

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER **(1 Timothy 3:1-7)**

I. An overall qualification (vs. 1).

- A. The very first qualification is an overall one that must be met first, even if all others are met.
- B. This one is that the brother in question, and it must be a brother and not a sister, desire the office.
 - 1. This word carries the idea of wanting the position and the work that goes along with it.
 - 2. He must want to be an elder and to do the work of such.
- C. A man may meet all qualifications but not desire the office.
- D. The word "if" is present.
 - 1. The word "must" is not present.
 - 2. If a brother desires the office or position of an elder, that which he desires is a good work.
- E. A man does not have to desire the position.
 - 1. However, if a man is qualified and there is a need for such, he should seek to meet that need.
 - 2. A biblical model is ability + opportunity = responsibility.
 - 3. If a man has the ability and the opportunity arises, he has the responsibility to do such.
- F. However, if he does not desire the position, he is not qualified to be an elder.

II. Familial qualifications.

- A. An elder is to be the husband of one wife.
 - 1. He is not to be a polygamist or one who is in a marriage that is not scriptural.
 - 2. There is debate about whether or not a scripturally divorced and remarried man can be an elder, or one whose spouse died and he remarried.
 - 3. As one writer said, if you are going to err, let it be on the side of literalness, and not looseness, when it comes to handling the scriptures.
- B. He is to be given to hospitality.
 - 1. In that day, inns were not the best places to stay.
 - 2. Christians opened up their homes to other Christians who were traveling.
 - 3. I put this under familial qualifications because a wife is a great asset in this regard.
 - 4. In our day, it is not common to house travelers like our first century brethren.
 - 5. However, we do have others to the home for studies, fellowships and the work of the congregation.
- C. Rules well his own house.
 - 1. The definition of this is found in the next phrase: "having his

- children in subjection with all gravity.”
- 2. His children understand he is the head of the house and act in a way that shows this to others.
- 3. The qualifications given to Titus include that he is to have believing children.
- 4. We will discuss this further when we get to Titus but one way they show respect for their father is by obeying the gospel message he loves so much.

D. The reason he is to have shown such is found in verse 5.

III. **Personal positive qualifications.**

- A. He is to be blameless.
 - 1. This word means not able to lay a hold of.
 - 2. There is nothing in his life that has not been forgiven by the blood of Christ that detractors can get a hold of that would make him unqualified.
 - 3. It does not mean there has been no sin in his life because that would mean no one would be qualified.
 - 4. Peter sinned publicly but later became an elder.
- B. Vigilant means that he is to be on watch for problems that the Lord's church faces.
- C. Sober means that he is in control of his desires and does not let them overcome him.
 - 1. Some translations use the word prudent.
 - 2. He uses sense and does not let himself be ruled by passions.
- D. Of good behavior is also translated “modest” in 2:9.
 - 1. It means one whose inner life is expressed in his outward actions.
 - 2. He does his duty because it is there to do and he does not shirk his responsibilities.
 - 3. It goes hand in hand with sober because sober has to do with the mind and good behavior has to do with actions.
- E. Apt to teach means able and willing to do so.
 - 1. He must be able to teach God's word to the flock.
 - 2. In Titus, we will see he must be able to teach non-Christians as well.
- F. Patient is also translated gentle, meaning that he takes into consideration the feelings of others and is not rude in actions.
- G. A good report from non-Christians (vs. 7).
 - 1. Those in the world need to view him as a good man.
 - 2. His business reputation must be good as well as his personal reputation because it leaves the congregation open for Satan's attacks as well as himself.
 - 3. One of the most damaging attacks Satan has is that of attacking a person's reputation.

IV. **Personal negative qualifications.**

- A. He is not to be given to wine.
 - 1. A marginal reading says: “Not ready to quarrel and offer wrong, as

- one in wine.”
2. He does not indulge in alcohol at all because it keeps him from being sober and of good behavior.
 3. Br. Hearn wrote, “The priests under the Old Testament were forbidden to use wine or strong drink (Lev. 10:9). All Christians are priests (1 Pet. 5:4-9), the anti-type of Old Testament priests, therefore, should refrain from intoxicants.”
- B. No striker means one does not resort to physical confrontations.
- C. Not greedy of filthy lucre means that he is not one who has taken on the role of elder for selfish, financial reasons.
- D. Not a brawler means not seeking confrontations all the time.
1. Christians are not out to win arguments.
 2. They are out to win souls and elders cannot constantly be arguing because it keeps them from their work.
- E. Not covetous indicates that he does not let anything unseat God from His position of prominence in his heart.
- F. Not a novice indicates one who is new to the faith.
1. A new Christian is not ready for the responsibilities that an elder has.
 2. If such is thrust upon him too quickly, he is liable to be prideful because of such, which was the devil’s sin.