

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Practical Considerations for Elders

Selected Scripture

Keywords: Leadership, Elders, Shepherding, Fighters, Men of God

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: The bible makes clear that there are certain non-negotiable character qualities that must be found in the life of any elder in a church. Having considered several of the key ones we now turn our attention to some other qualities that should be present in the life of a potential elder. These are natural corollaries to the biblical qualifications, some of which are simply applications of the qualifications and others are secondary ones that would not, in themselves, make a man qualified. But if they are absent then the man likely would not be a wise choice for that specific local church.

I. Introduction.

- A. Last message two character qualities why you try to identify men of God.
 - 1. Not just men. That is a biological reality that you have nothing to do with.
 - 2. But men who are devoted to God. Men who are God's men, doing God's work in whatever forum God has put them.
 - 3. The entire thing is being framed in the idea and office of Elder or Pastor.
 - a. This is not some holy office that is relegated to the so-called 'clergy.' The spiritual vs the mundane and earthly is a false dichotomy.
 - b. Rather, it describes the kind of character that should be present in the men who lead the local churches. Some who may be paid and others who may not. But they are the leaders and shepherds who watch over the soul's of God's people.
 - c. The elder is simply a man who has made this his pursuit and has come to the point where these character qualities exist in his life
 - d. But it also does not mean that he stops because he has somehow "made it." These character qualities are something he then seeks to build and enlarge all the more in his life
 - 4. Review:

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- a. To **desire** this office is a good thing because the work is a noble work. It is defined by God as an excellent labor. This means it is to be held in high esteem by all Christians.
 - b. Desire, however, is not required nor is it enough. There are objective qualities that must be already present in the life of each man.
 - c. **Above reproachfulness/blamelessness** is the umbrella idea. His life is such that no valid charge can be leveled against him as a habit in his life. He shepherds his own heart first. He has learned what it means to die to himself. He considers all things in light of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and eternity.
 - d. **Doctrinally sound.** These are not Christians who are vague about what they believe. They know it. They learned from those who went before them and have treasured the Word in their hearts. They go beyond memes and sound bites and into a life defined by the Word. They contend for the faith in whatever context they are in. They are doers of the Word and not merely hearers.
 - e. **Hospitable.** This means they are a welcoming household and it is evident. Christian and non-Christian alike are welcome in this household as it models a gracious and generous spirit.
 - f. **Husband of one wife.** He is a faithful husband and it is seen by all who watch. He is devoted to her and seeks to model the commands and duties of a godly husband to his wife and only his wife.
 - g. **Faithful children and Children in control.** Whether his children are older or younger they are under control and seek to obey and honor their father. How he runs his home and how he maintains control is indicative of how he will care for the souls of the church.
 - h. **A well-managed home.** He is running his home and he knows its strengths and weaknesses. He has a plan of action and is putting it into practice.
 - i. **A dignified home.** As he runs his home and raises his children and loves his wife he does it in dignity. He is worthy of respect because he commands it in his attitude and demeanor.
- B. There are other qualifications listed in the bible but they are easy to understand. But if these qualifications are true then usually the others are true as well.

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1. It is hard to be a dignified father if you are a drunk or given to fighting.
 2. But is that all there is to it? If a man fits these qualifications is he therefore to be an elder? The answer is no. It means he meets the minimum requirements but this is not all there is.
 3. Having considered several of the key ones we now turn our attention to some other qualities that should be present in the life of a potential elder.
 - a. These are natural corollaries to the biblical qualifications, some of which are simply applications of the qualifications and others are secondary ones that would not, in themselves, make a man qualified.
 - b. These are, in a sense, non-biblical. But if they are absent then the man likely would not be a wise choice for that specific local church
- C. So today, in no particular order, I want to speak about twelve expectations for an potential elder. And in doing so it may help you understand how we are trying to approach consideration of men for this role. These would also apply to a deacon or deaconess.

II. Twelve Expectations for Church Leadership.

- A. Shared Vision.
1. This is a very practical one that I wish for you to give thought to.
 2. Every local assembly of believers has a direction it is going. Vision affects the things that are emphasized in that church.
 3. Early on in my ministry as a pastor here there were many competing visions in the church and it was quite a circus.
 - a. I had some who rebuked me most every Sunday because I did not denounce abortion every sermon. Others were greatly concerned about end times theology and would fight with most anyone. Others decided that we should not be age segregated at all. Others were pro-breastfeeding. There were the extreme homeschoolers and the pro-psychology. The anti-birth control and the anti-children. There were the pay-no-taxes folks and the take-your-special-vitamins-and-look-with-suspicion-at any-type-of-Western-medical-care.
 - b. The result of this was that it was very hard to gain any traction.

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4. There needs to be a general agreement about the direction of the church or at some point the elders will get mired into disagreements and dissension.
5. So we want to see men who are not trying to become the leader to change everything but to help move the church along in the vision.
6. What is that vision?
 - a. Premised upon passages such as:
 - b. Matthew 28:18-20.
 - (1) Note it is a command from the One who has all authority.
 - (2) The core purpose is to “make disciples.”
 - (3) The means are through “going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching.”
 - (4) The time frame is until the end of this age.
 - (5) The limits are: “to all the nations” and “all that I commanded you.”
 - (6) And the promise is that our Lord is with us in this endeavor.
 - c. 2 Timothy 4:2.
 - (1) The command is to proclaim/preach.
 - (2) The content is the Word of God.
 - (3) The time frame is always, good times and bad times.
 - (4) The method of preaching involves teaching to rebuking. But it is to be defined and motivated from the Word.
 - d. To be a church that equips its members to be a faithful witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to their friends and community.
 - e. A church that trains and equips the church body to become godly households that are beacons of godliness and the gospel.
 - f. To be a church that seeks to faithfully pursue in worship and obedience the Triune God.

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4. So we think about a man who either has shown that they are on board with the theology of the leadership or is willing to grow and learn from them.
 5. This limits many men who allow the busyness of life to so capture them that they do not set time aside for study of theology and doctrine.
 - a. All younger men and women should be students of theology and instruction from their leaders.
 - b. All younger Christians should be taking in as much sound doctrine as possible to strip away the many false ideas that are currently present in them.
 - c. But because life choices are made on a moment by moment basis too often years slip by until they realize that they are lacking in any real biblical world-view. And then change is hard.
- C. To be seen as a leader.
1. Bubbles to the top.
 2. It is usually not hard to find a leader because they lead often in a very natural way.
 3. This is not to say that they always know they are leaders, but others do.
 4. A man who is perhaps not naturally that way is not somehow disqualified but it does mean that they need to develop the ability to lead. This means that they have to fight against certain weaknesses or tendencies.
 5. It is hard to lead when no one is wanting to follow so we look for leaders. But not leaders in the sense of what this world thinks, but what the church needs.
 - a. Men who love truth and will stand fast for it.
 - b. Men who are systematically considering their various areas of life and how much is controlled by a biblical world-view. They are not pressured to change easily unless shown from the Scripture.
 - c. Men who do not lead out of fear or anger but through wisdom and example.
- D. An ability to give wise, biblical counsel on a wide array of subject matter.

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1. All this really means is that he knows his Word well and also how to handle it in a skillful manner.
 2. He is a man who has experienced life and has thought deeply on issues. The result is that when he speaks it is not a grasping at straws, but a settled sense of direction that is driven by the glory of God and wisdom.
 3. When you speak to him you may not walk away happy but you do walk away better informed and hopefully a bit wiser.
 4. A man of 40, if he has been a believer for twenty years, should be capable of shepherding a person through just about anything. But of course this assumes the man has spent the last twenty years putting off lesser things.
 5. This is one of the many reasons we offer classes taught by Bruce Roeder. This is how the CGs should function, where the older believer is helping the younger one think through issues.
- E. He has a healthy, robust biblical world-view.
1. This obviously is closely connected to the prior one. But it is one with a bigger loop that covers more things.
 2. Usually I give counsel on very specific issues that are personal to the person or home to which I am helping or confronting. How they might better raise children, handle money, find good employment, serve more faithfully, etc.
 3. But with the world-view it is the lens through which you look at everything seen and unseen.
 4. These are not men wandering aimlessly through life moving from one fad to the next. This is a man who has thought, listened, and read deeply and broadly on many subjects so as to have a sense of direction.
- F. A good example to follow.
1. Twice Paul urges the Christian in Corinth to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1) and he has no shame in doing so. He is able to look at himself and his conduct in light of sound doctrine and say, "Follow me."
 2. Twice in 1 Thessalonians Paul commends the church for the fact they were imitating him and others in faithfulness.

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3. And twice in Hebrews the author tells them that they ought to imitate faithful examples. And a key one given is in 13:7 where they are to consider the outcome of an elder's life and imitate him.
 4. This is just as true in a man's life if he is to be an elder.
 5. A question I often ask others who desire to be seen as leaders and influencers in the church is if they would like a church filled with people like them. It can be very telling.
- G. He has endured some level of shame and suffering.
1. Nothing shows the mettle of a man or woman that to suffer or to be shamed.
 2. 1 Peter 2:19ff.
 3. 1 Peter 3:14-16.
 4. Acts 5:41.
- H. Disciples a person to maturity.
1. At the heart of an elder is that of a pastor. The term means shepherd and speaks to the task of what an elder is to do.
 2. Guarding and feeding are the core tasks of any elder and this is where he is to invest his time. Those on staff can commit to this to a high degree. But all are expected at some level.
 3. But it is not done in some vague way. An elder needs to learn to be effective in developing future leaders. A common problem in Ethiopia, it is true in America as well.
 4. If you desire to be an elder then begin now by setting up a time to regularly meet with another man with the goal of guiding him to be mature in Christ.
 - a. Able to know key doctrines.
 - b. Defend the faith.
 - c. Share his faith with unbelievers.
 - d. Bring his life under the control of the Word.
- I. A shepherd's heart to the people.

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1. I have already spoken of this in so many different ways.
 2. A shepherd dies daily. At least a faithful one does. He recognizes that he is not put here to fulfill his desires, but the desires of his Great Shepherd.
 3. He looks at the church not as hindrances but as people/sheep for whom Christ purchased with His blood.
 4. And he loves them and as a result he cares for them, feeds them the Word and wisdom, and guards them from false teaching.
 5. This is not something that just happens the day after he is brought on as an elder. It is something he has done already, which is why he caught the attention of the other elders.
- J. Read the bible through in a reasonable time more than once.
1. Does this honestly need to be explained?
 2. And yet it is something that seldom actually happens.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Beloved I ask each of you to pray diligently for your elders and this church. Pray that we will stand firm on that which is true and be done with distractions.
- B. Pray for the men of this church that they will reject the constant pressure to “get more.” That they will grow in godliness and a love of Christ’s church.
- C. Pray for the older men that they might provoke each other to take a younger man under their wing and help them grow in Christ.
- D. Pray for the younger men to see a need to learn from someone older and wiser.
- E. As we continue to move toward more church planting we need men who have a heart to pastor a church full time. But we also need qualified elders who can go with that man to do this.
 1. Not just men.
 2. But qualified men.
 3. The question is simply this: Will men rise up to this task or not?