

Qualifications for Elders (continued)

Detailed Outline

Part 6 of 9

Let's go on in the qualifications for a shepherd elder.

4) Relational Skills with People

A number of the qualifications revolve around one's skill in interpersonal relationships.

Gentle: By gentle he means forbearing, patient, not insisting on the letter of the law, understanding people's weaknesses and their foibles, and all the complexities of people. It's a marvelous virtue that should be true of every leader among God's people: a patient, forbearing, magnanimous shepherd. And that kind of person can get along with lots of people.

Upright: Living in accordance with God's righteous standards, to be law-abiding. A righteous person in character, behavior, conduct, and attitude.

Not Quick-Tempered: Not able to control one's anger. If you're quick-tempered, quick to get angry, you're going to be in a lot of conflict with people and you're going to hurt a lot of people.

Not Quarrelsome: An argumentative person. If you're a leader, you're going to have to interact with lots of people who disagree with you. You're going to have to learn to speak properly to people when there is disagreement, and not just argue endlessly every point.

Not Arrogant: This has the idea of "puffed up," self-superiority. Some translations say "self-will." This is the kind of person who has to have his way – "my way or the highway."

I hope you know about the church leader/elder called Diotrophes (3 John 9-10). Diotrophes loved to have the first place. He loved preeminence. He liked to control people and rule over people. He had very bad social skills because he excommunicated people who disagreed with him. He wouldn't even allow the apostle John in his church. But I'm sure he had a lot of talent. I'm sure there was a group of people who loved him and followed him, but he was self-willed and he was arrogant.

So, we see here that elders are in the people business. We shepherd people. We're not building cars or computers; we are leading, growing, edifying, and working with people. It's a totally people-oriented job, so we need these great social skills in dealing with people in a godly way.

We need also to be a team player; we need to know how to work with people we don't always agree with.

We are called to be servant leaders and humble leaders. If we are quick-tempered, quarrelsome, and arrogant, we're not going to be problem-solvers. We're going to be the problem.

5) Hospitality and Loving Good

Hospitality: You probably would not think that hospitality is a biblical requirement for a pastor elder, but it is.

Why do you need to be hospitable to be a church elder? Because we're in the family of God, and one of the most powerful tools for ministering to the family is your home, inviting them to your table for a meal.

Actually, hospitality is directly related to love. It's one of the ways we display love in a very concrete, real way.

A Lover of Good (Titus 1:8): An elder is a person who is compassionate and involved in kind deeds to help others. In Acts 20:35, Paul charges the elders to care for "the weak." The weak are people who cannot provide for themselves, whether because of age, sickness, or disability. Elders are to be compassionate, generous, caring people, full of service deeds, "loving what is good." These are marvelous traits of a leader of God's household.

6) Personal Integrity

A number of the qualifications revolve around personal integrity.

Above Reproach: The overarching qualification of being blameless.

Be an Example to the Flock: An example of godly Christian behavior and service that others would want to follow.

Not Greedy for Gain: Not stealing, pilfering, or misappropriating church money or the offerings. Greed and the temptation to steal church funds is a powerful temptation. More powerful than we realize!

Upright: Living in accordance with God's righteous standards, to be law-abiding. A righteous person in character, behavior, conduct, and attitude.

Holding Firm to the Trustworthy Word as Taught: You are doctrinally sound and living the truth of the gospel, not like the false teachers who do not hold firmly to apostolic, orthodox doctrine.

Holy: A devout Christian, firmly committed to God and his Word. It means to be separated unto God and pleasing to God.

Again, we come back to "character leadership." We're back to being godly role models of what a Christian life is to be like.

There's a marvelous verse in the Old Testament speaking of King David, one of the greatest leaders God ever gave Israel.

With upright heart he shepherded them (the nation of Israel) and guided them with his skillful hands.
(Psalm 78:72)

An “upright heart” is a word for integrity; with integrity of heart he shepherded the Lord’s people. He was a man of integrity!

Then it says that he guided them with “skillful hands.” In other words, a good leader is a person who is skilled with people. They know how to deal with people. They’re problem-solvers. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” They’re people who make peace. If you can’t make peace in a church, you will have a division.

A leader who has integrity is a person you can believe; it’s a person you can trust; it’s a person who lives in a manner consistent with what he says and what he believes. There isn’t a disconnect between belief and lifestyle.

Someone has said, very cleverly, many of our churches are suffering from *AIDS – Acquired Integrity Deficiency Syndrome*, and if we have an integrity deficiency in our elders, we’re in real trouble.

7) Spiritual Maturity

Not to be a recent convert or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 1 Timothy 3:6

You cannot be a new convert and be an elder. You can be a brand new convert and be an evangelist the same day. But you cannot be a new convert and be an elder of the church the same day. You must have maturity.

How long that takes is going to be different with everyone. But you must have life experience, you must know the Word of God, and you must show yourself to be the kind of person who can lead God’s people.

If the person is too newly saved, in a position of leadership too early, they’ll become conceited. They’ll think, *I’m a big shot, I’ve got a badge, I’m a church pastor*. But the devil will trick that person. It takes time to know the devil’s strategy and to know your own self and how easily you’re tempted and led astray, and to know your own weaknesses and fatal flaws. You have to know these things, and have dealt with them in life. So, you must be a mature Christian.