contentious, quarrelsome person..” (Thayer, 4131)

“plektes pugnacious and demanding- ‘bully, violent person.’” (Greek-English Lexicon NT:4131)

“plektes ... “quick tempered carries a chip on his shoulder, is ready with his fists.” (Lenski “1Tim. 3:3”)

Anger and frustration seldom lead to violence for most people. But there are some whose anger quickly escalates to a desire for violence. That is the nature of this word. This quality describes someone who is “ready with a blow,” a “bully” or “violent person” one whose “demanding” and “contentious” nature coupled with a “quarrelsome” attitude creates an ever present possibility of violence.

A striker is a man with so little self-control and temperance that his anger can get the better of him and cause him to lash out in a moment. This leads to caustic words, a bitter quarrel, or an actual punch in the face. With the potential conflicts those leading the church will encounter, this is a very bad quality. When false teachers seek to uproot the faithful, or immoral and ungodly saints, the desire to punish exists, but it can’t come out in anger and violence.

Although such anger can begin with righteous indignation, it must be kept in check. No one has the right to strike another or lash out at them no matter how evil, corrupt and wicked they are. Each man must learn to keep his temper in check.

#### **5. Gentle.**

“epieikes, from *epi*, unto, and *eikos*, likely, denotes seemly, fitting; hence, equitable, fair moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law; it expresses that considerateness that looks “humanely and reasonably at the facts of the case”; ...” (Vine, Vol. 2, p 144-145)

“epieikes, -es (*eikos*, what is reasonable); 1. seemly, suitable, ... 2. equitable, fair, mild, gentle...” (Thayer, p 238)

A lot has been written about this term. It conveys far more than our English “gentle,” and is therefore difficult to find a single word to translate. Paul spoke of its importance to all Christians, but notice how our translations struggled with the word in Philippians 4:5.

Let your **moderation** be known unto all men (KJV)    Let your **gentleness** be known to all men (NKJV)  
Let your **forbearing** {spirit} be known to all men (NAS)    Let your **forbearance** be known unto all men (ASV)  
Let your **gentle** {spirit} be known to all men (NAU)    Let your **reasonableness** be known to everyone (ESV)

The reason for this is set forth in the definitions below.

“It expresses exactly that moderation which recognizes the impossibility cleaving to all formal law, of anticipating and providing for all cases that will emerge, and present themselves to it for a decision; which, with this, recognizes the danger that ever waits upon the assertion of legal rights, lest they should be pushed into moral wrongs. ...It is thus more truly just than strict justice would have been. ...This aspect of *epieikeia*, namely that it is a going back from the letter of right for the better

preserving of the spirit, must never be lost sight of. (Trench p 153-157)

“...Aristotle describes in full the action of *epieikeia*: ‘to pardon human failings; to look to the law-giver, not to the law; to the intention, not to the action; to the whole, not to the part; to the character of the actor in the long run and not in the present moment; to remember good rather than evil, and the good that one has received rather than the good that one has done; to bear being injured; to wish to settle a matter by words rather than deeds’...” (Barclay, William, “Daily Study Bible Timothy Titus & Philemon,” p 96)

How can a Christian recognize the impossibility of cleaving to all formal law? Just look to our Creator who has replaced formal law with grace and mercy. With repentance and confession, strict justice is removed and replaced with compassion. Aristotle captured the word, but again it must be interpreted through the lense of Scripture. Pardoning human failings is a core belief of a mature servant of God. Look to Paul as he wrote to the Corinthian church about their human failings then turned around in the Second letter and set it all aside. It is the ability to look to the long run of faithfulness and submission, and not to the single sin that has been repented of and must now be forgiven. It is also the ability to “*bear being injured and wish to settle a matter with words.*” This is the essence of turning the other cheek and loving our enemies and praying for those who spitefully use us.

The “*gentle,*” “*forbearing,*” “*reasonable* and “*moderate*” man will manifest the most gentle, merciful, and compassionate aspects of service to Jesus.

*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, Mt. 5:23-25*

*But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. Mt. 5:39-42*

*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Mt. 5:44-46*

*Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that your brethren. 1 Cor 6:7-9*

In all these verses we see the workings of “*epikeia*.” We see the fulness of the definitions given above. Gentleness based on God’s gentleness, mercy based on God’s mercy and compassion based on God’s compassion. Peter thought he would manifest this trait if he forgave seven times, but Jesus said that was not enough. We are not truly gentle until we can forgive seventy times seven.

Knowing that “*with what judgment you judge you will be judged,*” the *forbearing* and *gentle* man is very cautious in applying Scripture to the lives of others. Cold hard justice can be used, but this is not what the *reasonable* and *moderate* man will do.

*So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. 13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. James 2:12-13*

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, **gentle**, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. James 4:17*

The man under the influence of “*epikeia*” allows “*mercy to triumph over judgement.*” To be “*easily entreated,*” “*full of mercy*” and *gentle*(*epikes*). With any doubt, judgment is withheld and deferred to God. He is unwilling to judge and condemn unless absolutely forced to do so. Relying on God’s justice for Israel, he too withholds judgment even though he might know someone is guilty unless

he has the strongest evidence. God would rather a guilty person be spared than an innocent one be condemned.

*Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. Deut. 17:6-7*

*“One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. Deut. 19:15-16*

As Jesus introduced His sermon on the mount, He captured the essence of this word in five out of the eight beatitudes. The reasonable and moderate man is humble (poor in spirit) well aware of his own sins and weaknesses (mourn), He is meek and gentle with his strength well controlled by reasonable moderation. He is merciful and seeking to make peace and keep harmony at whatever sacrifice to himself.

3 Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who **mourn**, For they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the **meek**, For they shall inherit the earth.

7 Blessed are the **merciful**, For they shall obtain mercy.

9 Blessed are the **peacemakers**, For they shall be called sons of God. Mt. 5:3-9

Elders will be forced to pass judgment on many different aspects and issues between brethren. They must have this quality to be able to do this well and keep peace. As Jesus left heaven, he manifested an attitude of mind that all reasonable and moderate men will imitate.

*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Phil. 2:1-8*

Using his own reasonableness, moderation and forbearance, a man with this qualification had removed selfishness and pride and replaced it with humility. He sees the needs of others as more important than his own and has moved beyond his own interests to the interests of others.

## **6. Not Contentious(See No Brawler Page 42)**

## **7. Not Self-Willed.**

“me... a particle of negation...” (Thayer, p 408)

“*authades* ... self-pleasing, self-willed, arrogant...” (Thayer, p 83)

“*authades*, self pleasing (*autos*, self, *hedomai*, to please), denotes one who, dominated by self-interest and inconsiderate of others, arrogantly asserts his own will,...” (Vine, W. E., op. cit., Volume 3, p 342)

A self-willed man cares more for his own ideas and opinions and less for the opinions of others. He is interested in the things that are important to him and ambivalent to the things that are important to others.

This is very dangerous to the peace and stability of a local church. People have a variety of opinions. While some are doctrinal and Scriptural, others are questions of human wisdom or expediency. Although these Scriptures deal with meat, days, and idols, their principles are timeless and would apply to any subject of disagreement where there are no Scriptures. Paul spoke clearly in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10 that it is better to defer to the opinions of others than to force one's own. A self-willed man will have grave difficulties placing his own opinions under that of others who are weak. Yet it is essential that he be able to do so.

*10 But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? .... 19 So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. ... Rom 14:10; 19;*

19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more.  
... 32 Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. 1Cor 8:1; 11-12; 19; 32-33;

Selfishness(self-love — *philautos*) and a prideful arrogance(self-will — *authedes*) are so closely related that they are nearly identical. Carefully consider how they are seen. in . ntand some are In a comparison between self love and sell-will

“...The *authades*... is properly **one who pleases himself**, who is **so pleased with his own that nothing pleases himself, besides**... He is one so far **overvaluing any determination at which he has himself once arrived that he will not be removed from it**; for **this element of stubbornness or obstinacy which so often lies an *authadeia***...The man thus **obstinately maintaining his own opinion**, or asserting his own rights, **is reckless of the rights, feelings and interests of others**; one indeed who with no motive at all is prompt rather to run counter to these, than to fall in with them... *authadeia*, which thus **cares to please nobody**, is **by Aristotle set over against *areskeia***, which is the ignoble **seeking to please everybody, the endeavoring at all costs of dignity and truth to stand well with all the world; these two being in his ethical system the opposite extremes**,... ‘the pleaser of himself’ and ‘the lover of himself’ stand in sufficient moral proximity, and are sufficiently liable to be confounded, to justify an attempt to distinguish them one from the other. ... Bengel profoundly remarks, and all experience bears out the truth of his remark, that there are **men who are ... at once soft and hard, soft to themselves, and hard to all the world besides**; these two dispositions being in fact only two aspects and outcomings of the same sin, namely the wrong love of self. But if *authades* expresses this sin on one side, *philautos* expresses it on the other. ... The *philautos* is exactly our ‘selfish’ “ (Trench, p 349-353)

Of course Trench is speaking of the term in its worst case. But he gives us a clear picture of the scope of the prohibited characteristics of the word. Someone who doesn’t know how to set aside his own views in the loving interests of others is not qualified to become a bishop made by the Holy Spirit. I like what Bengal said because it is to true. “*There are men who are ... at once soft and hard, soft to themselves, and hard to all the world.*”

God needs men who are concerned about other people and considerate of their feelings. A humble man who is ready to hear the opinions of others because they might be better than his own. A man who is willing to defer his own rights and opinions to help the lost. Jesus made it clear that those who would take any leadership role in His church mut become servants and never masters.

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. 26 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Matt 20:25-28*

This scripture brings death to “self-will.” No one can view himself as a slave to others while at the same time feeling that only his way is right and it must be done his way. Jesus and His apostles taught a spirit of tolerance and of giving up one’s own rights for the good of others.

*We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me.” Rom 15:1-3(ESV)*

*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Phil 2:3-4*

In order to be an elder, the feelings of others must become more important than our own. One of the indictments of the Old Testament shepherds was their selfishness.

*And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of*

*Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, even to the shepherds, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill the fatlings; but ye feed not the sheep. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought back that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but ye ruled with force and with rigor have ye ruled over them. Ezek 34:1-4*

These were self-willed shepherds. God wants none of them ruling over His sheep. Let each flock beware when it is selecting its shepherds that they select men who will truly care about them and their needs.

## **8. A Lover of Good.**

The term “good” is obviously a relative term. Each person has that which he considers to be good or bad. But in the context of the Scriptures, that which is good is clearly defined. First a composite of the definition as it is used in the New Testament.

*“agathos... excelling in any respect, distinguished, good. It can be predicated of persons, things, conditions, qualities and affections of the soul, deeds, times and seasons.... 1. of good constitution or nature... 2. useful, salutary... 3. of the feeling awakened by what is good, pleasant, agreeable, joyful, happy... 4. excellent, distinguished... 5. upright, honorable... upright, free from guile, particularly from a desire to corrupt the people... pre-eminently of God, as consummately and essentially good... The neuter used substantively denotes 1. a good thing, convenience, advantage, ... 2. what is upright, honorable, and acceptable to God... “ (Thayer, p. 2-3; 18)*

It is used to describe something that *excels* and is *useful* on the one hand and “*upright*” and “*honorable*” on the other, because it is “*acceptable to God*” A look at a concordance helps us to see the scope of the goodness that a man can love and be friendly toward.

*Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is **good**. Rom 12:9*

*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with **good**. Rom 12:21*

*as we have opportunity let us work that which is **good** toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith. Gal 6:10*

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good** works which God before prepared that we should walk in them Eph 2:10*

*working with his hands the thing that is **good**, .... no corrupt speech ... but such as is **good** for edifying. Eph 4:28-29*

*knowing that whatever **good** anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, Eph 6:8*

*to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every **good** work, Col 1:10*

*always follow after that which is **good**, one toward another, and toward all. I Thess 5:15*

*comfort your hearts and establish them in ever **good** work and word. II Thess 2:17*

*which is proper for women professing godliness, with **good** works. 1Tim. 2:10*

*if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every **good** work. 2Tim. 2:21*

*the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every **good** work. II Tim 3:17*

*be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every **good** work. Titus 3:1*

*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and **good** fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. James 3:17*

*And who is he that will harm you if ye be zealous of that which is **good**? I Pet 3:13*

*Beloved, imitate not that which is evil, but that which is **good**. He that does **good** is of God: 3Jn. 11*

Summing up these passages we can assess any man to determine if he loves the things below.

*cling to what is good  
overcome evil with good  
abound unto every good work  
bearing fruit in every good work*

*created in Christ Jesus for good works  
work with hands the thing which is good  
speak words such as are good for edifying  
work that which is good toward all*

*Prepared unto every good work  
furnished unto every good work  
be ready unto every good work  
zealous of that which is good  
imitate that which is good  
do good*

*the good done received again from the Lord  
always follow good to one another and all men  
hearts established in every good work and word  
a good conscience  
women adorned with good works  
wisdom is full of mercy and good fruits*

Since congregations are to be actively involved in good works. It is clear why God wants His leaders to love good works. When they love and are friendly to all that is good they will promote it among the members and practice it themselves. God's people must be encouraged to love that which is good. God wants all leaders in the church to be wonderful examples of it themselves.

## **9. Just.**

This word is used about 80 times in the New Testament, and about half of the time it is translated "righteous" and the other half "just."

*"dikaios ...observant of he dike, righteous, observing divine and human laws; one who is such as he ought to be;... 1. in a wide sense, upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God ... a. universally ... b. the negative idea predominating: innocent, faultless, guiltless, ... c. preeminently, of him whose way of thinking, feeling, and acting is wholly conformed to the will of God, ... d. contextually, approved God, acceptable to God, 2. in a narrower sense, rendering to each his due; and that in a judicial sense, passing just judgment on others, whether expressed in words or shown by the manner of dealing with them:..." (Thayer, p 148-149; 1342)*

The quality itself is based upon the attitude we have toward law and God's will. One who is just/righteous "observes divine and human law," "keeps the commands of God" and is "wholly conformed to the will of God." It is obvious that one who is just/righteous has great respect and reverence toward God who is the lawgiver. The righteous and just standards of God become the scale upon which we weigh thoughts and actions and pronounce them just or unjust. Actually, taking this a step further, God Himself is the true standard of righteousness. His eternal attitudes and actions, which have always been, and always will be, are the basis of what is just. When we were created in His image and likeness, we too were prepared to be righteous and just, living and thinking as He does.

*For Jehovah is righteous; He loves righteousness: the upright shall behold His face. Ps. 11:7*

*Righteous are you, O Jehovah, and upright are your judgments. . . 142 Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and your law is truth. Ps. 119:137, 142*

*O LORD God of hosts, who is like Thee, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You ... 14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; lovingkindness and truth go before You. 16 In your name do they rejoice all the day; and in your righteousness are they exalted. Ps. 89:8,14, 16*

God possesses an 'everlasting righteousness.' He has always lived within their domain. The angelic hosts who dwell with him have also lived this life. God has given His law to man in order that man might strive to live up to that same perfect standard of life. Therefore a just man is one who observes the divine laws of God because he wants to be right with God and he recognizes that God's ways are right and just.

*If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. 1Jn 2:29*

*Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 1Jn. 3:7*

*In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. 1 Jn 3:10*

*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not*

*burdensome. 1Jn. 5:2-4*

Again, remember that *righteous* and *just* are translations of the same Greek word. The Holy Spirit expected us to see that they are actually one and the same. If one is *just* then they are *righteous* and if they are *righteous* then they are *just*. But all justice and righteousness are based upon the commands and ordinances of our Creator and God.

Hence a man is just when he is keeping all of God's commands. This is how Job and later Zacharias and Elizabeth were commended.

*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. Job 1:1-2*

*And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Luke 1:6*

In order to be just the man must first keep God's commands blamelessly (*without reproach and blameless*). He fulfills his obligations on the job with the same concern for honesty and integrity. In summary, every area of his life is characterized by a submission to all the areas of authority that God has created.

This is so critical since as a shepherd and overseer, he will be assessing the conduct of others. An elder will be called upon to pass judgment and intervene in conflicts between brethren. He must be just, honorable, and fair in all areas of his life. He must take God's standards, and without partiality or prejudice apply them.

## **10. Holy.**

Unless we have studied Greek, or done some research, we may not be aware that there are two words in the Greek language that are translated *holy*. The term we are most familiar with is "*hagios*." When we read "*holy—hagios*," we understand it as someone/something that is sacred, consecrated and sanctified because of its relationship with God.

*but as He who called you is **holy(hagios)**, you also be **holy(hagios)** in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be **holy(hagios)**, for I am holy(hagios)." 1Pet. 1:15-16*

This word is used over 200 times in the NT. But that is not the word the Holy Spirit chose here. This term is only used eight times in the NT, and five of those time are quotes from the OT.

It is surprising that *hosios* ... should occur only 8 times in the NT (5 in quotations), ... does not occur in the Gospels, the main Pauline epistles, or the Catholic epistles. ... it is common only in the Pastorals whose vocabulary is more strongly Hellenistic. (Kittel, TWDNT, NT:3741)

Since it is only used three times in the NT. It is obviously used here because there was something distinctive about it that gave a more specific description of the quality the Spirit wanted assessed.

*"hosios ... expressing the everlasting ordinances of right, which no law or custom of men has constituted, for they are anterior to all law and custom; and rest on the divine constitution of the moral universe and mans relations to this... the hosios... is one who reverences these everlasting sanctities, and owns the obligation;... (Trench, op. cit., p. 327-334)*

Clearly there is a lot to consider in this Greek word. We have nothing like it in English. It's foundation is in the truth that there are some "*everlasting ordinances of right*." The *hosios*, "*reverences these everlasting sanctities, and owns the obligation*." When this word entered the Scriptures it became a perfect way to see the holiness in the sense of the unbreakable nature of all God's commands. Man can break, but Scripture cannot be broken. If we have to give up our life or anything less for the ordinances, *hosios* makes it not only necessary, but logical and the only reasonable and obvious way to deal with such a situation.

Another definition broadens this out further.

*"hosios "Of actions which by ancient sanction are regarded as "sacred," "lawful" and "according to duty,"... It makes no odds whether the sanctioning force is divine precept, natural law or ancient*

custom. *hosios* thus corresponds... to what a man does by disposition in accordance with his inward attitude and inner acceptance of what is felt to be binding.... In content it is what is right and good from the standpoint of morality and religion..." (Kittel, Gerhard, op. cit., Vol 5 p 489-492)

He adds that all actions with "*ancient sanction*" are "*sacred,*" "*lawful*" and "*according to duty.*" It defines what a man will do "*by disposition in accordance with his inward attitude and inner acceptance of what is felt to be binding.*" So a man who is *hosios* fulfills all obligations from a deep sense of appreciation for where they originated.

Since truth taught by Jesus in the gospels are from heaven and are thus eternal. They are something to die for. They can only be easily set aside by someone who has no respect for these ancient principles that transcend all else. They are unbendable, and must be followed under all circumstances and at all times no matter what the cost. This deep awe and respect comes from our deep love and respect for God and for His son Jesus Christ.

*15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. ... 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." ... 23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; ... 15:9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:9-10*

The "*holy*" man will never, even under the most trying circumstances allow his convictions to bend or change, because he knows what it would mean if he did so. Jesus remained in God's love because "*He kept His commandments.*" In exactly the same way, those who keep Jesus commands abide in His love. When anyone with *hosios* knows God is against something they are against it. When they know God is for something they are for it. The prospective elder with *hosios* will not change to suit anyone else. Even up to death, his allegiance to God and God's standards take higher precedence.

It was the principle of "*hosios*" that compelled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to choose death.

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." Dan 3:16-18*

They sealed these affirmations with their own deaths as they were cast into the fiery furnace. After God intervened, *Nebuchadnezzar* was amazed and spoke the truth.

*Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Dan. 3:16-18,28*

This is *hosios* at its finest! They "*yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!*" Their conviction about God's law forced them to die before they would compromise. Peter and the apostles were ready to do the same when standing before the Jewish Sanhedrin(Supreme Court). No matter what the consequences, they would not bend.

*But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. Acts 4:19-20*

*But Peter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29*

There is nothing extraordinary about these men. No one who possesses the specific "*holiness of hosios*" could do any different. They have too much awe, reverence and respect for the everlasting nature of God's law. This is no less than Jesus, who manifested the same respect in

the garden of Gethsemane, expected of all His servants.

*Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Rev 2:10*

Such a holy man will be faithful even if it costs death. But death is the furthest extent, it also affects every other important thing one may have in their life. Jesus was firm and resolute. Without this quality of holiness we are not worthy of Him.

*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. Mt. 10:37-39*

*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. Lk. 9:23-25*

If we have "hosios," if any time such a choice must be made, there is no choice to make. There is no need to even think about it. There is no such thing as circumstantial morality or situation ethics. No end justifying the means, no doing evil that good may come.

God's laws are absolute to a "holy/hosios" man. They cannot be changed. Man can be broken, but the Scriptures cannot be. Heaven and earth can pass away but obedience to God's laws cannot. God seeks such men who take a stand on the principles of right and wrong, on the principles of doctrinal purity. It all flows from the deep sense of awe and respect for the God who gave this law. God is true and every man a liar. God is righteous, holy and pure. His standards are an unbendable code of conduct which His people live by. His word is truth and his leaders must be selected on the basis of their strong feelings about this. They reverence the deep principles of right, make them his own and view them with the utmost respect.

*'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" Mt 4:4*

God needs such elders in his church. Men with conviction, honor, and integrity. Men after God's own heart. Such men will do great and lasting good.

So although we might otherwise understand holy as sanctified and set apart for God, this word takes that concept a step further.

## G. DOMESTIC RELATIONS

1. A Man 1Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:6
2. Husband of one wife. 1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6
3. Ruling well own house. 1Tim. 3:4
4. Children in subjection with all gravity. 1Tim. 3:4
5. Having Children that Believe Titus 1:6
6. Not accused of Riot or Unruly Titus 1:6

### 1. A Man.

*This is a faithful saying: If a **man** desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the **husband of one wife**,... 5 for if a **man** does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 1 Tim 3:1-2, 5*

*if a **man** is blameless, the **husband of one wife**, Titus 1:6*

For centuries this obvious qualification passed without much controversy or comment. But after decades of error, it must now be proved. After looking at the qualifications for an elder, there can be no doubt that God wanted only men to work in this role. The easiest way to prove this is to study the qualification “*husband of one wife*.” The Holy Spirit worded it in such a way that only a man can meet it. First, the definitions of the words themselves and second the grammar (way the words are set forth) only allow a man. The Holy Spirit had two words to choose in giving this command. The general word for “*mankind*” is the Greek word “*anthropos*,” which includes both male and female. The second term was more specific. The Greek word “*aner/andros*” was used to distinguish a male from a female.

*“aner ...is never used of the female sex; it stands (a) in distinction from a woman,” (Vine’s #435)*

The second word used in this qualification is woman/wife:

*gune ... In general Greek from the time of Homer, as also in the LXX (Septuagint) and the NT, gune denotes a. the “female” as distinct from the male: ... b. the “wife”: ...” Kittel TWDNT #1135)*

By placing “*andros-man/husband*” in the same sentence with “*gune-woman/wife*” it is impossible to translate or understand it any other way. Only a “*one woman man*,” or a “*one wife husband*” are possible translations. Added to the words, the grammar itself also creates a barrier. In English grammar we use word order to distinguish nouns in a sentence. In the phrase “the **husband** has a *wife*,” because **husband** is first, **husband** is the subject. In the phrase “the **wife** has a *husband*” the nouns are reversed and the subject becomes the **wife**. Greek grammar is different. Instead of word order they put different endings on the words. In this verse, “**husband**” has the nominative ending and must be the subject. The term “**wife**” is in the genitive and is used to describe the type of husband. Hence the one qualified to be an elder is a man/husband with a single woman/wife. It is impossible either grammatically or with the words themselves to understand this qualification in any other way. The elder must be a man, a husband, with only one wife.

### 2. Husband of One Wife.

Although these words appear to be simple and straightforward, they are among the most controversial of all the qualifications. More has been written on them than all the rest combined. The reason for this was discussed in a prophecy given in the next chapter of Timothy. Even before the close of the first century, Paul had revealed that marriage was going to become a very controversial subject in the church.

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 1 Tim 4:1-3*

The Holy Spirit stated this “*expressly*,” so it was distinct, clear and exact. At some point in the

future two things God had given to be received with thanksgiving by all who had accepted and believed the truth would be forbidden by religious leaders or teachers. While the truth in Scripture teaches that marriage is a wonderful gift from God for all, later preachers and teachers would arise who would teach the opposite.

The history of celibacy in the Roman Catholic church reveals that within four hundred years after the writing of this letter, the Catholic church was already teaching that the “clergy” should not be married. Taking a few passages out of their context, those influenced by the pagan philosophy of Gnosticism gradually came to the conclusion that the comforts and joys of marriage were incompatible with devout service to God. According to them, since pleasure is evil, and marriage brings great pleasure, marriage should be forbidden.

They sought to make Jesus and Paul agree with them. They used Jesus’ words regarding divorce (Mt. 19:10-12) and Paul’s words regarding the present distress (1 Cor. 7:32-35) to compel all who wanted to preach or serve as leaders in the church to remain unmarried. Obviously those teaching these things must go to great lengths to obscure this qualification and nullify it with human wisdom and sophistry. These teachings have continued from the fourth century up to the present, and we still see an unmarried pope, bishops, cardinals, priests, and nuns. The scholarship of all who have been influenced by this teaching will obviously be tainted with prejudice and error.

Yet the Holy Spirit expressly revealed that this teaching is false and part of an apostasy from the true church. Any teaching that leads to the conclusion that elders and others in the church should be forbidden to marry is made by those who do not “*believe and know the truth.*”

Yet this qualification is still assailed and twisted. A large segment of commentaries and other scholarship we can consult on this verse will still hold error. The comments of denominational writers shows a hopeless perversion of Scripture to justify what was inherited from Catholicism. This qualification stands in the way of this false doctrine, making it certain that it would run aground against the wisdom of men. In spite of the prophecy, the clear teaching of the Bible on the honorable estate of marriage, it is still viewed by many as an inferior state.

But the Holy Spirit who gave this qualification in chapter three, stated expressly that it would be nullified in chapter four. Since the Spirit knew this apostasy was coming, He obviously worded it so any attempt to twist or pervert it would become obvious to those who “*believe and know the truth.*”

Since we know understand that there is great error on the subject, we must keep our minds clear of the prejudice that has been created by the false scholarship and only look at the words in the qualification itself.

“*The husband of one wife*” translates the Greek phrase “*mias gunaikos andra*” in Timothy, and “*mias gunaikos aner*” in Titus.

“*mias*... a cardinal numeral, one...” (Thayer, p 186-187)

...is used to signify (l) (a) one in contrast to many... (b) metaphorically, union and concord...(2) emphatically, (a) a single (one), to the exclusion of others,... (b) one, alone... © one and the same...” (Vine, Vol. 3 p 137)

“*gunaikos*... 1. univ. a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow... 2. a wife...” (Thayer, p 123)

“*aner, andros*... a man,... 1. With a reference to sex, and so to distinguish a man from a woman; either a. as a male... or b. as a husband... 3. univ. any male person, a man...” (Thayer, p 45)

After carefully considering these definitions, along with the grammar in the sentence makes it evident there are only two possible translations. The elder must be a “*one woman man / man of one woman*”, or a “*one wife husband / husband of one wife.*” The only ambiguity in the quality is whether to translate man and woman or husband and wife.

The fact that Paul used the term man/husband and joined it with woman/wife proves conclusively to anyone not seeking to justify a previous notion that the man was expected to be married. A careful consideration of the facts offers one clear and obvious conclusion. With the coming

apostasy the Holy Spirit chose precise language that could not be twisted.

If He had only used the word “*aner*,” some would have argued that Paul did not mean husband, but man since the Greek word is somewhat ambiguous and thereby would have set easily it aside. But because God was already aware that the apostasy would lead in that direction, He wanted this qualification set forth clearly(1Tim. 4:1-4).

Hence the Spirit joined the ambiguous “man/husband” to the other ambiguous “woman/wife.” By placing woman in the genitive, there is no way to separate the two. An understanding of the purpose of the genitive case proves this conclusively. Carefully consider the description of how a noun used in the genitive (*woman*) limits the other noun in the sentence (*man*).

“The genitive is the case of definition or description. It “is in function adjectival.” and usually limits a substantive... the genitive is “employed to qualify the meaning of a preceding noun and to show in what more definite sense it is to be taken.” ... Thus the basal function of the genitive is to define. In this it quite clearly carries with it an idea of limitation,...” The genitive reduces the range of reference possible to an idea, and confines its application within specific limits.” (Dana and Mantey, “A Manual Grammar of the Greek NT,” p. 72-73)

Thus the noun “*man/husband*” is “**limited**” by the noun “*woman/wife*.” The “*one wife*” “**reduces the range of reference possible to the idea**” of man and “**confines it within specific limits.**” If the “*man*” does not have “*one wife*” he does not fit the “**specific limits**” placed by the Holy Spirit by placing “*one woman/wife*” in the genitive.

There is no way to set this aside. Let those in apostasy argue that the term is “*man*” and not “*husband*.” Still that “*man*” must have a “*woman!*” There is no logical argument to remove this. The man must be joined to a woman. He must have a woman who belongs to him. Since marriage is the only honorable way for a man to have such a woman, he must be the husband of a wife. He must be a married man!

Why does Paul use the term “one?” Doesn’t everything he needed to express regarding the man being a husband find its fulfillment in the term “*husband of a wife*”? Why does he emphasize this? This is the heart and soul of the controversy. The term “*one*” is a specific term for the number one. It refers to something less than two and more than none. It makes it so specific that it is amazing that there could be any disagreement. The man must have one wife. Not two, three, four, five, six, etc. wives and not none! He must have **ONE wife!**

H. E. Phillips book on the Eldership, offers a comprehensive discussion of the various arguments put forth to remove marriage from this qualification. It is an excellent book I highly recommend. The information on the husband and wife span over forty pages(97-140).

“The statement of Paul here when translated into English means that the bishop must be: **THE** -- a definite, specific--**HUSBAND**--a married man, joined to a woman by lawful marriage--**OF**--having the relation of, forming a part of, or belonging to--**ONE**--a single in number; more than none and less than two--**WIFE**--a woman lawfully joined to a man by the bond of marriage. The bishop cannot be a husband of any kind unless he is married. If he could be a husband without marriage, he would be an unmarried husband, which is ridiculous. It would be as ridiculous as single wives or married bachelors.” (Phillips, H. E. “Scriptural Elders and Deacons,” Cogdill Foundation Publications, Marion, Indiana, 1959 p 99)

“A series of nine appeals have been made to support the position of unmarried elders: (1) Evidence of scholars, (2) A restrictive requirement and not a positive one, (3) It only means blameless in the marriage relations, (4) Paul was an elder and was unmarried, (5) Christ was the Chief Bishop and was unmarried, (6) The parallel between II Corinthians 7:2 and 1Timothy 3:2, (7) Paul said the unmarried state was preferred in service to God, (8) Bishops can get as much experience without a family, (9) To compel bishops to marry is arbitrary and absurd.” (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 101)

“If the numeral ONE is the important word here, there is no escaping the fact that the idea of NONE is not taught. One means more than none and less than two. A bachelor has less than one wife and a polygamist has more than one wife, consequently, if ONE is the pivot word of the passage it cannot be just restrictive and not positive. One here has the same meaning as the one in Ephesians 4:5-- “One Lord, one faith, one baptism...” That does not mean “NO Lord, NO faith, NO baptism.” Neither does “one wife” mean “no wife.” (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 109)

"An appropriate case is supposed where a man is qualified (?) without marriage and children and the question is then asked: "Is this qualified man to be deprived of the work of an elder just because he does not have a family?" That is to beg the question. Could we not say the same of the quality of being "apt to teach?" Suppose a case where a man is reasonably qualified in all points except that he is not "apt to teach." Shall we deprive him of the position of elder because of that? One argument is as scriptural as the other." (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 110)

I have also included quotes from other books on the eldership that I think are helpful.

"To Timothy and Titus both, the apostle prescribes that the overseer shall be the husband of one wife. There has been a vast amount of disputation as to whether this requires him to be a married man. It is alleged, in opposition to this idea, that when churches were planted among a people practicing polygamy, men would frequently be immersed who had a plurality of wives, and that the apostle intends only to prohibit such from being made overseers. Undoubtedly the use of the numeral one in the text has this force, and it would be unlawful to place a polygamist or bigamist in the office. But while the expression has this force, we think that candor requires the admission that it also has the effect of requiring a man to be a married man. That he should be the husband of one wife, forbids having less than one as clearly as it forbids having more than one. If it be said that a man owns but one farm, it is just as clearly implied that he owns one as that he owns no more than one. Moreover, the context confirms that conclusion; for the apostle proceeds in both epistles to state how the overseer must govern his household, and especially his children; which statements imply that he is to be a man of family.

It has been urged as an objection to this conclusion, that it would disqualify Paul himself, and Barnabas and Timothy for the office of Elder although they held offices or positions of much greater responsibility. But this objection can have no force, unless it be made to appear that these brethren were qualified for the Elder's office, or that the qualifications of an Apostle or an Evangelist include those of an Elder. Neither of the two, however, can be made to appear, and therefore the objection has no force whatever. Indeed, it seems most fitting that men whose chief work led them from city to city and nation to nation, through all kinds of danger and hardship, should be freed from the care of a family, and equally fitting that the shepherd, whose work was always at home and in the midst of the families of his flock, should be a man of family. A married man certainly possesses advantages for such work that are impossible to an unmarried man, and the experience of the world must confirm the wisdom of the requirement that the overseer shall be the husband of one wife. It may be well to add that one living wife is clearly meant, and that there is no allusion to the number of deceased wives a man may have had. If my wife is dead, I am not now her husband." (McGarvey, J. W. op. cit., p 56-57)

"The domestic relations of the elder have given rise to more discussions and disagreements than any or perhaps all of the remaining qualifications. The meaning of the expression, "husband of one wife" has been debated since the close of the first century. Four prominent views have been set forth by expositors throughout the centuries. (1) Some contend that it prohibits a divorce and remarriage. (2) Others contend that it prohibits polygamy. (3) Still others believe the phrase prohibits remarriage after the death of one's first spouse. (4) The vast majority of our brethren believe it is a statement which prohibits both polygamy, celibacy, and divorce and remarriage..." (Williams, op. cit., p 23-24)

These quotations sum up the controversy. Men who desire the authority and position of the office but are unqualified for one reason or another often seek to lower the qualifications to meet their circumstances. Marriage is a difficult condition to maintain if one is not the proper type of man. Many have sought the position who could not maintain this necessary prerequisite. Especially in the great apostasy is this true. Since the words are clear and he is to be married to one woman, only the prejudices of men can force it to mean anything else.

Yet there is one consideration that has also become a point of disagreement. Does one wife mean in a lifetime, or does one wife mean at that moment? If it is one woman in a lifetime, then if his wife dies, and he remarries, he is no longer the husband of one wife, but two. Those who hold this position believe that such a man is no longer qualified. Others point out that if a man is married to one woman and that woman dies he becomes married to no woman and is unmarried. If he then remarries he becomes the husband of one wife again and could again be considered qualified. The Scriptures are clear and forceful on the fact that a man is no longer bound to a wife and thus has no wife after she dies.

*Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Rom 7:1-3*

Since a woman/man can only be bound to their spouse as long as they live, when the spouse dies he is free from that law and has no(0) wife. If he remarries he once again becomes the husband of one wife. The first marriage has been dissolved and will never be again.

*18 Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: 19 Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. 21 And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. 22 So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. 23 Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.” 24 Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. Mk 12:20-25*

Since marriage is forever severed at death it was foolish and unscriptural of the Sadducees to refer back to it as though it were still in affect. When a husband dies, she is free to marry so she is not married and has no husband. Since the Scriptures are this clear about what happens to marriage after a spouse dies, it is difficult to see how someone could successfully prove that a man whose wife died 20 years earlier and remarried is unqualified because he had two wives. He had one, lost her to death and now still has one. The church would certainly want to take some time to evaluate the new wife and see if she is qualified, but as far as the qualification of the man himself, if he is married after the death a former wife he is still a husband of one wife.

More complicated is the question of divorce. Not so much because of the husband of one wife, but the quality of being blameless and without reproach. A divorce is a terrible thing. Clearly if it is scriptural and he puts her away he has no wife. If a man puts away a wife for adultery, the marriage has been severed by God and he is the husband of no(0) wife. If he remarries he is once again the husband of one wife.

Yet in this case, the problem is not so simple. A divorce is a messy and terrible event and generally we have to wonder if any man is fully innocent and did all he could. Even if he did, there is still the nagging doubt that there might be some blame. But after all is said, if the divorce itself was Scriptural, he is still a husband with one wife. Yet each person and each local church will have to struggle to make the right decision on each situation.

### **3. Rules Well His Own House.**

*one who **rules** his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to **rule** his own house, how will he **take care** of the church of God?) 1 Tim 3:4-6*

The repetition of the term “*rule*” and its parallel to the work an elder does(*take care of the church of God*) makes this qualification of dual importance. There is very little information regarding the specific type of ruling to be done in the eldership. So the parallel between the home and the church will help us better understand what God intended. Though Peter warned elders that they were “*not to lord it over the flock*,” the writer of Hebrews described them as “*those who rule over you*” and “*watch out for your souls*.” The parallel is obvious. This qualification is therefore helpful for us to assess how a man is to rule his home and how an elder is to rule and take care of the church without lording it over others. There are many words for dominion and rule in both English and Greek. This word is only used eight times in the NT and has a very distinctive meaning.

*“proistemi... from pró (4253), before, over, and hístemi (2476), to place, to stand. Transitively, to cause to stand before, to set over. In the NT only in the intransitive meaning to stand before. (I) With the meaning to be over, to preside, rule (Rom 12:8; 1 Tim 5:17). (II) By implication meaning to care for something, to be diligent, ...” (Word Study Dictionary: NT 4291)*

*“proistemi... [to be at the head of, rule, care for] 1. This common word means “to put before,” “to present,” or, in the intransitive middle, “to go before,” “to preside,” and figuratively “to surpass,” “to lead,” “to direct,” “to assist,” “to protect,” “to represent,” “to care for,” “to sponsor,” “to arrange,” “to apply oneself to.” ... Only intransitive forms occur in the eight NT instances. The two senses usually involved are “to lead” and “to care for. .... “proistemi... ... means “to put oneself at the head,” “to go*

first,”... “to preside.” ...But other metaphorical meanings are more important: a. The most important of all is “to preside” in the sense “to lead, conduct, direct, govern”... There is also the thought of standing or going before someone or something in protection...” Kittel, TDWNT NT:4291

The basic action of this compound verb is to place or stand something (*hístēmi*) before or over (*pro*) another. So we might bring a glass and set it before someone or place a blanket over them. But over time it took on the sense of the person himself being placed or standing before another. It was used of those who were placed over another to “*direct, assist, protect, represent, or care for*” them.

Since it is only used eight times, the simplest way to evaluate it is to look at each of them. Five times it means “*standing before*” while ruling in the home or the church, once it is used of general leadership in any capacity, and finally to the rule and care manifested in how Christians stand before and direct their good works.

*he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; **he who leads**, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Rom 12:6*

*And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and **are over you** in the Lord and admonish you, 1 Thess 5:12-13*

*one **who rules** his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how **to rule** his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 1 Tim 3:4-5*

*Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, **ruling** their children and their own houses well. 1 Tim 3:12-13*

*Let the elders **who rule** well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 1 Tim 5:17-18*

*This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful **to maintain** good works. These things are good and profitable to men. ...*

*14 And let our people also learn **to maintain** good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful. Titus 3:8, 14*

How did God stand a husband/father before his house(wife and family)? God intended for him to “*direct, assist, protect, represent, care for*” all who are in his house. The Spirit merely required the man who desires the office of a bishop to have demonstrated his ability to do it.

The passages revealing how a man is to stand before his house and put himself as the head are divided into his role as a husband and his role as a father. In Ephesians, Paul used Jesus’ care and concern for His church as the basis for the husband’s care and concern for his wife. Each man must stand before his wife, giving her his love and sacrificing himself in order to bless and help her. Any man who is doing this will be ruling well his house!

*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ... 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. Eph 5:22-25, 28*

In Colossians, Paul defined it in a negative way. No husband ruling well his house will ever be bitter toward or allow himself to treat his wife out of bitterness, but instead with love, compassion and devotion to her needs.

*Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. Col 3:19*

Peter spoke to the husbands comprehensively, when he demanded a husband dwell with his wife in accordance with his knowledge of all the Scriptures dealing with relationships. The wife should receive the firstfruits of all the good things he has learned from his knowledge of the gospel about how to treat others. For example, when he learns to turn the other cheek to others, he must also dwell with his wife like that. Since all godly Christians are to be forbearing, patient, forgiving, compassionate, longsuffering, etc., toward all, so they must dwell with their wives.

*Husbands, likewise, dwell with them dwell with (your wives) according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. 1Pet. 3:7*

After his wife come the children. The souls he will influence with his own life. He must be cautious how he treats his children. Although God made him the head and the ruler, he must never selfishly or sinfully abuse that rule. Never should children feel exasperated or discouraged over the manner he leads and directs them. He has been placed before them to care for them and to do all within his power to bless their lives with the teaching and admonition of the Lord.

*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Eph 6:4*

*Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Col 3:21*

Husbands and fathers will only rule well over their house when they are doing all the above. They love and sacrifice themselves for their wives, are never bitter against them, and dwell with them according to knowledge. They must train up their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord and not provoke them to wrath. Each husband and father will give an account of this responsibility to God on the day of judgment.

With this qualification, the Holy Spirit demands that each congregation also make that assessment. A man is qualified or disqualified by whether he has done this “well.”

*kalos* adverb (from Homer down), *beautifully, finely, excellently, well*: ... **a.** *rightly, so that there shall be no room for blame*: ... **b.** *excellently, nobly, commendably*: ... **c.** *honorably, in honor*: (Thayer NT 2573)

To be qualified for the eldership, God expects him to have ruled his household “*beautifully*” in the context of the above passages and to have carried out those duties in a “*fine and excellent*” manner.

“*His own house*,” extends this further than our word family. At that time, not only were there wives and children, but also servants and extended family. While in his home, they too become his responsibility.

*idios*... 1. *pertaining to one's self, one's own*; used a. univ. of what is one's own as opposed to belonging to another... b. of what pertains to one's property, family, dwelling, country, etc. ...” (Thayer, p 297)

*oikos*...a. strictly, an inhabited house... univ. the place where one has fixed his residence, one's settled abode, domicile... 2. by metonymy the inmates of a house, all the persons forming one's family, a household... 3. stock, race, descendants of one...” (Thayer, p 441)

Joshua, Cornelius, and Crispus were all men who did such an outstanding job ruling over their households that God commended them for it.

*And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Josh. 24:15*

*a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. ... Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God. Acts 10:2, 33*

*Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Acts 18:8*

From the above examples it is clear that it is possible for a man to have his entire household in subjection to him, to hold to his values and ideals, and to respect his decisions and judgment.

## 4. Having Children in Submission with all Gravity.

The qualification “*rule well his own house*” narrows in this second qualification to the children. They are one of the most tangible areas a congregation can use to assess his ruling ability. If he has done it *well* then it will be obvious. There is little difference in Greek or English for the word child.

“*teknon...a child(akin to tikto, to beget, bear), is used in both the natural and figurative senses. ...It gives prominence to the fact of birth...*” (Vine, W. E. op. cit., Volume 1 p 187)

Those seeking the office of a bishop must have children and those children must be raised in strict accordance with God’s instructions. Their compliance with those instructions will determine whether or not he has ruled well. Without children, he cannot be assessed as a ruler. How he trained and raised his children prepared him to “*take care of the church.*” If he succeeded with his own children, God will entrust him with the care of the church. Hence ruling well his own house comes down to the “*submission*” in his children.

“*hupotage... 1. the act of subjecting... 2. obedience, subjection: ...*” (Thayer, p 645)

“*hupotage... means “submission,” ... then “subordination,” “dependent position”...*” (Kittel, Vol 8 p 46)

While the verb also carries the additional idea of one arranging themselves under the authority of another, the noun simply means submission or obedience. It is the duty of every father to impress upon his children the nature of authority and their relationship to it. He must gain their submission, their respect and their obedience. Children’s attitude toward the authority of their parents will have a great bearing on how they view other types of authority. If a father fails to gain their submission, it is unlikely that they will later give it to God civil government, or their employer.

What is the scope and measure of this subjection? How can others assess it? At the least, we can all read what God has revealed about His expectations of the children under a godly father and look to see if these children possess them. Anything God has required of children that his children are in rebellion against would reflect on his leadership.

Although both the father and the mother are actively involved in this training the responsibility is still placed at the feet of the father. It was to the fathers that Paul commanded to “*bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*”

If we are to gain a clear perspective of God’s expectations of what a father should accomplish with his children, we must begin with the instructions in the Old Covenant.

“*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Deut 6:4-9*

In this passage, it all begins with the faith, commitment, and conviction of the parents. Only when they love the Lord with their heart, soul, and strength and His words are in their heart are they properly prepared to teach their children. When they hold this awe and reverence, they will naturally teach God’s word diligently to them. Talking of them while sitting in the house, walking by the way, lying down and rising up. Clearly the father was expected to pass his own submission to God and to His Law to his children. A father could fail for only one of two reasons. Either he was violating the passage itself by not loving the Lord, not having God’s word in his heart, or not teaching them diligently to his children, or his children were not in submission to him.

“*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. Ex. 20:12*

“*If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, 19 then his father and his*

*mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. Deut. 21:18-20*

Many passages in Proverbs corroborate the need for fathers to be concerned about the spiritual development of their children and for children to be in submission to them.

*My son, hear the instruction of your father, And do not forsake the law of your mother; Pr. 1:8*

*My son, keep your father's command, And do not forsake the law of your mother. 21 Bind them continually upon your heart; Tie them around your neck. 22 When you roam, they will lead you; When you sleep, they will keep you; And when you awake, they will speak with you. 23 For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life, Pr. 6:20-23*

*He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly. Pr. 13:24*

*Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction. Pr. 19:18*

*Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it. Pr. 22:6*

*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him. Pr. 22:15*

*Do not withhold correction from a child, For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. Pr. 23:13*

*Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old. 23 Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding. 24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, And he who begets a wise child will delight in him. 25 Let your father and your mother be glad, And let her who bore you rejoice. Pr. 23:22-25*

*Whoever keeps the law is a discerning son, But a companion of gluttons shames his father. Pr. 28:7*

*The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Pr. 29:15*

Each of these passages gives a little clearer insight into what God wanted children to receive and how parents could help them gain it. All children need the proper blending of corrective discipline with the use of the rod, and instructive discipline through diligently teaching them God's law. Corrective discipline gained a child's physical submission, and instruction in the Law led to a spiritual submission that kept a child obedient to God even after he left the home.

Since it is the duty of all fathers to nurture his children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord, it will be a part of their judgment on the great day. If God can assess a man's ability to raise his children by the results, so can the brethren at the church where he attends. If his children grow up with a deep love for the Lord, then the man has proven he knows how to rule his own house, and therefore is prepared to rule in God's house. If he could not train up his own children in the way they should go, then how can he complete the training of others who are seeking to serve the Lord?

Even without the help of a father, Timothy's grandmother and mother were able to do this for him.

*when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. 2Tim. 1:5*

It was an unfeigned faith that Timothy's family was able to give to him. This appears to be the real goal of the demand that father's nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord. All the training that the child receives is thus placed in the context of the Lord. What could any parent teach their children outside of this that would really matter to the child?

Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords. How could parents not speak of these things at all times and in all places. How could a child not know the commitment and conviction of his parents? How could godly parents not want their child to serve God, and how could any child not know that? When a child passes the age of accountability and refuses to submit to Christ we have two choices. Either the father failed to make his children aware that all his efforts were directed toward this, or the children are aware of his expectations and refused to do it.

The submission and obedience children have toward their parents will be "with" all gravity.

“*meta*... a preposition,... and hence prop. in the midst of, amid, denoting association, union, accompaniment;...I. With the Gen. among, with...” (Thayer, p 401-404)

By using this preposition Paul stresses that all the acts of submission will be accompanied by, be in the midst of and united to “*all*” gravity.”

“*pas*,... a. any, every one(sc. of the class denoted by the noun annexed to pas);... all or any of the class indicated... b. any and every, of every kind,...2. with a substantive; 1. masc. and fem. every one, any one...in every condition, or in every matter, ... in everything, in every way, on every side, in every particular or relation,...” (Thayer, p 491-493)

Under any and every situation, with all types and qualities of submission the quality of “gravity” must be evident. Yet once again, we have a Greek term that the translators struggled to convey into English. “Gravity” in the ASV/KJV is *reverence*(NKJV), *dignity*(NAS, ESV), and *respect*(NIV). Each of these captures one aspect of the word the Holy Spirit selected.

“*semnotes*... that characteristic of a person or a thing which entitles to reverence or respect, *dignity, gravity, majesty, sanctity*...in an ethical sense, *gravity ...honor, probity, purity*...” (Thayer p. 573; 4587)

*semnótes* ... Decency, dignity, seriousness. Aristotle defined *semnótes* as the average of a virtue that lies between two extremes, *authádeia*(arrogance)... and *aréskeia* pleasure, ... an ignoble attempt to please everybody, the endeavoring at all costs of dignity and truth to stand well with all the world). Therefore, *semnótes* stands between caring to please nobody and endeavoring at all costs to please everybody. It is the ability not only to perform well one’s duties as a citizen, but also to adhere to the highest principles and ideals of earth and heaven, and thus drawing respect and approval. See 1 Tim. 2:2; 3:4; Titus 2:7. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT:4587)

There is no exact English word for this. It is a reverence and a respect for authority that leads the child to have a serious dignified attitude. Children properly trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord will have a great respect and honor for all forms of authority. They will submit to them with a serious and dignified deportment. Submission to their mother and father is offered with reverence and respect. They will respect and hold God’s Word in reverence. They will respect the authority of their teachers, principles, police and others.

We should not pass over Aristotle’s definition as it captures so well what every Christian wants for their children. The Greek word “*semnótes*” holds the perfect place between two terrible extremes.

The first extreme is the *arrogance*(*authádeia*) that cares for no one and no one’s opinions. This *hubris* is based on a selfishness that seeks only its own pleasure with no care and concern for the authority of others. There is no submission in the heart of such a person. The foolishness that was bound up in their heart is still there.

The other extreme comes from those who take so much *pleasure*(*aréskeia*) in pleasing others that they have no backbone or conviction to stand up. Like a chameleon, they change their morals and convictions based on who they are with. While with their parents and brethren, they do all to please them. But when they are with their friends, they change and do everything to please them.

Between these two extremes is the child of dignity, gravitas, and reverence. The child who bends his will to God. All other authorities(parents, teachers, civil authorities, employer, etc.) are under God and are dealt with respectfully, decently and seriously, yet with a consciousness of absolutes that can never be changed no matter who is present. There is no arrogance and no desire to please those who are present. Only a desire to be submissive to the things that are right. In all things they should reflect the same growth as Jesus:

*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:52*

Paul’s final words on this qualification explain again why it is so important.

*for if a man know not how to rule his own house how shall he take care of the church of God?*

Many occupations can only be fully learned in the doing. This qualification is job experience. The

man who closely follows the Scriptures in ruling his home and diligently carries them out is gaining the necessary attitudes and qualities and experiences to do the same thing with the church. As an elder, it will be his duty to see that the word of God is being followed. He will be closely watching over the souls of the members. He must be directing, guiding, exhorting and admonishing and occasionally rebuking the members just as he did with his own children. Instilling within them the same submission and obedience he himself holds toward God and his word. If he could not learn to do this well with his own children, he will not be able to do it with the church.

## **5. Having Children that Believe(ASV; NAS) “Are Believers” (ESV) . Having Faithful Children(KJV; NKJV)**

It is interesting to note that of all the qualifications for the elder, the most difficult questions arise about his wife and this qualification regarding his children. Because there are two ways to translate the Greek word used a disagreement has arisen over the exact nature of this qualification. This disagreement is not a minor point. Those who follow the first translation teach that all his children must be Christians who have obeyed the gospel and are believers. While those who follow the second translation teach that the children must be “*faithful*.” Yet those who conclude it is faithful must then answer an additional dilemma as to whom they are to be faithful. Some say their father in the flesh while others believe it is faithful to God.

Hence we must decide between whether they must be believers who are Christians, children who are faithful and reliable to their father, or faithful to God, which brings us back to being Christians.

Since the term “*having*” is present active participle which when joined to the verb which is in the present tense, “*be*,” we must understand this as a continuous action in the present moment. Thus as the present moment is continuously moving from year to year this qualification moves with it. Those who say this is only true while the children are in the home must answer from the context how they could conclude when it stopped. Since the Spirit gives no exceptions, it is difficult to understand why this present continuous action verb should expire. It doesn't with the one wife, why should it be different with the children?

So the children of the elder regardless of their age must either be faithful to their father or they must be Christians. As we will see over the next few pages, it is not a simple matter to draw the proper conclusion on these two differences.

When all is studied and considered, it all rests on Greek grammar, and because it rests solely on grammar, we have to rely on two basic foundations to make the proper interpretation/translation. First and always, we rely on how this same word is used in other Scriptures and thus look over the shoulders of the scholars and translators to assess why they came to their conclusion. Second, we must rely on Greek scholars who knew the language to help us see clearly what was intended by the Holy Spirit when He gave these words. We learned from Paul that the Holy Spirit gave the words(1Cor. 2:9-13) and from Jesus that even tenses matter(Mt. 22:29-33). So we must learn from the Greek Scholars what the grammar of these terms forces us to believe.

For these reasons, I have chosen to approach this differently than I normally would. Because of the nature of this disagreement, we must rely on Greek scholars who are fallible men. Knowing that the most sensible way to do this is to consider as many reliable scholars as possible and assess how and why they chose to interpret the grammar as they did. This is an unusual way to approach a Scripture, but the nature of the controversy leaves little else as a viable and reasonable way to proceed. We can't just form an opinion without looking at all the facts and the only way we can get these facts is to consider the conclusions others have drawn and their reasons for doing so.

Therefore, we have broken this down into four sections and we draw a conclusion based on all the facts.

- (1) Evidence of the Translations;
- (2) Evidence of Lexicons,

(3) Evidence of Scholars(Commentaries)

(4) The foundation used by these scholars(All the Scriptures where the word was used).

### (1) Evidence of Translations:

Of the primary translations used today, we see that the KJV and NKJV use “faithful,” while all the other translations use the term “believer” or “who/that believe.”

having children who believe, (NASB)  
having children that believe, (ASV)  
his children are believers (ESV)  
a man whose children believe (NIV)

having faithful children (KJV)  
having faithful children (NKJV)

But I didn’t want to stop there. Since my Bible program has many other translations I considered them all to see if this trend continued. I am not endorsing or validating any of the “*thought for thought*,” or “*dynamic*” translations, nor the paraphrases. I only use them for a grammatical analysis. All of these scholars were fallible men, but their assessment of the grammar of this term is still important to assess. Some are liberal some are conservative, but they overwhelmingly chose the more difficult “**believe**” and not the easier path of the passive “**faithful**.”

16 used the active “believe.”

5 used the passive “faithful”

1 used “faithful to God.

whose children are [well trained and are] <b>believers</b> , (AMP)	having children <b>STEDFAST</b> (YLT)	his children are <b>believers</b> (RSV)
having children who are <b>believers</b> , (Wuest)	having children who <b>believe</b> (WEB)	man whose children <b>believe</b> (TNIV).
his children must be <b>faithful to God</b> (Easy-to-Read)	having <b>FAITHFUL</b> children (Webster)	whose children are <b>believers</b> , (NRSV)
having children who are themselves <b>believers</b> (Weymouth)	His children must be <b>believers</b> . (NirV)	his children must be <b>believers</b> (GNT)
having <b>FAITHFUL</b> children, (Douay-Rheims)	must have <b>believing</b> children (TNCV)	with <b>believing</b> children (CJB)
his children <b>believers</b> (The Message)	Their children must <b>love the Lord</b> (TLB)	his children must be <b>believers</b> (NLT)
having <b>FAITHFUL</b> children (Holman Christian Standard)	having <b>believing</b> children (Darby)	whose children are <b>of the faith</b> (BBE)
have children who are <b>believers</b> . (God’s Word)	with <b>FAITHFUL</b> children (NET Bible)	his children must be <b>believers</b> (TEV)

Clearly the evidence of the translations points to “believer,” A total of 20 translations chose “believe” and 7 selected “faithful.” Clearly these is some margin of doubt since 7 chose the passive. As we look at the Lexicons, we will learn why there is some doubt whether it is the active believe or the passive faithful.

## 2. The Evidence of the Lexicons and Dictionaries

A lexicon like “Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon,” or dictionaries like “Vine’s Expository Dictionary of the NT” or “Kittel’s Theological Dictionary of NT Words” incorporate word definitions, grammar, and word usage of both the NT and secular Greek. These are the type of scholars who translate the Bible into a language we can easily understand. Whenever there is a controversy about the meaning of a word or the grammar in a sentence we have to rely on them to try to understand the nature of the question and the proof for each side. We will begin with Vine’s Expository Dictionary. (NOTE: I have highlighted the most important parts of the definition so you don’t have to read the every word).

*pistos* a verbal adjective, akin to *peitho* (see FAITH), is used in two senses, (a) passive, “**faithful, to be trusted, reliable,**” (b) active, signifying “**believing, trusting, relying,**” ... With regard to believers, they are spoken of sometimes in the active sense, sometimes in the passive, i. e., sometimes as “**believers,**” sometimes as “**faithful.**”...”NT:4103), ... *pistos* (A) in the active sense means “**believing, trusting**”; (B) in the passive sense, “**trusty, faithful, trustworthy.**” It is translated “believer” in 2Cor. 6:15; “them that believe” in 1Tim. 4:12, RV (KJV, “believers”); in 1Tim 5:16, “if any woman that believeth,” lit. “if any believing woman.” So in 6:2, “believing masters.” In 1 Peter 1:21 the RV, following the most authentic mss., gives the noun form, “are believers in God” (KJV, “do believe in God”). In John 20:27 it is translated “believing.” **It is best understood with significance (A), above, e.g., in Gal. 3:9; Acts 16:1; 2 Cor. 6:15; Titus 1:6;** it has significance (B), e. g., in 1 Thess 5:24; 2 Thess 3:3 (see Notes on Thes. p. 211, and Gal. p. 126, by Hogg and Vine). (Vine’s Expository Dictionary 4103)

When W.E. Vine calls “*pistos*” a verbal adjective we need to take a moment to remember exactly what that means. We learned these things in Grade school but they are not always readily remembered. A verbal adjective is made up of two parts. An adjective is a word that describes or modifies a noun. The noun *man* is modified by adjectives such as *young* or *old*, *strong* or *weak*. A verb is a word of action such as *walk*, *run*, or *believe*. A *man walks* is a noun and a verb. An *old man walks* is an adjective, a noun and a verb. A verbal adjective is an adjective with verbal qualities of action. In this case, the verbal adjective is faithful or believing. They are adjectives with the action of a verb. But just as a verb can be active or passive, so can a verbal adjective. In the Greek language “*pistos*” is a verbal adjective that can be used in the active sense of “*believing*” or in passive since of “*faithful*.”

When a verb is active, the individual is doing the action. When a verb is passive, someone else is doing the action to them. Hence in the verse “*he that believes and is baptized*” we see the active believe set next to the passive be baptized. So if one is actively *pistos*, they performing the action of *believing*, but if they are passively “*pistos*,” then others see *faithfulness* within them. *Believe* is what we actively do and *faithful* is what others see in us.

In some cases there are two different endings on the word that will tell us whether it is active or passive. That is not true with a verbal adjective. Since the word is used in both senses with the same Greek endings, we only have the context of each verse to determine if it is active or passive. Vine stated that he believed in Titus 1:6 the children were doing the action and therefore were *believing* children.

Next we turn to Thayer to see if he concurs with Vine or if he has anything to add.

*pistos, piste, piston*(*peitho*) ... **1. trusty, faithful; of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business, the execution of commands, or the discharge of official duties:**... *doulos*(*a servant*) Mt. 24:45; 25:21,23; *oikonomos*(*steward*) Luke 12:42; 1 Cor 4:2; ... *diakonos*(*servant*), Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7; 4:7; *archiereus*(*high priest*) Heb. 2:17; 3:2 of God, abiding by his promises, 1Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2Cor. 1:18; 1Thess. 5:24; 2Thess. 3:3; Heb. 10:23; 11:11; 2Tim. 2:13; 1John 1:9; 1 Peter 4:19; add, 1Cor. 4:17; Col. 4:9; 1Tim. 1:12; Heb. 3:5; 1Peter. 5:12;...  
**2. easily persuaded; believing, confiding, trusting** (Theognis, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Plato, others); in the NT one who **trusts in God’s promises**, Gal. 3:9; is **convinced that Jesus has been raised from the dead**, opposed to *apistos*(*a-privative*) John 20:27; one who has become **convinced that Jesus is the Messiah** and the author of salvation... (**a believer**): Acts 16:1; 2 Cor 6:15; 1 Tim 5:16; with the addition of to *kurio*(*the Lord*) dative of the person in whom faith or trust is reposed, Acts 16:15; plural in Col 1:2 (where cf. Lightfoot); 1 Tim 4:10; 6:2; **Titus 1:6**; Rev 17:14; ...” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, p 514; 4103)

Thayer, completely agreed with Vine. If their actions lead others to see them as faithful in the execution of commands or discharge of official duty, then the word is passive since it is what others see within them. It is then translated “*trusty, faithful, reliable*.” But if the word describes the action itself(what they are actually doing), then they are “*easily persuaded; believing, confiding, trusting*.” Thayer also specifically states that in Titus 1:6 the children are actively *believing* and not passively seen as *faithful*.

Other dictionaries confirm that this is a verbal adjective and that it can be translated with the active believe or the passive faithful.

*Pistos, faithful, believing...* **(1) Pistis occurs 67 times in the NT, though in only 16 of these instances with the meaning faithful in the sense of believing. The majority of occurrences thus follow the meaning predominant in non-Christian usage: faithful in the sense of dependable.** It is striking that John uses it only with the meaning *believing*. ... **(2) Faithful, dependable, credible (= prompting faith or trust): (3) Faithful in the sense of believing** ... Thus does Gal. 3:9 speak of Abraham, *who had faith* ... in John 20:27 the resurrected Jesus admonishes: “Do not be unfaithful, but *believing*”; ... **Certain persons are described as believing in reference to their conversion to Christianity:** Thus Acts 16:1 describes Timothy as the son of a Jewish woman who had become a believer ... Col. 1:2 speaks of *faithful* brethren, 1 Tim 6:2 of *believing* masters, and **Titus 1:6 of**

**believing children.** Finally, **used absolutely *pistoi* simply means believers** = Christians (so 2Cor. 6:15; Eph. 1:1; 1Tim. 4:10,12; 5:16). (Exegetical Dictionary of the NT)

*pisteuo pistis pistos pistoo* ... I. Classical Usage. First attested of the words *pis-t-* **is the (verbal) adjective *pistos* ... It has the active and passive senses of “trusting” and “worthy of trust” (“reliable”).** ... *pistis* **can denote not only the confidence one has but also the confidence one enjoys** ... *pistis* ... **can mean both “faithfulness” and “trust,”** though it is seldom used in the former sense. As “trust” or “faith” it occurs only in religious usage. (Kittel TDWNT)

The Exegetical Dictionary, and Kittel also confirm the conclusions of Vine and Thayer. The word *pistis* is used 67 times in the NT, and 16 of those times it is used in the active sense of believing. The other 51 times it is translated in the passive “*faithful, dependable or credible.*” It is interesting that even with the predominant use of the passive, they still affirm it is used in the active sense of believe.

I looked at two more books, one a dictionary and the other a lexicon. But they have nothing new to add.

*pistos* ... **to win over, persuade. Worthy of belief, trust, or confidence. (I) Trustworthy ... True, sure, trustworthy, believable, worthy of credit** Of things, true, sure, such as *ho logos* (the word) (II) Faithful in duty to oneself and to others, of true fidelity (Col 4:9; 1 Peter 5:12, a faithful brother; Rev 2:10). Of God as faithful to His promises (1 Cor 1:9, “dependable the God” [a.t.]; 10:13; ... of Christ (2 Tim 2:13). As an attestation or oath, God is faithful (2 Cor 1:18). Especially of servants, ministers, who are faithful in the performance of duty .... (III) **With an active sense, firmness in faith, confiding, trusting, believing, equivalent to *ho pisteuōen* ... to believe** (John 20:27; Gal 3:9). Followed by the dat. (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor 4:17). **Used in an absolute sense** (Acts 10:45; 16:1; 2 Cor 6:15; 1 Tim 4:3,10,12; 5:16; 6:2; **Titus 1:6**; Rev 17:14). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT)

*pistos* ... **Passive., to be trusted or believed; 1. of persons, trusty, faithful ... 2. Of things, trustworthy, reliable, sure: ... Active., believing, trusting, relying:** Acts 16:1, 2 Cor 6:15, Gal 3:9, 1 Tim 4:10, 5:16, 6:2, **Titus 1:6**, Rev 17:14; pl., Acts 10:45, 1 Tim 4:3, 4:12; ... (On the difficulty of choosing in some cases between the active and the passive meaning, v. Lightfoot., Gal., 157.) (Abbott-Smith Manual Greek Lexicon of the NT)

Once again, both these books place *pistos* as a verbal adjective and they both choose to place Titus 1:6 in the active believing and not in the passive faithful. Thayer and Abbott-Smith encourage us to look at what Lightfoot had to say. He as a Greek Scholar who was asked to help with the translation of the original ESV from 1880 which later became the ASV when it was brought to America. He has some interesting remarks that help us understand the dilemma of the translator on this word.

The Hebrew ... the Greek *pistos*, the Latin *fides* and the English *faith* **hover between two meanings; trustfulness, the frame of mind which relies on another; and trustworthiness, the frame of mind which can be relied upon.** Not only are the two connected together grammatically as active and passive of the same word, or logically, as subject and object of the same act; but there is a close moral affinity between them. **Fidelity, constancy, firmness, confidence, reliance, trust, belief — these are the links which connect the two extremes, the passive with the active meaning of ‘faith.’** owing to these combined causes, **the two senses will at times be so blended together that they can only be separated by some arbitrary distinction.**” (Lightfoot; The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians p. 154-158)

So what conclusions can we draw from the lexicons and dictionaries? They all agree that it is a verbal adjective and that it can be translated either “believe” or “faithful.” Yet five of them place the ides of “*pista*” children as believing and not faithful while the sixth simply passes over it without comment. So the scholarship of these lexicons and dictionaries fall solidly into the translation believing and not faithful. Yet Lightfoot cautions us to remember that this word will always “*hover between two meanings*” of the active “*trustfulness*” and the passive “*trustworthiness*,” and that “*the two senses will at times be so blended together that they can only be separated by some arbitrary distinction.*” Yet that being said, they all agree that it is active in Titus.

### 3. The Evidence of the Scholars(Commentaries).

Although the use of commentaries to prove a doctrinal point is very dangerous, in this case, we are only seeking an opinion on grammar. Since many of these men are experts in the Greek Language, have the same scholarship as those who write the Lexicons. It is only instructive to see whether these scholars understood “*pistis/pistos*” as a verbal adjective that is active “belief” or passive “faithful.” We are not seeking a doctrinal viewpoint, but only a grammatical analysis. So how did these scholarly men, many of whom knew Greek grammar, understand the term?

As in the translations, so also in these scholars *pistis/pistos* 3 understood it as the passive “faithful” and 12 saw it as the active “believe.”

#### Faithful:

- ◆ Barnes Notes
- ◆ Coffman’s
- ◆ EM Zerr

#### Believing

- ◆ Clarke’s Bible Commentary
- ◆ Jamieson Fausset and Brown
- ◆ NT Commentaries Lenski
- ◆ Robertson’s NT Word Pictures
- ◆ Calvin’s Commentaries
- ◆ Jewish NT Commentary)

#### Believing

- ◆ NT Handbook Series
- ◆ Vincent’s NT Word Studies
- ◆ Matthew Henry’s Commentary
- ◆ Bible Knowledge Com.
- ◆ Wiersbe’s NT Exp. Outlines
- ◆ NT Com. William Hendriksen

What conclusions can be drawn? The translations, dictionaries, lexicons and commentaries of those scholars who knew Greek all favored the more difficult “believing” to the easier “faithful.” In itself this proves nothing. But it helps us understand that the vast majority of scholarship points toward “believing” children and not “faithful” children. Yet the wise words of Lightfoot must never be forgotten “*Fidelity, constancy, firmness, confidence, reliance, trust belief — these are the links which connect the two extremes, the passive with the active meaning of ‘faith.’ owing to these combined causes, the two senses will at times be so blended together that they can only be separated by some arbitrary distinction.*”

Hence, we must assess all the Scriptures on this topic and seek to understand whether this word which offers no hint in itself, fits the context better as believe or with faithful.

### 4. List of the Scriptures

The list of Scriptures helps clarify the active and passive use of *pistos/pistis*. As the Lexicons noted, when the verbal adjective is used of men or things, it is generally translated with the passive “faithful,” and when it is used of God or His word it is translated with the active “believe.” Since some of the Scriptures use “*pistis*” more than once, the total number of uses is placed in front of each verse reaching to the total of 67. I have used a different font to identify those passages where the verbal adjective “*pistos*” is used in the active sense.

- 1 Who then is a **faithful** and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Mt. 24:45
- 2-5 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and **faithful** servant: thou hast been **faithful** over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 23 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and **faithful** servant: thou hast been **faithful** over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Mt. 25:21,23
- 6 And the Lord said, Who then is that **faithful** and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Lk. 12:42
- 7-10 He that is **faithful** in that which is least is **faithful** also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. 11 If therefore ye have not been **faithful** in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12 And if ye have not been **faithful** in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own? Lk. 16:10-12
- 11 And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been **faithful** in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. Lk. 19:17
- 12\* Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not **faithless(unbelieving[apistis]-NKJV)**, but **believing[pistis]**. Jn. 20:27

- 13\* *And they of the circumcision which **believed** were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts 10:45*
- 14 *And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the **sure** mercies of David. Acts 13:34*
- 15\* *Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and **believed**; but his father was a Greek: Acts 16:1*
- 16\* *And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be **faithful** to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. Acts 16:15*
- 17 *God is **faithful**, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. 1Cor. 1:9*
- 19 *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found **faithful**. 1Cor. 4:2*
- 20\* *For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and **faithful** in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. 2Cor. 4:17*
- 21 *Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be **faithful(trustworthyNKJV)**. 1Cor. 7:25*
- 22 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is **faithful**, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 1Cor. 10:13*
- 23 *But as God is **true(faithful -NKJV)**, our word toward you was not yea and nay. 2Cor. 1:18*
- 24\* *And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that **believeth** with an infidel? 2Cor. 6:15*
- 25\* *So then they which be of faith are blessed with **faithful)believing - NKJV** Abraham. Gal. 3:9*
- 26\* *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the **faithful** in Christ Jesus: Eph. 1:1*
- 27 *But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and **faithful** minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Eph. 6:21*
- 28\* *To the saints and **faithful** brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Col. 1:2*
- 29 *As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a **faithful** minister of Christ; Col. 1:7*
- 30 *All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a **faithful** minister and fellowservant in the Lord: Col. 4:7*
- 31 *With Onesimus, a **faithful** and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here. Col. 4:9*
- 32 ***faithful** is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 1Th. 5:24*
- 33 *But the Lord is **faithful**, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. 2Th. 3:3*
- 34 *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me **faithful**, putting me into the ministry; 1Tim. 1:12*
- 35 *This is a **faithful** saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1Tim. 1:15*
- 36 *This is a **true(faithful -NKJV)** saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 1Tim. 3:1*
- 37 *Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, **faithful** in all things. 1Tim. 3:11*
- 38\* *Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which **believe** and know the truth. 1Tim. 4:3*
- 39 *This is a **faithful** saying and worthy of all acceptation. 1Tim. 4:9*
- 40 *For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that **believe**. 1Tim. 4:10*
- 41\* *Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the **believers**, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12*
- 42\* *If any man or woman that **believeth** have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed. 1 Timothy 5:16*
- 43/44\* *And they that have **believing** masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are **faithful(believers - NKJV)** and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. 1 Timothy 6:2*

- 45 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to **faithful** men, who shall be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2
- 46 It is a **faithful** saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 2 Timothy 2:11
- 47 If we believe not, yet he abideth **faithful**: he cannot deny himself. 2 Timothy 2:13
- 48 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having **faithful** children not accused of riot or unruly. Titus 1:6
- 49 Holding fast the **faithful** word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. Titus 1:9
- 50 This is a **faithful** saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. Titus 3:8
- 51 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and **faithful** high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Hebrews 2:17
- 52 Who was **faithful** to him that appointed him, as also Moses was **faithful** in all his house. Hebrews 3:2
- 53 And Moses verily was **faithful** in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; Hebrews 3:5
- 54 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is **faithful** that promised;) Hebrews 10:23
- 55 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him **faithful** who had promised. Hebrews 11:11
- 56\* Who by him do **believe** in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. 1 Peter 1:21
- 57 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a **faithful** Creator. 1 Peter 4:19
- 58 By Silvanus, a **faithful** brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. 1 Peter 5:12
- 59 If we confess our sins, he is **faithful** and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9
- 60 Beloved, thou doest **faithfully** whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 3 John 5
- 61 And from Jesus Christ, who is the **faithful** witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Revelation 1:5
- 62 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou **faithful** unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Revelation 2:10
- 63 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my **faithful** martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. Revelation 2:13
- 64 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the **faithful** and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; Revelation 3:14
- 65\* These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and **faithful**. Revelation 17:14
- 66 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called **faithful** and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. Revelation 19:11
- 67 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and **faithful**. 6 And he said unto me, These sayings are **faithful** and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Revelation 22:6

As we methodically consider the passages above and seek for the reasons why it is translated as the passive faithful in some contexts and the active believing in others. Some contexts will not allow the active sense of believe while others could not be the passive faithful. As noted above, sometimes it is impossible to know exactly which way to translate the word.

## **(6) Conclusions**

While the Greek grammar would allow either translation, the evidence of translations, lexicons, dictionaries and scholars(commentaries) overwhelmingly favored the active sense of “believing children” over the passive “faithful children.”

What is gained or lost by each translation? How would each translation affect our understanding of the qualification? If we understand it in the active sense of *believing*, then the Holy Spirit demanded that elders have children who are Christians. This makes the qualification much more difficult to fulfill, but it is the translation most Greek scholars favor.

If we understand it in the passive sense of *faithful*, then the Holy Spirit is asking the congregation to assess the children's conduct. The children are acting in a manner that leads everyone to conclude they are faithful in their actions. But the manner in which they are to be faithful is not expressed. Is this faithfulness directed toward God or toward the father. Although it could be either, most who see this as a passive believe it is directed toward the father.

When compared with the parallel qualification in I Timothy, these two complement and develop one another. He must have his children in subjection, and they must be faithful or believing. One of the greatest goals a Christian father has for his children is to do everything he can to create a bright future for them. Training them to serve the Lord and become a Christian is one of the greatest things he can offer and a direct command from God.

*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. Eph. 6:4*

*"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Deut. 6:6-8*

Those who believe and teach that "*faithful children*" only means **faithful** to the father and not to God have two obstacles to remove. The first is that it very well could be the active believe. The second, if the child must faithful, what other criteria than the passages above could be used to assess that faithfulness?

I went into this study without prejudice. I did not seek to prove one position or the other, but only to look at the evidence and draw a Scriptural and logical conclusion. It is obvious that the safer approach is to assess the prospective elder/bishop/shepherd for children who believe.

## **6. Who are Not Accused of Dissipation(Riot) or Unruly.**

The Holy Spirit elaborates on the submissive reverence of the children in Timothy and the active belief in Titus with the requirement that no one within the church or those who are outside can bring an accusation against them. The Greek *katagoria* simply means an accusation or a charge. Pilate asked the Jews "*what accusation(katagoria) do you bring against this man?*" because he wanted to know what they believed he had done wrong. The elders children must have no one who can come forward and bring an accusation or wrongdoing in the realms of "*riot*" or "*unruly*." Since we seldom use the term "*dissipation*" in every day discussions, we have to look at a definition to understand its scope.

*"asotia... (the character of an asotos, i.e. of an abandoned man, one that cannot be saved... hence prop. incorrigibility), an abandoned, dissolute, life; profligacy, prodigality..." (Thayer, p 82)*

*"asotia... The original meaning is a. "incurable"... to be hopelessly sick... asotos then denotes b. "one who by his manner of life, esp. by dissipation, destroys himself"... a "wild and undisciplined life"... asotia occurs three times in the N.T.: at Eph 5:18: ... Tit 1:6... I Pet 4:4... In all these passages the word signifies wild and disorderly..." (Kittel, Vol I P 506-507)*

Hence riot/dissipation describes the actions and attitudes of one who refuses to be disciplined or to be saved. Because they are incorrigible and will not accept correction, they give themselves over to any and everything regardless of the consequences. This dissipation leads them to destruction. They run in the wrong crowd to the wrong places and do the wrong things. The Christian who will indulge in any lust of the flesh, not simply in a moment of weakness but as a habitual practice is guilty of riot. As we consider the two other places this word is used we begin to understand its scope.

*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation(debauchery); but be filled with the Spirit Eph. 5:18*

When one is drunk and under the influence of alcohol they naturally fall into dissipation. They do reckless and foolish things that can cut a life short or destroy one's future. What they would not do sober and only would do when drunk is what these children are begin accused of doing all the time.

The second use of the term reveals the full scope of emotions that can create this dissipation.

*that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. 1Pet. 4:2-4*

Lewdness and lusts, drunkenness and revelries, places to drink(bars) and idolatry all create this dissipation. People under the influence of these emotions and attitudes do the most obscene and evil things even to the point of destroying themselves. No child accused of such things has been properly trained, and a father of such children would be unable to become an elder.

It is important to see the depth of this accusation. The Holy Spirit didn't say they must be "perfect" children, nor does He say "sinless" children. They are not required to be as mature as their father. But they must not be accused of being past hope. They must not be children who have given themselves completely over to their fleshly lusts. A child who commits a sin no matter how public can not be accused of riot if they repent. It is unfair and unscriptural to expect perfection out of an elder's children. They are still babes and should be given the same grace and mercy as other babes in Christ. They must be in submission with all gravity, they must not be accused of riot and unruly, but they do not have to be perfect. The term "unruly" is defined:

*"anupotakta... (a priv. and hupotasso) 1. [passively] not made subject, unsubjected... 2. [actively] that cannot be subjected to control, disobedient, unruly, refractory..." (Thayer, p 52)*

*"hupotasso... to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection... mid. to subject one's self, to obey; to submit to one's control; to yield to one's admonition or advice..." (Thayer, p 645)*

An unruly child is a child who will "not be made subject" to authority. He refuses to be controlled and lives in a continual disobedient state. Such a child was described under the Old Covenant.

*"If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. 20 And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear. Deut. 21:18-21*

This child was stoned because of his violation the fourth commandment. Because he was guilty of both dissipation and was unruly, he refused to honor his father and mother:

*Honor your father and your mother, as Jehovah your God commanded you; that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you, in the land which Jehovah your God giveth you. Deut. 5:16*

The children of a man who desires the office of a bishop are a reflection of his abilities to shepherd them. They reveal his ability as a spiritual leader. If they have an unfeigned faith, are submissive, grave and faithful both to God and their parents then they properly reflect on the man's character. They are a sign to the church that their father knows what he is doing in the realm of spiritual leadership.

## **The Question of Child or Children**

There has been some question and controversy concerning the plural “children” by the Spirit. By using the plural is the Holy Spirit demanding that only those with more than one child can be qualified, or is He using the plural to include both those with more than one child and those with a single child? These questions are asked by sincere brethren who seek only to do the will of the Lord. H. E. Phillips had much to say on this:

“A question of considerable interest is whether or not a man must have more than one child to meet Paul’s requirement. Respected and reputable brethren in the church stand on both sides of this question. We must eliminate all prejudicial statements and irrelevant matter, avoid all extremes, and probe the statement and its context, comparing it with all comparable passages which are not in dispute, and elicit the true meaning from Paul’s statement. Such issues as this are not settled by ignoring them, or by pushing aside the subject with “it makes no real difference.” These two positions are not equal. To bind the one without sufficient proof is likely to put one in the unenviable position of binding on earth what is not bound in heaven, or to reject on earth what is bound in heaven. If the elder is not required to have but one child, to bind upon him more is legislating where God has not legislated; but if the elder must have more than one child to qualify, the man with only one child is ineligible.” (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 144)

He follows this with eight pages of material on the subject. Those interested can read His book. But note here some of his more pertinent comments on the subject:

“(b) We must always interpret words by the rules of language. Words must always be understood in their literal sense in every place unless the text or context demands a figurative use. When there is some doubt as to the literal meaning of a word as the author uses it, it is always proper to apply the author’s definition when he defines it either in the text or in some other place. If a word is used in a literal sense in two different passages it carries the same meaning in both places.” (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 146)

“(d) The same rule must be applied alike to all words when they are used in the same way. The word “baptism:” when defined and used in a text that shows it is connected to the remission of sins always means the same thing. The word “faith” when defined in a passage as a working or obedient faith in Christ, always has the same meaning in other passages that speak of an acceptable faith. (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 147)

“Therefore in applying some of these rules of interpretation to the case of “children” in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 we must do one of two things: (1) Make all other similar passages where the word “children” is found mean only the plural. (2) Make this passage have the same applications that we give to other passages where the plural “children” is found. “ (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 147)

“How is the word “children” used in other passages in the Bible? In both the Old and New Testaments the inspired writers used the plural for the singular and the singular for the plural in speaking of the offspring of a person. Since it is so obviously true in several other places, why would it not be true of I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6? What rule of language would we apply to one and not apply to the other?” (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 147)

“In Matthew 22:24 we read: “Moses said, If a man die, having no children(TEKNA), his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.” This is a case very similar to I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 in that it gives conditions to a certain goal, and “children” are involved in those conditions. In this one the man who dies without “children”(plural) has no seed and his brother must marry his wife and “raise up seed unto his brother.” Now if the plural (children) here forbids the singular (child), the man must have at least two children before he has seed. This we know is not the meaning of “seed” because Paul says the “seed” is ONE (Gal 3:16). A man has seed in the sense of offspring when he has any number of children from ONE to as many as possible. The word “children” here is one condition that decides whether a man should marry his brother’s wife or not. In like manner the word “children” is one condition that decides whether a man may be a bishop or not. If “children” means plural only in one case, by the same rule it must mean plural only in the other. If bishops must have “children” (meaning more than one) to be qualified, the man who died must have had children(more than one) before he had seed, and thus his brother was obligated to marry his wife and raise up seed to his brother unless he had two or more children.

Matthew 22:24 relates that MOSES said that if a man die, having no children, his brother should take his wife. Let us read what Moses said about it and see what “children” means. “If brethren dwell

together, and one of them die, and have no CHILD, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to by the Same Spirit, and there is no contradiction in what they say. the plural "children" in Matthew 22:24 includes the singular of Deuteronomy 25:5, and the singular "child" of Deuteronomy 25:5, means the same as the plural of Matthew 22:24. So when we turn to read Matthew 22:24 and come to the word "children" are we going to say it forbids one child--must be two or more? But if, as has already been shown, the plural here also means the singular, then by the same rule "children:" in I Timothy 3:4 and Titus 1:6 carries the same meaning. If him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her." (Deut. 25:5,). Here Moses said a CHILD (singular). If the plural forbids the singular and the singular forbids the plural, Matthew was wrong about what Moses said. Matthew and Moses wrote being guided not what rule will be applied? (Phillips, H. E. op. cit., p 148)

I believe these are powerful reasons to keep us from being too dogmatic with the conclusion that only those with two or more children could be qualified. Brethren with mercy and good judgment need to seriously reflect on barring a man who has all the qualifications including believing children, the believing children in his home only equal one.

Yet those who believe there must be more than one point out that we have the same construction here as we do in Acts 14:22. Just as there must be "elders in every church" there must be "children in every home." Singular elder and plural children(the bishop(singular must have children(plural))). On the same lines that each church(singular) is to have elders(plural)(Acts 14:22). This is a very powerful proof that can not be easily set aside.

Yet we have a similar construction in Paul's command that "if any widow(singular) has children or grandchildren(plural), let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents(plural);" ... 9 Do not let a widow(singular) under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, 10 well reported for good works: if she(singular) has brought up children(plural), 1Tim 5:4; 9-10. No one denies that these could also be a single child or children.

However, each local church must take the qualifications, and decide to the best of their ability exactly what God means by them. Though minimums must be set, members must decide how stringent they will be in applying perfect qualifications to imperfect men. This is one of those cases. If congregations decide two is the minimum, then the only damage done would be the possible loss of a man who only has one child but is otherwise qualified. If a local church decides a man is fully qualified with only one child, they are within their rights to select and appoint him. Each must live by their own conscience.

## **Conclusion**

This concludes the teaching of the New Testament on the qualifications for those who desire the office of a bishop. Those who have read them thoroughly are impressed with their high calibre and the greatness of the man who can possess them all. Through prayer and diligence any married man can reach for and master them. God will give us the means if we will strive for them with all our heart. It is my hope that they have been put forth in a clear and motivating manner. May God help each one of us to reach them.

## Qualifications for the Wives of Elder's?

The question mark above is an acknowledgment of the difficulties that must be resolved before we can draw the right conclusion regarding the nature of these qualifications. First, the term for *wife* and *woman* are identical in Greek so only the context determines whether the translator selects woman or wife.

*“gunaikos...1. univ. a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow... 2. a wife...”*  
(Thayer, p 123)

The translations bear this out:

*Likewise, their **wives** must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. (NKJV)*

***Women** in like manner (must be) grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. (ASV)*

*Their **wives** likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. (ESV)*

*In the same way, their **wives** are to be **women** worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. (NIV)*

***Women** must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. (NASU)*

Second, it is not placed immediately after the qualifications for the elders as one would expect, but in the midst of the qualifications for the deacons. Hence we must decide if these are wives that only include the deacons or the wives of both elders and deacons.

*Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, 9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. 10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. 11 Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 1 Tim 3:8-13*

The first question centers on the controversy of whether there were deaconesses in the church and whether these are their qualifications. We will speak more of this controversy in our book on the work of deacons. Suffice it now to say there is no credible evidence either in the Scriptures or in secular history that there were deaconesses in the churches in the first century. The second question is also relatively simple. Although it is not listed immediately after the elders, it is still easy to see that they would apply to both. Both elders and deacons needed to be the husbands of one wife. So these qualifications for wives would be equally needed for both. Since the elder's qualifications were more stringent than the deacons, it makes little sense that the deacon's wives needed these qualifications but the elder's wives did not. For these reasons, we will accept the need for the wives of elders to be assessed to have these qualifications in the same way as we would for the deacons.

Hence choice of the woman who would become his wife is also an important consideration to a young man who seeks and desires this office. When a man and his wife become one flesh, it is either a great blessing or it can become a curse.

*An excellent wife(worthy woman) is the crown of her husband, But she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones. Pr. 12:4*

Since there are two types of women, the Holy Spirit has asked the congregation to assess the wives of the men who would be elders and deacons. With these qualifications, we have a virtuous wife similar to the one revealed in the proverbs.

*Who can find a virtuous wife(worthy woman)? For her worth is far above rubies. 11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. 12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. ... 23 Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. ... 28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: 29 “Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.” 30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Pr. 31:10-12,23,28-30*

With such a wife, the elder will have a willing ally in helping him in all his endeavors. From raising children and opening up the home to hospitality and Bible classes to encouragement and

kindness, a worthy woman helps a man become an elder in the gates. These are not the same stringent qualifications as those for the elder himself, but they are broad enough to be certain she is a worthy woman.

Paul expected that the wives, “*in like manner*” with the elders and deacons must have their specific qualifications.

“*hosautos... in like manner, likewise... as often in Grk. writ. the verb must be supplied from the preceding context...*” (Thayer, p. 682; 5615).

The verb is “*must be.*” Just as the elders and deacons “*must be...*” so also the wives “*must be.*” The necessity here as above lies in the fact that the desired end cannot be accomplished without these qualifications. God knows what He will expect of these wives. He knows what will be required of them and what they will need to have in order to successfully help their husbands. This protects both the church and the women. It protects the church from unqualified people who would do a poor job. It protects the woman from being placed in a position she is incapable of handling and which will result in the loss of her soul.

### **Wives Must be Reverent(Grave.)**

A thing is *semnos* if the signs of a higher order may be detected in it. In man the orderliness perceived in his attitude and behavior is felt to be *semnotes*, with an ineffaceable trend toward seriousness and solemnity. ... In 1Tim.. 2:2 *semnotes* is used alongside *eusebeia*. the one is the piety expressed in respect for the orders, the other is the corresponding “serious and worthy conduct.” (Kittel, Vol 7, P. 191-196).

*semnos* adj. from *sebomai* (4576), to worship, venerate. Venerable, reverend, reputable, dignified. (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT)

*semnos* ... pertaining to appropriate, befitting behavior and implying dignity and respect - ‘honorable, worthy of respect, of good character.’ (Greek-English Lexicon NT:4586)

The word we translate “reverent” or “grave” has a long history among Greek speaking people. With it’s root in worship and respect, it is used of the awe and reverence that God’s actions create within us. In the human realm it is much more difficult to capture. Some of the dictionaries used words like “what commands respect,” because of the “propriety and befitting behavior” exhibited.

**semnos .... has a grace and dignity not lent him from earth; but which he owes to that higher citizenship which is also his; being one who inspires not respect only, but reverence and worship. In profane Greek semnos is a constant epithet of the gods ... It is used also constantly to qualify such things as pertain to, or otherwise stand in any very near relation with, the heavenly world. ... From all this it is plain that there lies something of majestic and awe-inspiring in semnos ... semnos is one who, without in as many words demanding, does yet challenge and inspire reverence and, in our earlier use of the word, worship, the word remaining true to the sebo with which it is related. ... How to render it in English is not very easy to determine. semnos Here too it must be owned that ‘grave’ and ‘gravity’ are renderings which fail to cover the full meaning of their original. ... the word we want is one in which the sense of gravity and dignity, and of these as inviting reverence, is combined; a word which I fear we may look for long without finding.** (Trench’s NT Synonyms)

No one can quite put their finger on a word that captures all this. Obviously I can’t either. But if we take a composite of those things God has said about women that would make them “*grave and dignified to a degree that invites reverence*,” we must settle for that. Peter speaks of several things that would be considered grave or dignified by God’s people.

*Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. 3 Do not let your adornment be merely outward — arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel — 4 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being*

*submissive to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. 1 Peter 3:1-6*

As we carefully assess these passage we find everything necessary for a woman to act in such a way as to command respect and even reverence among God's people. First, she is "*submissive to her own husband*" in a way so tangible that it is without question or doubt. Her chaste conduct accompanied by fear toward her husband is the second clear characteristic that should create this same respect for such dignity and propriety.

Peter himself captures the idea of grave and dignified when he calls this an "*inward adornment*." One that her husband, God's people, and God can see. The Holy Spirit call this an "*incorruptible beauty*" of the "*hidden person of the heart*." With these words, when we see these qualities it ought to inspire the reverence, respect and dignity of *semnos*.

Yet most importantly is that "*meek and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of God*." That which is precious in the sight of God should create this sense of respect, esteem and honor among those in the church. Jesus placed being "*meek*" in one of the beatitudes (Mt. 5:5), and used it to describe His own Jesus demeanor of being meek and lowly in heart (Mt. 11:28-30). It is an attitude of gentleness and pleasantness. It is a mild, soothing disposition that leads one to try and calm and allay the fears or concerns of others. It leads one to calm those who are irritated, and to keep a quiet and friendly composure never becoming embittered or angry at what is unpleasant.

Vine defines this word as "*tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others*." Thus this inward adornment and beauty comes from the quality of being *tranquil* and *causing no disturbance*. Her deep faith in God, and her submission to her husband remove the frustrations and anxieties of life and replace them with this quiet tranquil spirit. women to be calm, collected and serene, whose main business is the care of her husband, children and home.

Another passage that helps us identify the things from the heavenly world is found in the instructions of the older woman to the younger:

*that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Titus 2:4-5*

The wives of men who desire to be elders must reflect a "higher order." Their attitude and behavior is seen to be reverent when it has a serious and solemn attitude toward life and toward the things of God. It is a piety toward God that is expressed in the respect with which his commands are held. It appears that Mary held such an attitude in her demeanor toward Jesus.

*Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word. 40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. 41 But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: 42 but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. Luke 10:38-42*

Mary showed her respect to Jesus by sitting quietly and receiving his word with due reverence and honor. He told Martha that she had chosen the good part. This is the kind of thing to watch for in the heart of a woman. Her reverent, serious and dignified behavior will be clearly seen in her choice of priorities. The truly reverent woman is more concerned about the appearance of her heart than of her physical appearance.

## **Not Slanderers,**

This is not a nice word as it is the name God chose to describe the devil. It refers to his propensity to slander and falsely accuse.

*"diabolos... prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely... a calumniator, false accuser, slanderer... In the Bible and in eccl. writ ho diabolos is applied... to the one called in Hebr. ... ho satanas... Satan, the prince of demons,*

the author of evil, persecuting good men... estranging mankind from God and enticing them to sin... the malignant enemy of God and the Messiah..." (Thayer, p. 135; 1221)

In its three usages to describe men, it describes those actions in which we imitate him. The wives of elders are not to slander others. She must know all the facts before passing judgement on others. She must not whisper slander and false accusations to her husband. She cannot be the person who makes assumptions regarding the behavior of others and with no evidence passes those guesses and surmisings to others as fact. Since love "*believes all things*" she is to see the best possible motives and give the benefit of the doubt, calming and soothing tense and difficult situations instead of creating even more strife.

Since the law of kindness is on her tongue she never uses her tongue to create evil conclusions in the hearts of others. The danger here creates problems in two directions. First, in the personal conversations between husbands and wives in which she would have the opportunity to influence him with slanderous words of assumption. The other possible risk would be in the limited information she could pick up from her husband just by the brief snatches of conversation she might here and the things she might overhear. Her use of her tongue must be of such nature that she knows how to conceal matters, and never jumps to conclusions about others.

*A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends. Pr. 16:28;*

*He who covers a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates friends. Prov 17:9*

*A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin. Pr. 26:28*

*Whoever hides hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool. 19 In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. 20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. 21 The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom. Pr. 10:18-21*

*There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers. Pr. 6:16-19*

*She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue is the law of kindness. Pr. 31:26*

It would severely hinder the work of their husbands if the congregation did not trust an elder's wife to be discreet. If they felt uncomfortable giving the elders information necessary to help them with a problem for fear of what their wife might do with it.

## Temperate

The term "temperate" is the same quality that was discussed of the elder in 3:2(please review - page 44).

*"nephaleos ...sober, temperate; abstaining from wine, either entirely, or at least from its immoderate use:...(in prof. auth., esp. Aeschyl. and Plut. of things free from all infusion or addition of wine, as vessels, offerings, etc.)" (Thayer, p 425 NT:3524)*

*"nephaleos ... to be sober. Sober, temperate, self-controlled, especially in respect to wine. Used metaphorically, meaning sober-minded, watchful, circumspect (1 Tim. 3:2)" (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT NT:3524)*

It began its existence as a word to describe those who were completely free from wine. Since wine that clouds mind and judgment, those abstaining are temperate and thus always sober, vigilant and circumspect. Over time the word lost its focus on wine and described anything that clouds judgment. As a mind free from alcohol is sober, so also those who are free from lusts of the flesh and eyes and all the illusions the pride of life can create.

The elders needs a wife with this quality as it will supplement his own ability. It is an indispensable quality for a woman who becomes a helper of an elder. A bad temper, selfishness, personality

quirks, jealousy or any other sinful lust and weakness would keep her thinking clearly. She must know her character and have found her flaws and faults that hinder her clearly. These must have been removed to a degree where they no longer hinder her.

### **Faithful in All Things.**

This is the same term for “faithful” as was discussed above for their children. Here it is clearly in the passive sense of being believed and trusted.

*“pistos... trusty, faithful; of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business, the execution of commands, or the discharge of official duties... worthy of trust, that can be relied on...”* (Thayer, p. 514; 4103)

This is a woman all the members trust and feel confident around. She doesn't let others down. Remember the worthy woman above, “her husband trusts in her.” “She does him good and not evil all her life.” She will never under any circumstance let anyone down. The woman is faithful to the Lord, her husband, her friends, and the congregation. She is reliable in every way and under all circumstances.

Without such a qualified woman behind him, no elder could do all that the Lord expects. She can rise to the level of a worthy woman and be a wonderful blessing to the church. All women should be seeking these wonderful attributes and helping their husband reach for this.

### III THE WORK OF THE ELDERS

#### Introduction:

Now that the reader has completed the study of the qualifications, they should be prepared for the strenuous nature of the work itself. The qualifications are God's way of protecting men from a job they could not do, and a congregation from men who cannot lead in the direction and manner He desires. Without these qualifications he could not do the work. When God requires the very best of Christian men, it naturally follows that only the best of men could do it. These qualifications make certain the man is prepared to do this important work.

As one looks at other realms of life, this reasoning certainly holds true. On the academic level one can usually gain a good estimate of the mental load of a job by the number of years and the quality of classes it takes to prepare for it. A job which takes no training and no previous experience is generally not too difficult. A job which requires eight years of school and 2 years of on-the-job-training is much more complex. If one desires such a difficult job, they must pay the price by becoming qualified. Yet gaining the qualifications is only half the story. After all the years of schooling and training, the day finally comes when the man accepts a job and begins working. This is when all the effort and toil put forth in the past must be used. Once in that job, he must use all his skills, experience, previous study, and toil to push himself into the new realms of responsibility which are now his.

Consider the illustration of a doctor. He has been assessed by his colleagues and employer, and has been hired to work at an Emergency Room in a hospital. He comes to work the first day, very shaken and concerned. It is a whole new world, with new responsibilities and obligations. Much of his concern is removed when he is taken aside by the doctor he is replacing and told what he is to do that day. His anxieties are removed as he hears each responsibility to be required of him and realizes that he is competent and prepared to do these duties. All his years of schooling and preparation now pay off as he easily moves into his first day. As the patients come in, each presents him with a challenge, but it is a challenge he has prepared himself to meet. He finishes his day satisfied. His teachers and friends have prepared him for everything and confidence begins to fill his heart. He knows there will be other days and other challenges, but he will meet them as they come.

This is also true of those who desire the office of a bishop. The day finally comes when the years of toil and labor reap the reward that comes from having all the qualifications. They have been assessed by the other members of the church and have been deemed qualified. They are appointed to the office of a bishop, and are now required to do that work. It is Monday morning, the newly appointed men get together to discuss what differences this will make in their lives. What does God expect of them? This is the purpose for this third section of the book. It is important to explore the duties God has given the eldership, and consider how they can best be fulfilled. But like the doctor above, those who have the qualifications will be prepared for the work. There will be challenges and heartaches, even some mistakes. But God knows what He wants done and God chose the qualities He knew would be necessary to get it done. If a man is a Holy-Spirit-made-bishop/overseer(Acts 20:28), then he is fully qualified. He will have no real difficulty doing the work itself.

The remainder of this book will focus on the things necessary to understand the nature and scope of their work. This will be done in as systematic a manner as possible. The terms bishop and shepherd will be considered for their use as descriptions of the work, then we will consider Paul's sermon to the elders at Ephesus and his discussion of Christ's gifts to the church. Peter has some specific comments to the elders that help understand the nature of the work. The subject will then conclude with some miscellaneous Scriptures.

# A. Implications from the terms Bishop and Shepherd

*Faithful is the saying, If a man seeks the **office of a bishop** he desires a good work.*

The phrase “*office of a bishop*” is a single word in Greek:

*“episkope,... inspection, visitation,... b... that act by which God looks into and searches out the ways, deeds, character, of men, in order to adjudge them their lot accordingly, whether joyous or sad; inspection, investigation, visitation,... in a good sense God’s gracious care... oversight i.e. overseership, office, charge;... the office of a bishop...” (Thayer, p 243-244)*

The word is used of those who are charged with inspection, investigation, or visitation. Going out and looking at what people are doing. It is used in two broad ways in the New Testament. Both help reveal the work of elders. In the Septuagint, it is used of the day of visitation. The day when God is pictured as coming comes to take a closer look at what is going on in a nation to decide whether that nation will continue to exist. It is used this way twice in the NT.

*And shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy **visitation**. Lk 19:44*

*Having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that, wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold, glorify God in the day of **visitation**. 1 Pet 2:12*

This visitation includes close inspection and investigation as well as the decision to do something. By choosing the same term to describe the leaders in the church, God implies He wants them to do the same thing. God visits to look into the deeds and character of men. His bishops are responsible to do this work.

The other term used in 1Tim. 3:2 refers not to the office, but to the man himself. The “*bishop/overseer*” must be qualified to do the work God has set apart for him to do:

*“episkopos...an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent;...The word has the same comprehensive sense in Greek Writings from Homer... down; hence in the N.T. ...guardian of souls, one who watches over their welfare... spec. the superintendent, head or overseer of any Christian church...” (Thayer, p 243)*

Our own use of the word “*scope*” in telescope bears out this meaning. As we use a telescope to look upon the stars, the elder uses the Scriptures to look upon the brethren. Making sure that their lives are in harmony with the Scriptures. They are the guardian of souls, looking out for their welfare. The main work of the bishop is in watching over every soul in the church. To visit with them, get to know them, assess their strengths and weaknesses and then decide how to help them grow. It is a job that demands a great deal of time and effort from those appointed. They must often discuss the needs of the members and make decisions on how best to serve them. Over all this is the realization that they will give an account to God about how they did these things.

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Heb 13:17*

It would be foolish for anyone to seek and desire the office of a bishop if they do not want to help others get to heaven. If they are not willing to take the responsibility of help others work out their own salvation with fear and trembling(Phil. 1:12). A young boy who wants to work at a car wash because he likes to spray water finds out quickly that there is a lot more to it. Spraying water is only a small portion. The main duties will be scrubbing cars with brush and sponge working hard both before and after spraying water. He may keep the job, but he will certainly have to reevaluate why he wanted it.

This is true of the eldership. Those who think that becoming an elder gives them the driver’s seat in making decisions for the congregation are in for the same kind of revelation. Only occasionally do elders make easy decisions regarding the future of the church. Most of the time it is helping others with their problems and going to those in rebellion and seeking to help them see the truth.

Even if there is an important decision to make about the future of the congregation, they will still seek out the feelings and desires of all the members. The authority of elders leads to service, not power.

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Mark 10:42-45*

Most of the time it is not decisions for the congregation which elders are making, but how to deal with brother Smith's temper, or sister Jones' gossip. How to get Joe to attend more regularly, or deal with Bill who has a wrong idea about the second coming. On a day to day basis the elders spend much more time and concern over problems in members' lives and how to help them than they will in making easy decisions about building maintenance. Elders are inspectors of people not buildings. Their concern is for the strengths and weaknesses of each and every member of the church where he serves. Their lives become even more important to him as he has now been appointed to oversee and inspect them. This is his role as bishop.

God also revealed that those who hold the office of a bishop are also shepherds of His flock. The term shepherd further clarifies his duties.

*And I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. Jer 3:15*

*And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and multiply. And I will set up shepherds over them, who shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be lacking, saith Jehovah. Jer 23:3-4*

As God contemplated the duties of the shepherds of his flock in the church, He spoke of feeding the flock with knowledge and understanding. He also spoke of their being protected by these shepherds and that they would not fear any more or be dismayed. Shepherds properly doing their duty lead churches where nothing is lacking. What does this tell us about their work? These leaders are to care for and take care of God's flock.

As shepherds, they must love the sheep. The welfare of these sheep must be their highest priority. They must feed, guide, and protect them. They must watch out for dangers and keep the sheep safe and sound. They do not want to hear the same condemnation given by Jeremiah and Ezekiel to the shepherds of their day:

*"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the Lord. 2 Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the Lord. 3 "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. Jer 23:1-3*

*And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3 You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. 4 The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. 5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them." Ezek 34:1-6*

The NT shepherds must visit the flock and seek to keep them together. They must feed the sheep, strengthen the diseased, heal what is sick, bind up the broken, bring back what is driven away, and search and seek for the lost. This is the heart of the responsibility and duty of the

eldership. The words themselves give great insight into their work.

## **B. Paul's Sermon to the Elders at Ephesus**

Paul's sermon to the elders at Ephesus offers the most comprehensive listing of the duties and responsibilities of the eldership. After reading his warnings, use of his own example, and specific instructions, we have a very comprehensive overview of God's expectations for the eldership. First, he calls only the elders and only the elders came.

*From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and **called for THE ELDERS** of the church. 18 And **when THEY HAD COME** to him, **he said TO THEM**: Acts 20:17-35*

This was not a general sermon to all the brethren in Ephesus. It was a lesson prepared and delivered only to the elders of the church. Hence these are instructions and admonitions to elders about how they are to do their work. Paul began with his own life and the things he has done that perfectly mirrored what elders should be doing.

*"You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. ... 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 31 remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. ... 33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ... 34 Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:18-21; 26-27, 33, 34-35*

One of the key statements is verse 35. "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this." Thus in all the things Paul said, he was "showing them" how to "labor like this." Paul listed the following things in his words"

1. Served the Lord with all humility with many tears and trials
2. Kept back nothing that was helpful / declaring the whole counsel of God
3. Taught publicly and from house to house.
4. Ceased not to warn night and day with tears.
5. Coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.
6. I have shown you in every way
7. Laboring like this you ought to help the weak.
8. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Paul's discussion with them offers a good overview of the specific responsibilities God seeks from elders. It also adds to the conclusions already drawn from the names themselves. It also sets forth clearly the expectations God has for them if they find a problem.

### **1. Served the Lord with all Humility**

Paul never thought of his position as an apostle or his accomplishments in the gospel as something he had accomplished. He used two things to keep him from becoming proud.

First, he never forgot the terrible things he had done prior to becoming a Christian, and that it was only the grace and mercy of God that had brought him to it. Second, because he understood that all natural abilities were also gifts of grace from God given to each at birth.

*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: Rom 12:3-6*

Abilities are only a means of serving God and our brethren. The qualifications of the elders should have led them to draw the same conclusions, and Paul used himself as an example for elders to follow. This will protect them from the error the Pharisees fell into.

*But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6 They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' 8 But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. 10 And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. 11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Mt. 23:1-12*

## **2. Kept back Nothing Helpful / Declaring the Whole Counsel of God.**

Paul never shrank from telling people what they needed to hear. If it was profitable for them to hear it, or if it was a part of the whole counsel of God, Paul would tell them. Wise elders take this example to heart and make it a part of their own activities. There is nothing worse than an inspector or superintendent who watches workers making mistakes in their job and say nothing about it. When a shepherd sees one of his sheep doing something dangerous or foolish, he will intervene. This is exactly what Paul did and was encouraging the elders to do.

*"hupo-stello... 2. mid. to withdraw one's self, i.e to be timid, to cower, shrink: of those who from timidity hesitate to avow what they believe, Heb 10:28... to be unwilling to utter from fear, to shrink from declaring, to conceal, dissemble..." (Thayer, p 645)*

When Paul saw a problem, he did not act like it wasn't there. He did not pretend they were right with God when he knew they were not. He was not afraid to hurt their feelings. Instead he declared everything that was profitable to them. Whether he believed they would like it or not did not enter his decision. If it was the whole counsel of God, and if he knew they needed it because it was profitable to them, then he would speak it. By doing this, he was showing his love and friendship.

*Better is open rebuke Than love that is hidden. Prov 27:5*

*So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth? Gal 4:16*

There is a great need for elders to follow Paul's example here. When brethren sin, they need someone with the courage and love to tell them. It should be done gently, with love and compassion, but it must be done.

## **3. Taught them Publicly and from House to House.**

This is another way of saying the sheep need to be fed. The elders must be as concerned as Paul that the brethren are being fed with wholesome food. They are involved in public teaching both by doing it themselves and by monitoring the preachers and teachers who are involved in public teaching. But there is often a need for house to house teaching where a Christian or his family can be individually taught those things that apply to them. Members can grow more quickly into maturity when given instruction in their home where the teaching is focused on their individual needs. When couples are having marital difficulties, house to house teaching is needed. Whether the house is the home of the elders and an extension of his hospitality, or in the home of the brethren depends on the circumstances. But no eldership should neglect this. Paul taught publicly **and** from house to house.

## **5. Ceased not to Admonish Night and Day with Tears.**

Paul warned, exhorted, and reminded brethren of the Lord's expectations of them. If they sinned he warned them, if they were weak he exhorted them, if they needed guidance he instructed them. Paul's love came through with the tears he shed because of his love and concern for them. We should not hide them as a sign of weakness, but allow them to flow as a sign of true care and concern. It can disarm anger and hurt feelings because it proves you desire only their good.

Elders would be wise to follow Paul in this as he asks.

Giving warnings to others is an emotionally charged task. It is always difficult because one never really knows what the other person is going to do. It is natural for tears to flow at such an emotionally charged event. When we are teaching and they become angry, sorrow for them is better than anger. Generally these are the two alternatives. When we go to help others and they refuse our help it can make one sorry for them, or become angry with them. If it make us angry, we will generally fail, because anger will often lead us to say things we later regret.

*Ye know this, my beloved brethren. But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God. Jas. 1:19-20*

If we turn to sorrow instead of anger, they become aware that we are only there for their best interests and because we love them. Tears are a gift from God to release emotions and to show others the depths of our concern for their soul. Paul used them freely whenever the need arose. Jesus also used them. Elders too could use them today as a powerful tool(not forced but real) to supplement their duty to admonish night and day.

## **6. Coveted no Man's Silver, or Gold, or Apparel.**

Paul's office would often put him in the position to truly help others. He preached the gospel to countless numbers of people. Only God knows how many lives Paul saved in the same manner as he did the Philippian Jailor. That man's life changed from the emptiness of sin to his entire house turning to the Lord. What depths of feelings would be stirred in such hearts? How many people felt so deeply indebted to Paul that they would have given him anything he wanted? Perhaps a man like Simon the sorcerer would have used his office to help himself to the goods of those he helped. Paul would not stoop to such a thing. He never looked at the possessions of others as something he desired. He refused to be interested in anything but their souls. As he had recently told the Corinthians: "*I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls;*" 2Cor. 12:15

Elders need to follow Paul's example in this. They will also find themselves helping others with marriage and family. They will build relationships of trust and mutual care and concern. They must be very careful not to covet or seek anything that belongs to them.

## **7. In All things he Gave them an Example.**

This gives the power of application to the first six points. Paul here states that what he had done while with them is how they should continue to do after he was gone. The Holy Spirit often used Paul's life to elaborate on his teaching. They saw it firsthand, while we can only read about it and try to imitate it as they did. This wasn't just for the elders though, it was for all Christians.

*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. Phil 3:17-18*

*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. Phil 4:9*

Everything in this sermon should become a goal for elders who want to be faithful.

## **8. So Laboring you Ought to Help the Weak.**

## **9. Remember the Words of the Lord Jesus: It is more Blessed to Give than to Receive.**

Paul wanted them to help the weak. The weak are often neglected in a congregation. They are more difficult to be around because they need continuous admonition in the form of both warning and exhortation. But regardless of the difficulty they need help. Often elders find that most of their time is spent helping the weak. This is as it should be. The strong need little direction and little admonition, they know what they are doing and they do it. The weak need constant supervision

and warning. Those who are strong must give it.

*Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. 3 For Christ also pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell upon me. Rom 15:1-3*

This requires elders to freely give the weak their time as well as their mental and emotional effort. Paul exhorted them not to forget the words of the Lord in this realm. It is always more blessed to give than to receive. It is better to give to those who are weak and who need help which they may never be able to return.

*Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." Lk. 14:12-14*

## **The Command to do their Work**

Along with example, Paul gave a threefold command in Acts 20:28. These commands were handed down directly from Jesus (Mt. 28:18-20), and must be heeded and acted upon.

### **1. Take Heed to Yourselves.**

*"prosecho... to turn to... 1. to bring to, bring near, ... 2. to turn the mind to, attend to, be attentive... B. to attend to one's self, i.e. to give heed to one's self... to guard one's self, i.e. to beware..." (Thayer, p 546)*

These men are to take heed to themselves. They are to attend to their own areas of weakness and doubt. They are to guard themselves and beware of the same dangers they are continually admonishing the flock about. Admonitions fall on deaf ears when coming from the lips of one whose own house is not in order. Elders are not to neglect their own personal piety and consecration, or the needs of their wives and children in order to do this work. If they do, only heartache and sorrow will follow.

If they are so busy with the congregation that they neglect themselves or their family then soon all they are building up will fall. Their first priority must be their relationship to the Lord, then their relationship to their own family. It is essential that leaders of a congregation take the time to keep themselves and their families strong. A flock senses the care and concern of its shepherd. It also senses when the shepherd is having troubles of his own. Most big problems can be avoided by a wise man who consecrates himself daily through prayer, meditation, Bible reading and fasting. No elder should get so busy that his own life becomes less than it ought to be.

### **2. Take Heed to All the Flock.**

After he has carefully taken heed to his own needs, he is also to take heed to all the flock. The same earnest care he manifests in his own relationship to the Lord and that of his own family, he is now, as he has opportunity, to bring to each individual in the congregation. He must have a better answer than Cain:

*And Jehovah said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? Gen 4:9*

They will be asked this question for they are "*those who will give an account.*" (Heb. 13:17). Every elder must be concerned about and watching over the spiritual welfare of all the brethren in that congregation. Elders should be assessing the character of their flock and seeking the best means to help them grow. Like a shepherd, they should know the condition of every member of the flock and be helping them reach their potential. Taking heed to the flock by following Paul's example. They will seek to follow Paul's words to the Philippians.

*doing nothing through faction or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting others better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Phil. 2:3-4*

In this way they will avoid the stern rebuke God gave to the shepherds under the Old Covenant. By taking heed to the flock in the same manner Paul described above they will be working in fellowship with God and with His Chief Shepherd.

*I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. 16 “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.” .... 23 I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them — My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. Ezek. 34:15-16; 23-24*

*But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,” says the Lord. 5 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord, “That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the v earth. Jer 23:3-5*

When shepherds are taking heed to all the flock, they will seek what was lost, bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken, and strengthen what was sick. When they are taking heed to do these things, “they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking.

### **3. Feed(Shepherd) the Church of the Lord**

While the older translations used “feed,” it was too limited and has been changed to shepherd in the later translations. Their duty is to tend their flock and the flock they are to tend is the church of the Lord, which Peter limited to the flock which is among them. These sheep belong to God and God wants them cared for and tended as He had planned. God had made promises to His sheep and these shepherds must fulfill them.

*And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. 16 “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.” Ezek. 34:13-16*

God promised that after He gathered them from the countries, He would:

- \* feed them with good pasture.
- \* They shall lie down in a good fold.
- \* I will seek what was lost.
- \* bring back what was driven away.
- \* Bind up the broken.
- \* Strengthen the sick.

All of this must be done by God’s shepherds. It is their work. As we saw earlier, God destroyed His OT shepherds because they would not do it. The members should feel secure because their shepherds are watching over them.

## **C. Paul's Discussion of the Gifts of Christ**

This letter was written only a few years after his previous discussion with the elders at Ephesus. While the letter is addressed to the entire congregation, the elders there would see the connection. Here the Spirit revealed the shepherd's work. First with the apostles and prophets (NT Scriptures), and also with the evangelists and teachers. He described how these offices working together will lead to a fully functioning and spiritually mature church. The apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (shepherds) and teachers are called Christ's gifts to His church. Every local church should be grateful for these offices, and the men who hold them. Though responsibility is shared among the offices, each should feel responsible for bringing it all to pass. Men in each office should be doing his best to bring about the purpose these gifts were given to accomplish.

*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." ... 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come 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; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Eph 4:7-8, 11-16*

Christ gave these offices as gifts unto men. They are precious treasures which our loving Savior has bestowed on us. The men holding the offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher have eternal value to the souls of all those who will be influenced by them.

### **The Work of the Apostles and Prophets**

The Holy Spirit used the book of Ephesians to clearly reveal exactly what these two gifts Jesus gave the church were to accomplish. Their role is so important that they form the foundation upon which the church is built with Jesus being the chief cornerstone.

*Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, Eph 2:19-21*

The reason they are given this lofty position is similar to the position Moses had in giving the Law to Israel. For centuries his name was linked with the Law of God. In the same way the apostles and prophets are linked with the Law of Christ. All Scripture was delivered through these two offices.

*how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: Eph. 3:3-6*

What Paul and the other apostles and prophets received by the revelation of the Holy Spirit they wrote in the books that bear their name or the name of the church or person to which they were written. When we read what they have written we have access to the same knowledge they possess through revelation. Though Jesus' apostles have died and gone to their grave, we will always have them. Matthew, John, Peter and Paul are still speaking today through the letters they wrote by inspiration. Though the prophets have left the earth, we still have Mark, Luke, James and Jude through the books they have written.

Though these gifts of Christ are now in written form, they have lost none of their power. They will continue to teach His disciples to do the things He has commanded. They are a most precious gift to us. They were the ministers who brought us the oracles of God (I Pet 4:11). They are

priceless! Without them we would not know how to serve our Lord.

## **Evangelists, Pastors(Shepherds) and Teachers Complement Their Work.**

It is an honor to the evangelists, pastors(shepherds) and teachers to be placed in the same list of gifts to the church as the apostles and prophets. They are the living gifts that complement the permanent work of the apostles and prophets. Though the church will always have the apostles and prophets in Scripture, just as Israel had Moses, their role is now passive. We can't write them like Corinth did with specific questions for them to answer. They are no longer here to exhort and strengthen us, or contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They furnish us completely to every good work, but only if we read and comprehend their writings. Yet like the Ethiopian Eunuch, sometimes we still need someone to guide us.

Jesus therefore saw a need to create these three other offices who would supplement and continue their work. After the Scriptures were completed and we now possess all truth, there is still a great need for living men to take their words and practically apply them to the brethren. These three gifts will always be living men, changing from generation to generation. But when properly qualified and working as the Lord intended they would take the words of the apostles and prophets and help those in the church to properly apply them.

Evangelists preach the good news. They fill the pulpits on the first day of the week and go house to house daily, boldly proclaiming the word of God. They are the men who spend their time studying the Scriptures and preaching them clearly and simply. They follow the example of the apostles in going into all the world to preach the gospel to all nations.

The term "pastor" has caused no end of confusion and controversy in the church. For some reason, the translators decided to translate the Greek word "*poimen*" into the Latin term "*pastor*" instead of the English word "*shepherd*." It is difficult to understand why they did this. Some today claim that they believed no one knew what the term shepherd was in 1611, but that answer doesn't really satisfy. At any rate, there was no legitimate reason to add "*pastor*," but it has been used for so long that it is now retained in all the translations. The Greek word is used about 20 times in the NT but never translated shepherd except here. Even the KJV chose "*the LORD is my shepherd*" in Ps 23 and called Jesus the "*good shepherd*," in John 10, but still chose "*pastor*" here. Because of this change, people have freely interpreted pastor as the choose. Most use the term pastor as a term for their preacher. Yet nowhere in the Scriptures is the evangelist who preaches called a pastor(shepherd).

Since only the elders are told to shepherd the church, this word only applies to them. Hence, literally, Jesus gave His church "*shepherds*." There is only one group of men who are called shepherds in the NT. They were called by Paul to meet in Miletus(Acts 20:17,28), and Peter told them to tend the flock(1Pet. 5:1-2). Though many preachers today call themselves pastors they are wresting the Scripture. Only elders with the qualifications found in 1Tim. 3 and Titus 1 have the right to this title.

In the introduction to this book(page 1-4), we saw how the elders/shepherds gradually were given the authority over the local church that the apostles held in the earliest days in Jerusalem. The church began with the apostles fulfilling the role of leadership and shepherding in the NT church. They were looked to for all the needs in the early church. As time passed, prophets and evangelists such as Philip and Stephen began preaching and helping the churches, and soon after this the elders began to take a more active role in the congregations(Acts 11:29-30).

As the church continued to grow and spread into the uttermost parts of the earth, these five gifts became indispensable to bringing as many as possible to maturity. The church began losing her living apostles in Acts 12 with the death of James, and by the end of the first century, all the living apostles and prophets were gone. Until Jesus return, it is the evangelists, pastors (shepherds) and teachers who will continue to do the work which the apostles had begun by applying their writings. It is still being done today in congregations across the world and will continue until the

Lord returns.

With the passing of the apostles and prophets as living men, their authority was vested in the New Testament Scriptures. The congregations now depend on their evangelists shepherds and teachers to lead and guide them by properly applying the writings and recorded lives of the apostles and prophets. But of these three remaining offices, the shepherds have the greater role. They are the ones who will give an account, they are the ones who watch in behalf of souls. They are prepared to shoulder this load because they are qualified to do it.

Consequently, any responsibilities this passage brings out will fall equally upon their shoulders. When a congregation is without elders the evangelist and teachers must do the best they can by example and teaching, but nowhere is the authority of shepherds passed to others. When a congregation has elders, they must use their office to watch and determine that all the things Christ seeks are being accomplished. God will hold them personally responsible for this. The elders must therefore shoulder this responsibility.

## **The Purpose and Goal of Jesus in Giving these Gifts**

Jesus had some specific expectations and reasons for giving these gifts. He revealed their purpose so everyone would know what he wanted them to do. All evangelists, shepherds, teachers and brethren can assess the work they are doing. For when each is doing their work these will be the fruits:

- \* for the equipping(perfecting) of the saints
- \* for the work of ministry
- \* for the edifying(building up) of the body of Christ
- \* all come to the unity of the faith  
and the knowledge of the Son of God
- \* to a perfect man
- \* to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ
- \* that we should no longer be children,
- \* tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,
- \* we should no longer be children
- \* speaking the truth in love
- \* may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ —
- \* from whom the whole body,
- \* joined and knit together by what every joint supplies
- \* according to the effective working by which every part does its share
- \* causes growth of the body for the edifying(building up) of itself in love

The apostles and prophets have completed their part. They perfectly revealed the will of God. Each subsequent generation must develop living men to apply their words.

*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Tim 2:2-3*

The elders can look to the evangelists and teachers for support and help, but it is from them that the final account will be given to the Lord. On the day of judgment they must account for each soul in their care for all the above.

Never forget God's frustration with His shepherds under the Old Covenant. They were not properly feeding and caring for the sheep. He had given them to His sheep to help them in the ways specified under that law. They had failed Him and He condemned them severely for their lack of effort. God will have the same feelings toward His New Testament shepherds if they do not fulfill these things. Therefore we will look at each one of these things to understand what they are to do.

## For the Equipping(Perfecting) of the Saints

The list begins with the foundation. The saints must be equipped and how well they are equipped is the most important goal of every church. If the saints are growing, becoming stronger, and more mature, then the gifts are doing what Christ intended. "For" is defined:

"*pros...* 1. of the goal or limit towards which a movement is directed... e. of an intended end or purpose... Eph 4:12..." (Thayer, p 542)

Jesus' gifts were intended and had as their goal and purpose the perfecting of the saints. With this preposition Paul stresses this as the purpose of the gifts. Everything else will flow from this clause. This is what Jesus had in mind when He gave them.

If a man speaks to his son for several weeks about a ditch he wants dug, and then goes out and buys him a shovel, the boy should have no doubt what the shovel is for. The boy is then specifically told that the shovel is to dig the ditch, There shouldn't be any doubt what the shovel is for. If after three weeks the ditch is still not dug, it becomes obvious that even with all the instructions, the boy didn't understand what the shovel was for.

This is Paul's point in speaking of the gifts of Christ to the church. Note the obvious progression. They are (1) "*for the equipping of the saints*, leading to (2) "*for the work of ministering*," completed in (3) "*for the building up of the body of Christ*." The gifts Christ gave are to "*equip*" the saints. This is an important term, so once again, I have given several different definitions to sift through. W.E. Vine uses the verb as the foundation upon which to understand the noun. The verb describes the action of "*rendering fit*" or "*completing*" and is illustrated by "*mending nets*." "*It points to the path or progress*."

*katartizo* "to render fit, complete" (*artios*), "is used of mending nets, Mt. 4:21; Mk. 1:19, and is translated 'restore' in Gal. 6:1. It does not necessarily imply, however, that that to which it is applied has been damaged, though it may do so, as in these passages; it signifies, rather, right ordering and arrangement, Heb 11:3, 'framed; 'it points out the path of progress, as in Matt 21:16; Luke 6:40; cf. 2 Cor 13:9; Eph 4:12, where corresponding nouns occur. NT:2675 (Vine's Exp. Dict. NT:2675)

Thayer agrees with Vine but carries it into the areas we are looking at here. He repeats the idea of mending and repairing, then "*to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust*" which perfectly captures the process that begins when those who were "*dead in sin*" "*were made alive in Christ*" and must now "*put off the old man*" and "*put on the new man*"(Eph. 2:1-8; 4:17-24). Thus Jesus gave the gifts to "*to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be*." Again though this is the verb, Thayer also confirms that both derivatives must go back to the verb to gain an understanding of their meaning.

"*katartizo...* to render *artios* i.e. fit, sound, complete,... hence, a. *to mend* (what has been broken or rent), *to repair*... b. *to fit out, equip, put in order, arrange, adjust*... c. ethically, *to strengthen, perfect, complete, make one what he ought to be*... Gal 6:1 (of one who by correction may be brought back into the right way)..." (Thayer, p 336; 2675) ....

*katartisis* ... (*katartizo* which see), *a strengthening, perfecting, of the soul* (Vulg. *consummatio*): 2Cor. 13:9. (*a training, disciplining, instructing*, (Thayer, p 336; 2676)

*katartismos* ... equivalent to *katartisis* which see: Eph 4:12. (Thayer, p 336; 2677)

The saints must be trained, disciplined and instructed. They must be spiritually fitted out, equipped, arranged and adjusted. They must be strengthened, perfected, completed and made what they ought to be. Whenever a lack is found in the saints, they must be fitted out and equipped. Whether publicly or house to house, each must be guided and directed toward perfection. There is no reason why any saint should be left behind. All saints should be led to the spiritual pasture and water which will cause them to grow.

There is little difference between Paul's words here and those of Acts 20, except in the sharing of the task. It will always be the duty of the elders to see to it that this is the highest priority of the church. If the saints are not being perfected then the elders must be concerned. This is their

primary duty. The sheep must be cared for. Each one must be known by name, they must be visited and spoken to and befriended. They must be guided, taught and directed into all the areas of Christian duty and responsibility. This is the reason and purpose Christ gave the gifts, all that follows in this passage is founded and rooted here. Remember God's words to the priests in Hosea's day.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. Hos 4:6

The highest priority is to teach the disciple what they need to know to be perfected. All teachers, preachers, and elders must be fully aware of this lest they fall into the same condemnation God passed upon his priests under the old law. We must not let God down and we must not let the saints down either.

## **For the Work of Ministry**

This preposition "for" is different than the one above. The gifts are "for" the perfecting of the saints and the perfecting of the saints is "for/unto" the work of ministry.

*"eis,... a Prep. ... denoting entrance into, or direction and limit: into, to, towards, for, among. It is used...after words indicating motion or direction or end; 3. it denotes the end; and a. the end to which a thing reaches or extends, i.e. measure or degree... b. the end which a thing is adapted to attain...c. the end which one has in view, i.e. object, purpose;... d. the end by which a thing is completed, i.e. the result or effect...(Thayer, p. 183ff; 1519).*

Thus the end, object, and purpose for the perfecting and equipping of the saints is so they can do the for the work of ministry and build up the body of Christ. When the saints are properly equipped it will reach, extend and find its completion in the work of ministry and building up of the body. This is the end Jesus had in view in giving the gifts for perfecting the saints, for the perfecting will find its result and effect when the body of Christ is built up and the saints are doing the work of ministry.

The primary duty inherent in all the gifts of Christ is to motivate and prepare the saints to minister. The term chosen here for "ministry" is a word we are familiar with as it describes the office of a deacon.

*"diakonia... service, ministering, esp. of those who execute the commands of others. 1. univ. ... 2. of those who by the command of God proclaim and promote religion among men; a. of the office of Moses... b. of the office of the apostles and its administration... c. of the ministration or service of all who, endowed by God with powers of mind and heart peculiarly adapted to this end, endeavor zealously and laboriously to promote the cause of Christ among men, as apostles, prophets, evangelists, elders, etc. ... 3. the ministration of those who render to others the offices of Christian affection... 4. the office of deacon in the primitive church... 5 the service of those who prepare and present food..." (Thayer, p. 137-138; 1248)*

Jesus called all His disciples to be His servants(ministers). This is inherent to their confession that Jesus is Lord. If He is the master, then we must be the servants. Doing what our Lord wants us to do is the mark of true discipleship.

*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. Luke 9:23-25*

*So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Luke 14:33*

Jesus will not even accept a man or woman as a disciple unless they are willing to work for Christ and renounce all their own things for Him. Only productive ministering servants can view themselves as being faithful.

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit... 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you*

*can do nothing.... 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. Jn. 15:1-2, 5, 8*

A Christian is a branch on the vine and must want to minister. This is the key to bearing the quality fruit Jesus desires of us. Elders who are concerned about their sheep must seek to instill this attitude in each of them. True perfected saints desire to serve and minister for their Lord. It is the only path to greatness Jesus offers those in His kingdom.

*And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." Mk. 9:35*

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Mk. 10:42-45*

We have all been called to serve. A good eldership takes these words of the Lord and helps the sheep reach their potential as servants. They will assess the saints who attend there and help them find the "small things that they can do." The true test of the effectiveness of their work is the amount of ministering the saints are doing. When the entire congregation wants to minister and does so, then all the offices are doing what Christ gave them to do. A saint who does not want to minister, who grumbles and complains about extra work is not yet properly perfected and equipped.

## **Unto the Building Up of the Body of Christ.**

The final result of the perfecting of the saints and increasing their desire and ability to minister will be the "building up" of the body of Christ.

*oikodome* denotes (a) "the act of building" (*oikos*, "a home," and *demo*, "to build"); this is used only figuratively in the NT, in the sense of edification, the promotion of spiritual growth ..." (Vines NT 3619)

This is the fifth of the eight times the body of Christ is mentioned in the book of Ephesians (1:22-23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16, 5:23, 30). The church, as the body of Christ, has many members. Some are strong and some weak. The gifts Christ gave to the church are promoting the growth of the body in wisdom, piety, holiness and happiness. It begins with the newborn babe leaving the water of baptism to begin his life as a Christian. Both publicly and from house to house this babe is given the food and protection necessary for him to grow into a mature Christian. As each Christian grows into his potential, Christ designed and planned for her to be.

As the elders work with evangelists and teachers guiding and training in the writings of the apostles and prophets, each member of that local congregation is equipped to work in the ministry of evangelism, edification and benevolence. As this process continues, the body of Christ grows numerically and spiritually. Just as an apple tree produces apples and a pear tree produces pears, a working congregation is producing an edifying and supportive environment for it's members to grow in.

The rest of this section describes the various elements of equipping, ministering and edifying.

## **Attain the Unity of the Faith and Knowledge of the Son of God.**

Paul described this unity earlier in this chapter (Eph 4:1-6). He spoke of the emotions and mindset of "lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, and endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." With these attitudes toward one another, we all study and give diligence to understand the Scriptures as Paul pleaded with the Corinthians and Jesus asked for in His final prayer.

*Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1Cor. 1:10*

*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Jn. 17:20-23*

This is the highest priority of every local church. Nothing is more important than the doctrinal unity of the brethren. Elders must encourage brethren to overcome their doctrinal and moral differences and stand on the Scriptures.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! Ps 133:1*

Such unity will be based upon the knowledge of the Son of God. This could be knowledge about Jesus or the knowledge Jesus has revealed to us in Scripture.

*The disciple is not above his teacher: but every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher. Lk 6:40*

*Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; 2 Pet 1:2-3*

This is the great unity and edification that will occur when the gifts are properly used.

### **Unto a Full Grown Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ.**

These are both extensions on unity and the knowledge of God's son. With these two qualities comes maturity, wisdom and stature.

*For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Heb 5:12-14*

A time comes in the life of a disciple when they pass from first principles(milk) to solid food. A time when they no longer have difficulty with first principles(Heb/ 6:1-2), and can move beyond them. When they can stand as tall as Christ stood in every realm of their life they have reached the goal of Christ's gifts to them. All should be striving to this goal. We should feel as Christ felt, think as Christ thought, believe as Christ believed, pray as Christ prayed, suffer as Christ suffered, and be pure as Christ was pure. Jesus is our example in every realm of life. This is the upward call of God:

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Phil 3:12-16*

Only when we are looking into the mirror God created for us through the apostles and prophets can we begin to reflect the same image of Jesus that has been etched there.

*But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit. 2 Cor 3:18*

### **That we May no Longer be Children Tossed To and Fro by Every Wind of Doctrine.**

With this passage Paul returns to where we all began. There was a time in the lives of every member of Christ's body was a babe who loved the truth, wanted answers to everything and trusted everyone. But with all the false teachers and false doctrines, we can be tossed from one end to the other. This is not a weakness, but a necessary stage in our growth. As we study the errors that grow up around so many Scriptures, we have to find our way between the two extremes to the truth. The shepherds must watch for ravaging wolves, and protect us during these formative years when we are most vulnerable.

### **Speak Truth in Love.**

In the quest to avoid error the errors of extremes, strong emotions must be avoided. Anger, bitterness and disgust toward those who confused and sought to destroy us must also be avoided. The truth must be taught and error must be exposed, but always in love.

But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. *// Tim 2:24-26*

### **May Grow Up in All Things to Him who is the Head.**

### **All the Body Fitly Framed and Knit Together Through that which Every Joint Supplies**

### **According to the Working in Due Measure of Each Individual Part.**

### **Unto the Building up of the Body in Love.**

We will consider these last four sections as a whole. What Paul began in Eph 1:22-23, he now explains and expounds upon more fully.

*and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Eph 1:22-23*

The church is the body of Jesus Christ and He is the head. In this passage Paul sums up the work of the gifts of Christ as helping each member of the body grow up into all things into Him who is the head. Jesus is the true measure and stature. Our example in every way. Each disciples seeing themselves as individual members in Christ's body, working together with all others for the edification of the whole. No one is to be left behind as a hindrance to their own growth. The body is to be fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplies. Every part of the body must be used, for all are important parts. No one can be neglected or shoved aside. The strong must bear the infirmities of the weak. The body cannot fulfill its role if any of the members seek to work independently.

It is important that local churches be seen for what they are. A body in which every part is necessary. Jesus wants those with the least abilities to be treated with the same respect as those with the very most. He wants to see the weakest parts encouraged, helped, and given tasks they can do. God's Shepherds must concern themselves with this great duty.

## **D. PETER'S EXHORTATIONS TO THE ELDERS**

*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. 1 Pet. 5:1-4*

Since there is a textual question about a few of the words in verse 2, I have also included the ASV to see the difference. The bolded words were not placed in the KJV/NKJV:

*Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, **according to (the will of) God**; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;1 Peter 5:2*

After carefully reviewing the reasons why it was placed in the ASV (and NASB/ESV) and omitted from the KJV/NKJV, I believe caution would lead us to consider it as part of the text. There is no reason to leave it out and it offers nothing we don't already know about the role of a shepherd.

1. Shepherd the flock of God which is among you.
2. Serving as overseers.
  - A. Not by compulsion but willingly.
  - B. According to the will of God.
  - C. Not for dishonest gain
  - D. But eagerly
3. Not as being lords over those entrusted to you
4. Being examples to the flock.
5. You will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

### **The Elders who are Among you I Exhort,**

Before commenting on this phrase, we need to remember the scope of this letter. It was written not to a single congregation, but to the elect in five provinces of the Roman empire.

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect who are sojourners of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 1 Pet. 1:1*

Since we know there were at least seven churches in Asia (Rev. 1:4), and Paul wrote to the "churches" in Galatia (Gal 1:1) we know there were many churches. Added to this are the additional churches in Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. Yet he doesn't actually address it to churches at all, but to brethren. So this letter is written to a large geographical area that is much larger than a single local church.

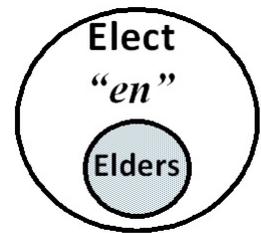
Yet all these "elect" regardless of where they were in all these provinces were all members of a local church where they lived and worked. They had all learned "how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1Tim 3:15). They had gone through the process as outlined by Paul in 1Tim 3 and Titus one and had appointed elders in every church.

In this large segment of the elect, some "among them" were elders. This section of the Scripture is addressed to these men who had been selected and appointed by the churches to shepherd and oversee them as elders.

When Paul called for the elders of the church in Ephesus and they came to him, he told them "take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28 Paul knew that the Holy Spirit had made each of these men into bishops, shepherds and elders. Thus all elders are made bishops by the Holy Spirit and are to shepherd the church.

In the midst and among all the elect, these words are directed to one group in the midst of all the others. It is to the elders among you (the elect) that he is now speaking. So just as Paul called only

the elders and only the elders came, so also now Peter is speaking only to the elders among all the others. Hence a circle is drawn around a circle. The circle of the elect has a circle within it of the elders. The preposition Peter used here is “en” which means “in the midst of; within; or among.” So as Peter addresses these men, he describes them as elders in the midst of, within or among the elect. So while most of the letter was directed to all the elect, these words are only written to the elders who are in the midst of or within and among them.



In writing this way, it is evident that this office had become established in the NT church. As Peter’s life draws to its close and the apostles prepare to leave the earth, the conclusions we made earlier in the book about how the office of the elders developed in the book of Acts are validated by Peter.

Peter “exhorted” those among the elect who were elders.

*“parakaleo, to call to ones side, call for, summon:... to address, speak to;... which may be done in the way of exhortation, entreaty, comfort, instruction, etc. hence result a variety of senses... 1. to admonish, exhort;... 2. to beg, entreat, beseech; ...3. to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort;...4. to encourage, strengthen;... 6. to instruct, teach...” (Thayer, p 482-483)*

With the root meaning “to call to ones side,” Peter seeks to encourage, console and instruct them. He too is an elder and he wants to give them the motivation necessary to do the work to the best of their ability. When one calls to his side, we have a verbal picture of an older brother teaching a younger brother by putting his arm around him and giving him instruction. As a fellow elder and inspired apostle he knows what they are facing and wants to help them. He offers words of advice and encouragement to help them with their duties.

### Who am a Fellow-Elder,

This opens up a new vista of Peter. In his life as an apostle, he has also gained all the qualifications of an elder. In the same way as all the others among them, Peter has also worked hard to gain the qualifications and the trust of the church he works with. He too is concerned about the weighty and awesome duties of an overseer of God’s people. The Holy Spirit allowed Peter to offer this encouragement and then stamped it with divine inspiration. Peter’s words here are Scripture!

### 1. Shepherd the Flock of God Which is Among You

“Shepherd” is also translated “tend” and was the same word Paul used when he addressed the elders at Ephesus.

*Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28*

Everything the Holy Spirit had revealed through Paul in his address to the elders at Ephesus is now also revealed through Peter. Yet this passage builds on what Paul said. There is a very important boundary and limitation Peter placed upon the work of each elder. Using the same prepositional phrase as he did above, he told the elders to shepherd the flock “which is among you.” The exact word order in Greek is: “shepherd the among you flock of God” The term translated “among” is defined:

*“en...a preposition... in, on, at, with, by, among... 1. of Place proper; a. in the interior of some whole; within the limits of some space... c. of proximity, at, near, by... 4. with, among in the presence of,...” (Thayer, p 209-213)*

This phrase is a limitation. The elders can only shepherd the “among you” flock. The flock in which they are in the midst or in the interior of. The flock



they are in proximity to, near and among. This is the interior in which they function and the limit of space in which they work. Their responsibility and their authority begins and ends with the flock that appointed them to be shepherds. They are only to shepherd the flock that assessed their character, determined they had the qualifications and offered to submit to. Only that church is under their oversight. They are to tend that flock to the fullest extent of their ability. But they have neither access or responsibility to oversee any other congregation. They are not elders there.

This is a blessing to elders. The grave responsibilities and obligations of an eldership would be taxing enough if they spent all their time with that church. What is required of them to accomplish in the one church they oversee would become overwhelming if other churches were added. Giving an account of one flock is sobering enough, to add more simply could not be done. A man must live with the sheep and be among them. If he is not, he cannot watch for wolves, and tend them properly. Both God's wisdom and His love for the sheep are shown here. The shepherds belong exclusively to their flock. Elders are commanded to work with them and no other.

This binding command must be taken seriously. Take heed elders! Do not violate this command. Do not violate it out of ambition or out of true concern for the plight of others. Elders are not elders in another congregation. They are only men. They have no authority and no business being involved in the work of another congregation. If they go to another flock, it is not the "among them" flock. Peter said shepherd the "among you" flock.

This preposition demands the autonomy of each local church. God never intended or desired to see various churches joined together. In His wisdom He desired them to be self-ruled. Doing their own work under the direction of their own elders. They are to be a single unit, capable of continued work and toil regardless of what is happening to other churches around them.

Paul used this same construction when he was speaking to the elders at Ephesus. In that case we know he was only talking to the elders of a single church.

*From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and **called for THE ELDERS** of the church. 18 And **when THEY HAD COME** to him, **he said TO THEM**: Acts 20:17-35*

The single church in Ephesus had elders. Paul sent for the elders of that church at Ephesus. When those elders came, he said to them: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church ..." (Acts 20:28). The term among which or in which is the same prepositional phrase used by Peter. It is the flock "among which" or "in which" the Holy Spirit made you bishops." Thus to the elders from the flock at Ephesus, Paul told them the Holy Spirit had only made them bishops in that flock "among which" or "in which" they had been called from.

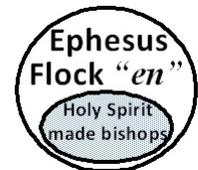
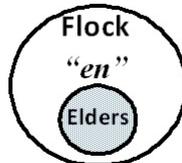
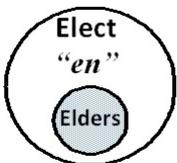


So comparing these three constructions we see the harmony of interpretation.

Peter spoke only to the elders **in the midst (en)** of the elect.

Elders shepherd only the flock **in the midst(en) of which** they had been appointed and worked.

Elders at Ephesus take heed only to the flock **in which (en)** the Holy Spirit had made them bishops.



They are all the same construction and must be interpreted the same way. Just as **only the elders among the readers** were to be considered as those Peter was speaking to, the flock could **only consider the elders who were among them** and the elders at Ephesus were **only made**

## **bishops by the Holy Spirit among the flock in Ephesus.**

### **2. Serving as Overseers**

There is a slight distinction between this word and the one used by Paul in Acts 20:28.

*“episkopeo... to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after, care for... I Pet. 5:2...”*

*“episkopos... an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent...Acts 20:28...” (Thayer, p 242-243)*

The concepts surrounding this term were discussed in the beginning of the book. We are only looking for the additional things Peter adds here. Peter exhorted elders to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after and care for the flock which is among them. Yet while Peter adds little to the concept of the overseer/bishop, he gives four qualities to limit or elaborate on this it.

#### **A. Not by Compulsion but Willingly.**

“Compulsion is defined:

*“anagkastos...by force or constraint...” (Thayer, p 36)*

The essence of the term is “*force*” and that is the very thing Peter forbids. No Christian can be faithful and pleasing to God if the elders are forcing them to do something they don’t freely want to do. No Christian can serve Jesus feeling forced, driven or compelled.

*The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” 2 The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! 3 Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; Ps. 110:1-3*

But as we read the phrase “*serving as overseers not by compulsion but willingly*” a few times we begin to see that this compulsion could be understood in two distinct ways. Peter could be telling the elders that they should do their own job(exercise the oversight) because they want to and not because they feel forced and have to do it. This would certainly enhance their work. No one who is doing something only because they are driven and forced is going to do that job as well as someone who loves it.

Another way to understand “*serving as overseers not by compulsion but willingly*” is how the elders lead the sheep. They must not drive and compel them, but instead love them and lead them in such a way that they willingly want to follow their leadership. The elders must lead by example, with love and concern. They are to seek to have their flocks follow, not because they feel compelled and forced to do so, but because they want to.

Both of these are true and would enhance an eldership. Since the rest of the context surrounds the attitudes of the man, and since the second possibility will be fully considered under the heading of “*not as being lords*,” we will consider only the first possibility now. Willingly is defined:

*“ekousios...voluntarily, willingly, of one’s own accord...” (Thayer, p 198)*

Be a willing overseer who does his job because he wants to, and because he enjoys it.

*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. Ecc. 9:10*

God has done so much for His people, and we have such a short time to serve Him in this life. All should be thrilled and excited about an opportunity to serve. No elder should feel he has to do his job. Elders should be excited to give something back to the Lord for all He has done. If they have this attitude it will cause them to do it with all their might.

There will always be a great difference between the worker who works because they feel compelled, and the one who works of his own accord because he enjoys it. Elders must not fall into the trap of bitterness or frustration. When they no longer enjoy their job and do it only because of duty, it is time to quit or change attitudes. A constant vigil must be kept on their hearts.

When such signs of frustration or irritation arise they need to pray about and properly deal with it. Those who tend the flock must be willing. They must take heed to themselves. Men who deal with others problems can become weary. Peter exhorts them to rise above this temptation and remain a loving shepherd who cares for the sheep and rules over them with compassion and concern.

## **B. According to the Will of God;**

“According to” is defined:

*“kata,... denotes reference, relation, proportion, of various sorts; a. distributively, indicating a succession of things following one another...b... as respects; with regard to; in reference to; so far as relates to; as concerning;...c. according to anything as a standard, agreeably to....b. in proportion to, according to the measure of...” (Thayer, p 328)*

Their oversight is in proportion and relation to God’s Will. The Greek term “kata” has the same function in a sentence as the “=” sign does in math. In the equation 2+2=4 we understand that what is on one side of the “=” must be identical to what is on the other. “kata” does this in a sentence. Elders are to exercise the oversight “=” the will of God. Their oversight must be equal to and in harmony with the will of God at all times. There should never be any difference in the two. This is what God sought in David as a “man after God’s own heart.” Men who will rule as God would rule. Who want God’s Will “done on earth as it is in heaven.” God wants people to walk humbly with him.

*He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? Mic. 6:8*

If elders are to direct the congregation into the will of God, they must first rule according to that will. When an eldership leaves the revealed will of God, they leave the path of life, and enter the broad way that leads to destruction.

The Old Testament is full of leaders and shepherds who were unwilling to lead God’s sheep in God’s path. From the first king of Israel, God sought a man after his own heart. A man who would lead the people into the paths of righteousness and submission. A man who would walk humbly with him. Seldom did he find one. Saul failed, David succeeded, Solomon failed, as did Jeroboam and all after him who led the ten tribes. The two tribes occasionally gained a man who would lead them properly, but only those who completely submitted their will to God’s, walked humbly with Him, and ruled in such a way that the people were brought into submission to God’s laws are spoken of as a good king. Elders do not want to hear the same words spoken to Saul at his rejection.

*So Samuel said, “When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? 18 Now the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, ‘Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.’ 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?” 20 And Saul said to Samuel, “But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.” 22 So Samuel said: “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.” 1 Sam. 15:17-23*

Saul’s problem was simple, he put his own will on an equality with God’s. He also placed his own wisdom on an equality with God’s. As a leader he had decided he could direct his own steps as well as the steps of God’s people. This is always a fatal mistake. Stubbornness and rebellion are exceedingly wicked in the eyes of God. To God there is no distinction between this and idolatry and witchcraft. Note what God said to Jeroboam as he began his reign as shepherd of God’s people:

*Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you. 1 Kings 11:38*

Jeroboam did not listen to God. He set up ordinances and laws that were not God's will. The people never recovered themselves from this error and went into Assyrian captivity, completely cut off from God. God blamed Jeroboam's for this. (2Kings 17:22-23).

Peter warns against this. Elders must exercise the oversight according to God's Will. God wants shepherds to lead His people as He himself would if He were among them. As Christ did while He was here. He wants elders who make His will theirs, who rule with a love for His desires. Elders must tremble at God's word(Isaiah 66:1-2). They must be humble and walk with God.

Many have ignored these words, and the legacy of their folly and rebellion remains. Their departure In the second and third centuries brought the Roman Catholic church into existence. In the nineteenth century the elders allowed a merging of congregations to further a work which resulted in the Christian church. Not too many years ago ambitious elders took on more than the flock which was among them could do. They now rule over the money of many congregations. What will their legacy be? It always results in the fate of Jeroboam. They left the path, they stopped walking with God, they have new ordinances which are not found in God's word. They are no longer exercising the oversight according to the will of God. Take heed elders! Exercise your oversight according to God's Will.

### **C. Not for Dishonest Gain**

Though this is one of the qualifications for the eldership, Peter felt the need to stress it again after they had entered the office. That which was forbidden prior to their appointment must not become a part of their character after they begin to serve as an elder. Paul spoke of coveting no man's silver, gold, or apparel(Acts 20:33). Money is to have no part in the motivation they have for serving in this capacity. If they sought the job for the money it pays(1Tim. 5:17-18), or for the opportunity it gives to influence others in order to seek their possessions. He must not have such motives. They must be banished. They must not give in to the temptation to remove the glory from God and take it to themselves. This is done when they emphasize their own role and downplay God's in hopes of gaining possessions.

Elders must take heed to the example of cleansing of Naaman the leper. Elisha was the instrument through which God's divine power worked. Naaman wanted to show some gratitude to him. After he was cleansed he returned to offer Elisha a present. Elisha rejected the present and there was no covetousness in his heart. He was content to serve God and help his fellow man. But Elisha's servant fell to the temptation to profit from the man's gratitude.

*Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? 27 Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow. 2Kings 5:26-27*

The desire to use this office in a capacity to court favor in order to gain things is a temptation God warns against four times. Twice in the qualifications and twice directly to elders. Simon was told by Peter that he was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity for having such feelings(Acts 8:18-24). God wants elders to beware of this dangerous and seductive emotion. It is the error of Balaam that led him crashing down the path to destruction(Jude 11).

### **D. But Eagerly**

*"prothumos... "ready," "willing," "eager," even "active," "passionate." ... in the sense of "ready and willing," "joyfully ready"..." (Kittel, Vol 6 p 694-697)*

Shepherds must exercise oversight in a ready and willing manner being joyfully and passionately ready to do God's will. These are great goals to strive for. Regardless of the difficulty, True

shepherds have enough motivation to protect them through the long years of labor and toil. The long hours, heartache, frustration, and added responsibility are made easier when the proper motivation is before their eyes. Peter speaks of the crown of glory the chief shepherd will bring. Thinking of this crown will bring some motivation. Serving God and Jesus will bring more. Whatever it takes, a qualified elder will seek to maintain this “*ready and willing*” attitude far more than the greed of the previous phrase. They must seek passionate desire because it is the will of God and because they are willing to do his will as Jesus did wait for the wonderful reward He has promised.

*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. Heb 12:2-3*

### **3. Not as Being Lords Over Those Entrusted to You**

While the actual word is a verb with the definition below, the Holy Spirit chose to make this a participle so that the person is the embodiment of this quality.

*“katakurio... a. to bring under one’s power, to subject to one’s self, to subdue, master... b. to hold in subjection, to be master of, exercise lordship over:... Mt. 20:25; Mk. 10:42; I Pet. 5:3;...” (Thayer, p 332)*

Do not become “*a lord*,” “*a subduer*” or “*a masterer*.” Many people have the desire to become one who can do this, but only those in positions of authority can actually do it. Because of the potential abuse and misuse of the limited authority Jesus has given to shepherds, this warning is given. Do not allow such emotions to tempt you into becoming this person. Jesus was deeply concerned with His apostles who also had the opportunity due to these position to misuse the limited stewardship He gave to them. The first time it became evident, Jesus asked them about it and then told them that in His kingdom, all authority was given to be a benefit and actually serve those they lead.

*Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” 34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Mk. 9:33-35*

In the next chapter it came even more to the forefront when James and John came seeking greater authority than all others even to sit on His right and left hand. When the others heard of this, they too had the same feelings as they became angry at James and John. Jesus again called them all to Him and told them that His kingdom was unlike any other kingdom on earth and they would be different from all others in authority.

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. 44 And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Mk 10:42-45*

The Gentile kingdoms use authority to gain mastery over the time, possessions and even the lives of those they lead. But in the church, this will never be true. The greatest in His kingdom are not those who take but those who give. Not those who lord and demand, nut those who serve and give.

Even on His last night with the apostles it came out as they again begin to argue over their own self-importance and what it might bring to them. Jesus again stops what He is doing and again explains to them the nature of authority in His kingdom.

*Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. 25 And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who*

*exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'* 26 *But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.* Lk. 22:24-26

The apostles had to learn this lesson. The gospel is designed to save souls from the world of sin and despair. We are all redeemed sinners under the authority of Christ. No matter how long we have served, and how great we have become, we never rise above the level of helping and serving each other. Jesus stern rebuke of the Pharisees is a clear warning to all of us.

*They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'* 8 *But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.* 9 *Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.* 10 *And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.* 11 *But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.* 12 *And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.* Mt. 23:6-12

While the apostles learned that lesson and never sought to use their authority in any other way than to serve Jesus and their brethren, the position of the bishop has been misused and abused through the centuries. Nearly every apostasy in the church has been brought about through this desire. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus of their own danger which ultimately led to the apostasy of that church.

*For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.* 30 *Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.* Acts 20:29-31

Hence there is a very fine line between the proper use of their influence and authority and its abuse. Though elders are responsible for the flock and will give an account regarding them, they do not have the right to use disciples for their own ends. They must not bring any member under their power, hold them in subjection or exercise any type of control over them.

Some might see this as unfair. God makes them responsible, but doesn't give them the full power to take control. But service to God must be free and willing and elders are helping no one by bringing them under their own power, regardless of their good intentions. Elders must seek to direct, guide and support, but they cannot subdue, master or lord it over them. Elders can direct the willing and free desires of the congregation but they cannot force them.

Members need to feel that they are not being lorded over. They should see in their elders men leading by example and open to suggestion. They should feel that the work and direction of the church is not far removed from them and that they can come and discuss their feelings about it with the elders. They should also trust their elders to listen to their concerns and make changes if ideas are good and sound. Congregations are not being properly served if members feel that their own zeal and study makes no difference there. Elders need to remain open to the members, and good suggestions should be acted upon.

The elders are to lead God's people, and Peter's command not to lord it over them does not change this. It only modifies the method of ruling. Elders do make decisions, and sometimes not everyone likes them. A charge of lording cannot be made by a member simply because the elders do something they do not like. But elders should not simply sweep aside this quality either. They must lead and direct the flock, but not by force, and not in a way that members feel they have no say in how things are done.

A wise eldership will keep both the direction and work of the congregation constantly before the eyes of the members. There should be some form of open dialogue between elders and members about the work of the church. The members need to know what is going on or they may feel they are being lorded. If they have little or nothing to say about anything in the church year after year, they may be right.

When a congregation appoints an eldership they should be getting men who love them and want to help them in their work. Men who keep close to the members and allow the members a great

deal of say in the work of the body. The command to not lord must temper the way in which they do their work. They should lead in such a way that the members feel that their elders are servants, helping and guiding them in the right direction, but giving them a say in the work. A fine distinction even to write about, each eldership will have to seriously reflect on how to fulfill this in the congregation where they serve.

There is a rich heritage behind the term “*entrusted*.” It was the manner in which God allotted the land of Israel to the 12 tribes. Once allotted, it became their through all generations of God’s people. In the way each eldership had been allotted or entrusted with the members of the “*flock that is among you*.”

“*kleros*... 2. what is obtained by lot, allotted portion... those whose care and oversight has been assigned to one [allotted charge] ...” (Thayer, p 349)

What is the allotted portion assigned to the elders? The Spirit stated it was the flock which is among them in I Pet. 5:2. An elder must not lord over the charge God has allotted or apportioned to him. There are two important thoughts here. First, there is the limitation that “*allotted*” demands. The elders have no relationship with those who have not been allotted to them. But perhaps more important is the realization that the elders are elders and work as bishops and shepherds, not because of any ability of their own. God gave this flock to be under their care and they must never forget that God allotted this to them, they did not deserve or merit it on their own. It is the same thing God had sought to get Israel to understand.

*then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’ 18 “And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Deut. 8:17-19*

#### **4. Being Examples to the Flock.**

His final words explain a very important part of being a Christian and shepherd. The sheep are to follow and the shepherd is to lead the way. But the manner of leading is not lording by showing. Not demanding, but giving an example to them all of how a Christian is to conduct himself. Paul told Timothy something along the same lines.

*Let no one despise your youth, but be an **example** to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that **your progress may be evident to all**. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, **for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you**. 1Tim. 4:12; 15-16*

The word translated example in both passages is the same word and it is defined:

“*tupos*, ...1. *print... the mark of a stroke or blow; print...* 2. *a figure formed by a blow or impression; hence univ. a figure, image:...* 3. *form...* 4. *an example; a. in the technical sense, viz. the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made... b. in an ethical sense, a dissuasive example, pattern or warning... an example to be imitated: of men worthy of imitation, Phil 3:17”* (Thayer, p. 632; 5179).

We use this term for “typing” on a “typewriter,” First we engrave an image on metal for each key. Once that image is engraved, every time that key is pressed the same image forms on the paper. This is why *type* is “*the mark of a stroke or blow*,” Thus a type is a perfect example of the impression on the metal. Jesus is the perfect image that has been engraved in the Scriptures. As men come into conformity with that pattern, others can use them to pattern their own life after. Paul urged us to look at him in that way, and then to look at others who conform to them.

*Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. 1Cor. 11:1*

*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a **pattern**. Phil. 3:17-18*

The word “pattern” is the same word as example above. Paul had come so far into conformity with Christ that now he too is a pattern upon which they can imitate and seek to emulate. This is exactly what the Spirit urges the elders to become. They are to live the gospel to such a degree

that like Paul they can say:

*The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you. Phil. 4:9*

All elders should be such examples. They must go before the sheep living an exemplary life. They are not to force and compel, but show them how things should be done. Their example as a good husband and father, as evangelist and teacher, and as an employee will do more to help the church than any attempt to force the members to be these things. They should not simply tell them what to do, but more importantly, they should show them how to do it.

## **5. You will Receive the Crown of Glory that Does Not Fade Away.**

Elders that do all the above are encouraged that they will receive their reward. If those in this role carefully submit to these exhortations their reward is secure. The crown of glory is within the grasp of all elders. Elders should feel the comfort and encouragement of these words. They have taken on one of the greatest and most awesome of responsibilities. The demands of this work, beginning with the qualifications and ending in the actual duties are great. But God assures them here: "You can do it!" The crown of glory can be won. This passage is offered as advice to help get the crown.

God will be giving this wonderful reward to those who faithfully discharge their duties. Forget about the filthy lucre, ambition, or the desire to get your way. Focus on the crown of glory that fades not away. Focusing on the reward is an important tool to keep motivated and ward off bitterness, frustration, or anguish.

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1Cor. 15:58*

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Rom. 8:18*

All elders will be highly motivated to do this job if the above is kept in mind. The reward will more than compensate for all the troubles and heartaches. This crown will bring glory to them. They will gain the right to wear it from long years of service, and it will never fade away. Through the long ages of eternity it will be glorious.

## **E. The Exhortations to the Hebrews**

Although there is no mention of the terms elder or shepherd here, a careful reading of the passage leaves no other conclusion. There is no other office in the church that does all of these things except for the office of overseer and shepherd.

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*  
*Heb. 13:17*

This passage can be broken down into four important areas that everyone who accepts the office and does this work. As we go through these things it will become more and more evident that the only group of leaders in the church who do these things are the elders.

1. Obey those who rule over you and be submissive
2. They watch out for your souls.
3. As those who must give account.
4. Let them do so with joy and not with grief
5. For that would be unprofitable for you.

### **1. Obey those who Rule over You, and Be Submissive.**

The perspective here is different from all the other passages we have considered. This one discusses the office from the perspective of those who are under the oversight of the elders. It outlines the relationship between the elders and the congregation where they serve. It confirms some of the inferences we have drawn from the definition of the terms and the scope of the work. Shepherds lead their flock and the sheep follow. Overseers watch over the work done by the brethren with an eye to correcting and directing them as the need arises.

Here the church is commanded to obey and submit to them. The term “obey” first means to be persuaded then to listen, yield and comply.

*“peitho... a. to be persuaded, to suffer one’s self to be persuaded; to be induced to believe... b. to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with:...”* (Thayer, p 497-498)

The choice of this word perfectly describes how the elders would use the scriptures to lead and direct the flock. They seek to persuade and induce them to believe what has been revealed. As they listen to these things, they must obey and comply with them. They are commanded to listen to them, obey them, and comply with their directions. When a congregation selects elders, they are selecting the men who will be charged by God to guide, lead, and protect them. When they appoint them they put themselves under their direction and must then submit to them. Just as the Spirit told the elders not to lord it over the flock, but to lead by example, He now demands that the church submit to that gentle leadership.

Not only are they to be persuaded and yield, but they must also submit.

*“hupeiko... from Homer down to resist no longer, but to give way, yield, (properly of combatants) metaph. to yield to authority and admonition, to submit...”* (Thayer, p 638; 5226)

*“hupeiko... , from hupó (5259), and eíkœ (1503), to yield, submit. To submit, surrender, yield, cease to fight. (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT; 5226)*

A careful reading of the definition reveals that this is an extension of the previous word. After one is persuaded and induced to believe they are to “*resist no longer, but to give way and yield.*” This is the process most Christians follow as they leave the world and enter the church. There are cherished convictions habits and hobbies that Scripture often condemns. As the elders seek to convince them, they first allow themselves to be persuaded by Scripture and then “*submit, surrender, yield, cease to fight.*” This is the relationship between the sheep and their shepherd.

Then their shepherd is also addressed. He is the one who “rules over” them. The one they are to

obey and to whom they submit. This word is used 28 times in the New Testament and it is only used three times for ruling. It is not a word for dominion or Lordship as other Greek terms. This is a leading by *guiding, conducting* and *going before*. It clearly can have the idea of leadership as a general would his army or an admiral his fleet.

*hegeomai* ... to go before, lead the way, Homer, ... to lead the way for him, guide, conduct, ... to go before on the way, 2. to be one's leader in a thing, .... to lead the song, Id., etc. 3. ... to lead, conduct, II. to lead an army or fleet, c. dat., Hom., to be the leader or commander of, (Liddell & Scott Abridged Greek Lexicon. NT:2233)

But this is the term Jesus chose in Luke 22 to teach His apostles the nature of leading in the church. There will be those who **“govern,”** but they will **“govern as he who serves.”** So the strength of this command or leadership had been muted by the Lord to a **“leading servant”** or a **“serving leader.”**

*“The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ 26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who **governs** as he who serves. Lk. 22:24-26*

The following definition captures the modifications to the term as it was brought from the Greek world into the spiritual kingdom. It is a leadership of *“influence,”* of *“showing how to”* of *“going ahead of”* expecting to be following by willing and obedient sheep. These leaders *“demonstrate how one ought to”* using only Scripture for their authority.

*hegeomai* ... to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action - ‘to guide, to direct, to lead.’ ... ‘he who takes the lead must be like the one who serves’ or ‘he who is the master must be like one who serves’ Luke 22:26; ... In some languages it is difficult to distinguish readily between expressions for ‘leading’ and those which refer to ‘ruling’ or ‘governing,’ but it is important to try to distinguish clearly between these two different sets of interpersonal relations. In some languages, the concept of ‘leading’ can be expressed by ‘showing how to’ or ‘demonstrating how one ought to.’ In other languages it is possible to speak of ‘leading’ as simply ‘going ahead of,’ (Greek-English Lexicon)

Hence the leadership of “elders” is only a leadership of guidance and direction. There is no real authority within them. They are not lords or masters, they are leaders who having walked the strait and narrow way that leads to life are now seeking for those they can go before and show the way.

## **2. They Watch Out for Your Souls.**

This is the final admonition that Paul gave to the elders at Ephesus.

*Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. Acts 20:31*

We might imagine a shepherd sitting on a nearby hill, watching over all the sheep. Watching for approaching danger, watching for those who might wander away, watching to be certain they have food and water. They also watch the condition of the sheep. Are they healthy, have they been injured, are they protected from the elements. This is what true shepherds of sheep are doing. So when the sheep themselves are being admonished and exhorted, they are told to obey and submit because all that these shepherd are doing is in their best interest and for their own good.

These elders who are shepherds and overseers *“watch out”* for your souls.

*agrupneo* ... from the priv. α (1), without, and *húpnos*(5258), sleep. To abstain totally from sleep, to watch, wake, be awake. Spiritually, to be watchful and attentive to spiritual things (Mark 13:33; Luke 21:36; Eph 6:18; Heb 13:17). (Complete Word Study Dictionary: NT; 69)

*“agrupneo...to be sleepless, keep awake, watch... to be circumspect, attentive, ready... to be intent on a thing ... to exercise constant vigilance over something(an image drawn from shepherds), Heb 13:17... agrupnein may be taken to express simply ... absence of sleep, and, pointedly, the absence of it when due to nature, and thence a wakeful frame of mind as opposed to listlessness;”* (Thayer, p 9; 69)

The reason the sheep should obey and submit is because their elders are sleepless in their vigilance. They are watchful and attentive with a wakeful frame of mind. If they come with any advice or warning then the sheep should be willing to submit and listen carefully.

The exhortation here is clear. Their constant vigilance is directed only toward the benefit of the sheep. They are only hurting themselves if they refuse to listen. It is all done “for” your souls.

*“huper,... 1. properly, of place, i. e. of position, situation, extension: over, above, beyond, ... 2. i.q. Lat. pro, for, i.e. for one’s safety, for one’s advantage or benefit, (one who does a thing for another, is conceived of as standing or bending ‘over’ the one whom he would shield or defend... to be for one i.e. to be on one’s side, to favor and further one’s cause...” (Thayer, p 638-640)*

This preposition like all the others has a primary meaning describing a location. In this case it is someone over or above and thus looking down or looking over. Hence the elders are sleepless and vigilant in their concern for the souls of the sheep placed in their care. They are watching for their safety, advantage and benefit. They are on their side, favoring and furthering their cause. They seek to shield them from danger, and defend them from enemies. Their primary motivation is concern for their souls. Anyone fighting such men is not thinking clearly. Congregations should appreciate a worthy eldership.

### **3. As those who Must Give Account.**

There is a blending of two thoughts here. First, the responsibility of the sheep toward their shepherds and second, the obligations of their shepherds to God. This is the reason why the sheep must obey and submit. When their elders render an account to God regarding them, it will be to their benefit if they were obedient and submissive.

Every eldership will “give” an account to God for the souls of those entrusted to them.

*“apodidomi... The compound of didomi formed with apo ... means give away, give out, yield, and give back, repay, recompense. Fixed phrases are apodidomi ton logon to give account (Mt. 12:36; Lk. 16:2; Acts 19:40; Heb. 13:17; 1Pet. 4:5; Rom. 14:12...” (Exegetical Dictionary of NT; 591)*

While the word generally means to give back or repay, when it is joined with *logos* it changes to giving an account. This clearly states that God will require an accounting, a reckoning, or a settling of accounts with each eldership. God will expect answers and explanations on how and why things were or were not done. Jesus captured the essence of these terms in the parable of the unjust steward. When his master heard of his dishonesty, he demanded an account of his stewardship.

*So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’ Luke 16:2*

We can easily imagine him bringing the books and having the master go over every line to see whether he had been honest or had cheated him.

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 2Cor. 5:10*

This is what Jesus says God will do with each of us regarding every word we have spoken. We will give an account of why we said what we said. So each and every word must be assessed and we will be asked about them.

*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Mt. 12:36-37*

In the same way, elders will give an account of those who have been entrusted to them. This reveals the blessing of the limitations we noted in Peter’s exhortations to the elders.

*Shepherd the flock of God **which is among you**, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over **those entrusted to you**, but*

*being examples to the flock; 1 Peter 5:2-4*

The elders of a flock will give account of the flock which is among them. It is this local congregation where they are watching and where they will give a account of those they watched. These are the souls “*entrusted to you*” and God will ask about them. Remember what God told the shepherds in Ezekiel.

*The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.... 6 My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.” Ezek. 34:4,6*

God was watching and when He saw what these shepherds were not doing, He revealed to them what he held them accountable for. These were the things they should have been doing but were not. These are the same things elders in the church will be questioned about.

All who are baptized, or have placed membership in that local church are under their care, guidance and protection. God will want an accounting. He will want to know where they are. Cain’s answer: “I know not, Am I my brother’s keeper?” will not be acceptable. Every soul will be accounted for. A shepherd taking 100 sheep out to pasture should still have 100 sheep when he returns. If there are only 99, the owner of the sheep will want to know what happened to the missing one. He is responsible for them.

*And he spoke this parable to them, saying 4 “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ... 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” Lk. 15:3-4*

This is the kind of concern God wants His shepherds to have. He wants them watching over the flock and averting danger, teaching and guiding them down the right path. If after all their efforts a sheep is lost and no longer in the fold, He will expect the elders to go and look for them and find out what happened. He will also want them to do everything possible to get them back. This includes all His directions on discipline. They must apply Matthew 18:15-18; I Corinthians 5:1-13; and II Thessalonians 3:6-14 to each saint who sinned to bring them to repentance. These Scriptures show the only acceptable means by which a church is no longer responsible because they did all they could.

This is a weighty responsibility. It justifies every qualification God gives in I Timothy and Titus to be sure they can do it. Nothing can be left undone. Elders must properly deal with problems as they occur, thus staying ahead of them. If they procrastinate, do not deal with problems as they arise, sooner or later something will slip through. Great efforts must be put forth to keep themselves pure from the blood of all men. They are legacy God’s watchmen.

*“So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. 8 When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. 9 Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Ezek. 33:7-9*

Because they must give an account of every soul, God will require them at their hands. Thus the elders were given the true legacy of Ezekiel. Once again this is why they can only shepherd the flock among them. How can they watch and give warnings to those who are not in their midst?

Yet though we have spent so much time looking at it from the shepherd’s perspective let us return to that of the sheep. These sheep know all this about their shepherds. One day, they will stand before God and hear the account the shepherds are giving. If they have sinned and the elders have done everything they could to help them, then all the guilt falls on them. This is why we are all admonished to heed and submit to them.

#### **4. Let them Do So with Joy and Not with Grief**

Once again we return to the flock. The elders will give an account, and the flock must do all within their power to be certain that accounting is with joy over success and not grief over failure. The fellowship between the sheep and shepherd is now complete. The elders lead, guide, protect and strengthen. The sheep follow, submit and allow the wisdom of the shepherds to protect them through all the trials and adversities of life. There will be joy in the hearts of every shepherd when their guidance has been accepted that the life has turned out successful. When the judgment day arrives there will be great joy and weeping and gnashing of teeth. Those whom they give an account who did submit and are saved at the second coming and preparing to enter into the joy of the Lord will bring great joy to the hearts of their shepherds. Those who rebelled and rejected their advice. Those who would not submit and needed to be reprovved and exhorted, but finally had to be disciplined will be weeping and gnashing their teeth and it will be with grief that the elders give an account.

#### **5. For that Would be Unprofitable for You.**

This final thought should sober any congregation. Once qualified and appointed, they are "*Holy Spirit made bishops*"(Acts 20:28). In a marriage, God allows society to determine the method of joining, but God joins them together. The relationship of a shepherd and the flock is similar. Though the congregation selects and appoints them, they are joined by God. Once this is done, it is going to be unprofitable for those in the congregation who set this aside. Those who subvert the authority of the elders, or who will not submit to them, will find it unprofitable for the flock. These men can only be removed by an entire flock, and only with the steps outlined by Paul to Timothy(1Tim. 5:17-18). Unless these steps are taken, elders must be obeyed and respected. Anything less will be unprofitable for them. If a qualified eldership has to give an account with grief it will be unprofitable for the one it is made over. Not for them.

Though short and succinct, this passage sets forth the weightier side of the work of elders. It doesn't give specifics of the work, but shows what it is leading to. A ruling in such a way that a good account can be given. To be required to give an account to God for every member who has ever been a part of the flock. All who would be elders should seriously reflect on this.

## **F. Miscellaneous Scriptures**

### **Acts 11:29-30**

When a famine came upon the whole world, it had a grievous affect on the churches in Judaea. Their sacrifices recorded in Acts 2-4, in selling homes and giving up possessions, along with the great persecutions and trials recorded in Acts 8 had left the saints in these churches poorly prepared for a famine. They simply did not have the resources to deal with it. When Agabus revealed their plight, all the disciples there in Antioch wanted to send help to them. This passage explains exactly how they did it.

*And the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judaea: which they also did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul Acts 11:29-30*

They didn't seek to investigate the needs of each brother and send help individually. They did not send it to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders there for them to distribute it to the churches. This is striking since only a few years later, that was exactly what they did when they brought the doctrinal problem in Acts 15 to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

*Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. Acts 15:2*

Hence, something that could never be duplicated since the apostles are no longer on the earth was only done once. Yet this issue of needy saints would be a recurring problem. This is the only pattern we have. It was sent to the elders because they knew the needs and character of each individual sheep their flock. With Peter's command to shepherd the flock among them, we are forced to conclude that these were not just the elders in Jerusalem who were only elders in that flock, but all the elders of all the churches in Judea. This passage also makes it clear that another responsibility that fell to them was to help the needy.

This was exactly what the apostles had been doing in the early church before the church grew too large for them to do it, and others were appointed to help them with it(Acts 6:1-6). This manifests the awareness of the elders of the physical as well as spiritual needs. Elders need to be aware of the physical needs of the brethren they oversee. This requires communication. Brethren cannot be too proud to make their needs known, and elders need to be watching for their benevolence needs.

### **I Timothy 5:17-18**

*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. 20 Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. 1Tim. 5:17-20*

The term "rule" and "well" are the same ones found in the qualification "rules his own house well."

*one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 1Tim, 3:4-6*

This also adds evidence that the exhortations to the Hebrews about those who "have the rule over you" is the elders. Elders who rule well are those who spend a large enough amount of their time doing the work of shepherds and overseers that it is their main occupation. This is especially true of those who are also doing the work of an evangelist. Those who are so working are to be counted worthy of double honor. The work they do raising the balancing scales to a level where they should receive this double honor.

A worthy eldership is one that works among the members in the word and teaching. Worthy elders

watch in behalf of souls and labor in word and teaching. One of the qualifications was to be apt to teach. Those who are ruling well are especially using this ability. They are teaching and helping members both publicly and house to house(Acts 20:20). They are perfecting the saints(Eph 4:11) and the body is being built up.

An interesting discussion has developed over the term “*double honor*.” Some feel very strongly that it refers to paying them wages while others feel very strongly that it does not. Paul’s use of “*muzzling the ox*” makes it difficult not to conclude that money wasn’t involved, especially after reading Paul’s words regarding the evangelists who have given their lives to preaching(1Cor. 9:7-14). Unless there is a strong reason to interpret it otherwise, consistency would lead us to conclude that it is Scriptural to pay elders just as preachers if they are doing the same amount of work in their individual realms of endeavor. Yet each local church is free to make that decision.

## **G. Conclusion**

The organization of a local church of Christ is manifested very simply in the New Testament as seen by Paul’s address to the Philippian church.

*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Phil. 1:1*

As soon as there were qualified men, there were elders/overseers/shepherds in every church. Along with them were the deacons who were given to help them in their work. The will of God is clear. The strength of each church is based on this organization. If a church carefully assesses those whom they want to lead them by God’s will, then many years of fruitful service can follow.

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