

I. INTRODUCTION – Read Vs. 1-7

A. The Need for Quality Elders

1. The average church in the US, regardless of brand or flavor, has 85 members.
2. A **new** church grows to that number in 4 years then **stays there**.
3. **Half** those new churches will then close their doors over the next 5 years.
4. There are over 300 churches in VC; about 40 in Oxnard.
 - a. Many of them are good, solid works of God.
 - b. Others aren't; because they're served by **poor leaders**.
 - c. Many churches start as a result of a church-split.
 - 1) Sometimes a pastor has problems & people leave to start something new,
 - 2) Other times a rebel thinks he can do it better & splits the church to prove he's "the man."
5. After 30 years, I can say the single most important element in having a **healthy** church is **healthy leadership**.
 - a. The elders & pastors need to be mature, godly men—**devoted** to their calling.
 - b. If they are, the church will be healthy & sound.
 - 1) **Not perfect**. Every church has issues & challenges.
 - 2) But because it's **sound**, those things will be successfully negotiated & overcome.
 - c. **Where leadership is poor**, the environment is unhealthy & people suffer.

B. Timothy's Instructions

1. Paul knew this axiom of spiritual leadership & wrote Timothy to make sure he selected quality leaders.
2. Here in Ch. 3, he gives a list of qualifications for **elders & deacons**.
3. Let me say first that in the NT, the words translated "**bishop, elder, & pastor**" are synonymous.
 - a. Different words are used to describe the different **dimensions** of their work.
 - b. **Bishop** means **overseer** & refers to the **office** he holds as **a** leader of the church.
 - c. **Elder** refers to his **character**; his exemplary spiritual maturity that allows him to lead.
 - d. **Pastor** is the same as **shepherd**, & describes his **task** of leading, feeding & protecting the flock of God.
4. In vs. 1-7, Paul gives a list of criteria men must possess to **BE** elders.
5. Then in vs. 8-13, he gives the criteria for **deacons**.
 - a. Deacons were both men & women charged w/a specific area of ministry.
 - b. They might lead others in **doing** that work, but **under** the leadership of the elders.

C. Today

1. Today were' going to dig in to vs. 1-7 = The qualifications for being an elder.
2. Several of them are **duplicated** in the list for deacons, which we'll just read over.
3. But as we begin, I want to note that this is **more than** just a list of qualities elders need.
4. This is a **Portrait** of Spiritual Maturity.
5. While there can **only be a few** who hold the office & ministry of elder, **every** Christian, men & women both, ought to set this as the object of their desire in terms of their **character**.

II. TEXT

A. V. 1

¹ This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

1. People in the 1st century didn't have their own Bible they brought to church with them or read daily devotions out of.
2. There might be **only one** set of Scriptures for an **entire church** of hundreds.
3. But that was true of **all** literature. Most people went through their entire lives without **ever** touching a scroll or book.
4. Learning was done by **listening, repeating, & memorization**.
 - a. In both schools & churches, the teacher would say something short & memorable & people would repeat it in unison, out loud, **several times** to make sure it was committed to memory.
 - b. It was like this: The goal of a disciple is to be – **Just like the rabbi**.
 - 1) To that end, disciples followed their rabbi 24/7 because their goal was to be – **JLtR**
 - 2) They followed so close, they wanted the dust that came up from his feet as to land on them; all so

they could be – **JLtR**

3) When a rabbi invited a disciple to follow Him, he was saying he believed that disciple would one day be – **JLtR**.

5. See the first 5 words of v. 1 – “***This is a faithful saying:***”?
 - a. Paul writes that 5 times in his pastoral letters but ***nowhere else***.
 - b. He’s ***urging*** Tim & Titus to make what follows one of those ***core lessons*** they teach the church.
 6. Being an elder – was a good thing to aspire to.
 7. Paul urged Timothy to share this with the Ephesians because of what was happening at that time.
 - a. Official opposition to Christianity was ***heating up***.
 - b. It was understood when persecution came it would ***go after the leaders first***.
 - c. So there weren’t a lot of guys chomping at the bit to be elders.
 - d. They needed to be reminded that being one was worthy of aspiring to.
 8. But not as a merely ***office holder***. Note how he words it –
If a man desires the position [office] of a bishop, he desires a good work [task].
 - a. The ***true*** elder doesn’t want a ***title***, he wants to ***serve***, to do the ***work***.
 - b. He doesn’t aspire to a ***position*** for the ***prestige*** it will gain him.
 - c. He wants the ***position*** for the ***posture*** it provides to do a work he’s called by God to.
 9. But a man can ***desire*** that role & ***prepare himself for it*** by making the qualifications we’re about to look at, his own.
 10. But again – The ***true elder’s ambition*** is for ***God’s glory***, not his own.
 11. That’s a good, quick diagnostic for those you see in leadership in the church.
 - a. Are they mere office-holders, concerned everyone remember how important they are?
 - b. Or are they servants who understand they’re called to make the lives of others better?
 - c. It doesn’t take long to determine if a leader is aimed at promoting his glory or God’s.
 12. Though the word “desire” is used ***twice*** in v. 1, it’s ***2 different words***.
 13. We should understand it this way –
The man ambitious for the OFFICE of overseer, elder, pastor, inwardly craves the COMMENDABLE WORK that office brings.
 14. Since he’s craving the ***work***, he knows it can only be done by ***someone with the proper tools & skills***.
[Construction & Hobbies Importance of tools & skills]
 15. Paul lists the spiritual tools & skills a man who wants ***to BE*** an elder & not just pose as one.
 16. These qualities will enable him ***to lead, feed, & protect*** the flock of God.
- B. V. 2
- ² A bishop then must be blameless,
1. That shuts the door on everyone except my wife, & as we saw last week she can’t be an elder.
 2. The word doesn’t mean ***perfect***. It’s literally ‘***w/o-handle***’; IOW, there’s nothing to grasp or hang on to.
 - a. This man has ***nothing in his life*** that an accusation of could latch on to that would ***disqualify*** him.
 - b. He’s not perfect, but there are no glaring faults or habits someone can point to & say, “That’s wrong!”
 3. Instead of Paul giving a list of all the things that might disqualify someone, he says, “As long as there’s no anchor point for someone to ***attach blame***, he’s a go.”
 4. Well, that & the ***rest of*** what we find here.
the husband of one wife,
 1. Literally He’s a “***one woman man***.”
 2. This isn’t his ***relationship status*** on Facebook. It’s a ***character trait***. It means he’s ***loyal***!
 3. Keep the historical setting in mind. Ephesus was steeped in a Greco-Roman culture where it was not only ***allowable*** for married men to have a mistress – it was ***expected***.
 - a. A man had a wife to raise a legal heir by. But for love & fun he had a mistress.
 - b. What made it worse is that many wives had little affection for their husband & preferred he leave her alone.
 - c. The Ephesians were thoroughly Greco-Roman & this social convention was a major challenge to the Church.
 4. Elders have to demonstrate ***loyalty*** to the Lord & His people.
 5. How can they do that if they can’t be loyal in the 2nd most sacred covenant in life Marriage?

6. An elder ***must be zealously loyal to his wife.***
 - a. He understands the ***sacredness*** of marriage.
 - b. He gives himself to his wife in a solemn commitment that excludes anything that vies w/his affection for her.
7. Paul does ***not*** say a man ***must*** be married to be an elder.
 - a. He can be single, as Paul, Timothy, & Jesus were.
 - b. But even single, he must be ***loyal***. He's won't be a serial dater.
8. There have too many pastors who had an improper relationship with someone other than their wife.
 - a. Whether it's sexual or merely an emotionally out of bounds relationship – it's ***contrary*** to the ***exclusivity*** the marriage vow promises.
 - b. A man who ***won't*** be loyal to his wife ***can't*** be trusted with the flock of God.
9. I want to say something here • While this certainly applies to elders, it applies to ***all*** men.
 - a. Some women can be ***difficult*** to live with.
 - b. A guy who cheats will sometimes say it's because his wife is a piece of work & drove him to it.
 - c. ***No Mister!*** You drove yourself there.
 - d. Your wife may have put some gas in the car but it was ***your hands*** on the wheel.
 - e. And ***so what*** if your wife is difficult?! You made a vow; Remember? "For better or for worse"
 - f. Guess what – You know have a chance to ***really be*** like Jesus in your marriage!
 - 1) Tell me – What's ***His*** bride like? Is the Church, are ***we*** always a lovely, submitted, loveable, compliant, eager, beauty?
 - 2) Or are we often a wretched, rebellious, cantankerous, brawling, selfish & whining hag?
 - 3) Does Jesus look at us when we're like that & go out looking for another lover? No! He's faithful.
 - 4) And it's ***that faithfulness*** that brings us to repentance & will one day see us transformed into a stunningly gorgeous companion worthy of Jesus. The angels will suck in their breath in surprise on the day we're lifted to glory!
 - g. You have ***no excuse*** to have an affair because your wife is not what you want her to be.
 - h. What you ***do*** have is an opportunity to be ***even more*** like Jesus than the guy whose wife is loveable.

temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior

1. These 3 together describe someone who's ***not impetuous*** or given to ***wild swings of emotion***.
2. This person doesn't get so excited about something it takes over his attention to the harm of everything else.
3. He goes thru the normal arc of emotions like everyone but doesn't lose his basic, good, common sense.
4. He makes wise decisions regardless of how he's feeling.
5. And ***being*** spiritually mature, if a ***serious season*** of depression or elation does come, he knows it's ***not wise*** to make important decisions & puts them on hold till things settle down.
6. I often think of these qualities when I hear of church that's gotten caught up in some new wind of doctrine.
 - a. There's no end to the false prophets & teachers peddling some new ***hot religious fad***.
 - b. A few gullible pastors buy in & soon it becomes a major trend sweeping the church landscape.
 - c. Guys not committed to the Word are always looking for a ***new program*** to keep their people excited, & jump on the latest church-growth bandwagon.
 - 1) Conferences selling programs ***vs.*** 2) The CC conf.
 - d. All program-pastors do is keep people busy & entertained, but they aren't growing them up in Christ.
7. They ***aren't*** temperate, sober-minded, & behaving soundly. They're variable & impetuous.
8. You don't want someone like that charting the course for ***your*** spiritual life. You want pastors & elders who are solid, stalwart, & dedicated to your growth in grace.
9. When they ***do*** bring change, it needs to be at the bidding of the HS.
 - a. Not some new & improved fad that makes a lot of noise & whips the crowd into a mighty hurrah –
 - b. Then dissolves into nothing a couple months later, only to morph into the ***next*** program.
10. Listen, I know what I'm doing here isn't sexy & hip.
 - a. But I don't aspire to be a famous showman & get my name on a marquee.
 - b. I just want to be a faithful shepherd that gets you ready to meet Jesus.
 - c. You belong to Him, not me.

hospitable,

1. The word means "***the love of strangers.***"
2. It was demonstrated perfectly by the Good Samaritan for that poor guy beat up by thieves & left wounded

along the side of the road.

3. It's a **practical outworking of love**.
4. In Galatians 5 we read the **premier evidence** we're growing in grace is love.
5. So one of the **evidences** of spiritual maturity is **practical expressions of love**.
6. Love for those we know & are close to us is easy & expected.
7. Caring for the needs of strangers is **selfless** because there's no expectation of reward. That's clearly love.
8. Since elders are an example to others of what spiritual maturity **looks** like, it's important they be hospitable. [or apt] to teach;

1. In the early church, teaching was the **primary ministry** of elders.
2. So obviously, they have to have the **ability** to do it.
3. This is the way a pastor **feeds the flock**; He teaches the Word of God.
4. He's able to instruct others so that they **understand** the things of God.
5. It's important to say here that teaching is one of those ministries & gifts of the Spirit that has a wide range of expression.
 - a. Some elders are gifted teachers in a group of a dozen. Put them in a room w/a thousand & it's **not** so good.
 - b. Others are **stellar** in that room w/a thousand but **terrible** with the dozen. [Gestures]
 - c. Some are effective in one-on-one discipleship, in a face-to-face setting that's personal & intimate.
 - d. Others **NEED** a couple hundred before they're comfortable sharing.
 - c. Some elders excel at giving a **lecture**; Other are more effective in a **discussion** format.

6. The point is, if they're an elder – They need to be able to bring it.

B. V. 3

³ not given to wine,

1. "**Given**" is **given over to**. The elder isn't **addicted** to wine. He's not a drunk, an alcoholic.
2. Literally, it means one who "**lingers at wine**."
3. Paul never would say an elder **cannot** drink **any** wine because wine was the staple drink.
 - a. It was watered down, but still wine. // Most water was **unsafe**; it had parasites & disease.
 - b. By adding enough wine to the water, it would kill off the most dangerous bugs.
4. Later in Timothy, Paul tells Tim to **take some wine** to help with his stomach problems.
5. But **drinking** to cop a buzz was not proper for a man of God. **Drunk elders make bad leaders**.
not violent,

1. The elder can't be a **brawler**. // He doesn't resort to violence when frustrated, tired, or things don't go his way!
2. Not only won't he use his **fists**, he won't engage in **verbal violence** either.
3. While it might not hurt **physically**, words can inflict much harm when uttered in anger w/spite.
4. Elders have gained mastery over both their fists **& tongue**.

not greedy for money,

1. Years ago when Billy Graham's ministry was taking off & he had to expand his staff, he understood they'd become a major target for the devil because they were seeing so many converts to Christ.
2. Billy knew the perennial problems that beset ministers so he urged his staff to make a commitment to never touch the **money**, the **women**, or the **glory**.
3. It was an excellent policy & kept his ministry from being tainted by scandal.
4. The elder must not be in the ministry for the money he can get out of it.
5. If he did he'd be a **mercenary**, a **hireling**.
6. At the first sign of trouble, when he calculates his income doesn't match the trouble, he's gone.
7. I've known some pastors who thought the money people gave the church was their personal fund to use as they wanted.
8. If you're in full or part time ministry, it's right & proper to be supported by a salary or wage.
9. But when you think the money is yours to use however you want, that's just messed up.
10. The money people give is **God's** money, not the pastor's.

but gentle,

1. A mature believer doesn't force himself & his will. He's not aggressive!
2. He's **sensitive** to those around him & chooses his path with care.
3. He understands if he can't **influence** thru his counsel & example, **forcing** the issue will only make matters worse.
4. But let me qualify that by saying this gentleness is in his conduct **in the Church**.
5. In the pastor's task of **protecting** the flock, when wolves come w/the intent to do harm – gentleness has to be set

aside for a resolution to use **whatever level of resistance** is needed to stop the threat.

6. I want you to know that I'll be gentle with you as one of the Lord's sheep, but if I find a wolf trying to rip off the flock, you have 2 options, repent & become a sheep or I will run you off.

not quarrelsome,

1. Because the mature believer is a child of God, he's a **peacemaker**—not a **troublemaker**.

2. He refuses to engage in disputes for argument's sake.

3. He contends for truth, but won't get caught up in the endless word games the immature play.

4. Spiritual maturity doesn't need to prove itself by winning every argument.

not covetous [greedy];

1. Greed is a subtle sin that often only comes out over time.

2. When a man consistently makes choices that sacrifice **relationships** in favor of **wealth**, he has a problem.

3. The spiritually mature person understands that **money is merely a tool** to be used in serving people.

C. Vs. 4-5

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?);

1. A test to see how a man is going to lead the church is how he's **already leading** his 1st-congregation – his home.

2. Is he a good steward with his marriage, children, & household?

3. Is he **respected** by his wife & kids?

4. Do they honor his eldership in a realm where he's **already called** to be the head?

5. The **out of control PK** is proverbial.

6. But does the troubled PK mean a man has to resign as a pastor?

7. **Maybe:** If the reason the kid is a wreck because dad has done a poor job as a father.

8. But let's face it: It isn't a certainty that good parents produce **angels** & bad parents produce **rebels**.

a. Sometimes **great** parents have **Dennis the Menace & Sinister Sally**.

b. While **terrible** parents have **Andy Awesome** or **Greta Great**.

c. And what do we say of the parents who have **both**

1) A lying murderer named **Cain** & 2) A righteous man of God named **Abel**?

9. The issue is less, "How straight an arrow is the kid" as how does dad deal with them as they go thru the various phases of life under his roof?

a. If they go through a rough patch, how does Dad handle it?

b. Wisely, commendably? Or does he **over-react** or **refuse to do anything**?

c. What becomes of his sons & daughters as they turn into adults?

d. Does their respect for him **return** as they mature & realize he **really did love** them & raised them well?

e. [Billy & Franklin Graham]

D. V. 6

⁶ not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil.

1. A novice hasn't been **tested**.

2. He's been a believer too short a time to see if the things we've looked at are real or feigned.

3. Thrust too soon into the office of elder a man can easily fall prey to pride, the root of the devil's fall.

4. It's likely Paul speaks from **personal** experience.

a. Remember that he wrote this toward the end of his life & ministry.

b. We know from the Book of Acts even though Paul spent only a short time in some cities, when he left he appointed elders to lead the church he'd just started.

c. How mature could they be if they'd just come to faith a few weeks or months before?

d. He'd had to write many letters & make return visits to these churches dealing with the problems of weak & poor leadership.

5. He cautions Tim to let new believers be tested – let time pass. Don't appoint anyone to leadership too hastily.

E. V. 7

⁷ Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

1. The final quality elders need is a good reputation **outside** the church.

2. It's amazing how often people live **double** lives.
3. When they go to church they look like ***Ben Born-Again & Sally Saved***.
4. But at home or work, they're ***Robert Reprobate*** or ***Diane Debauchery***.
5. Spiritual maturity isn't 2-faced; it has integrity; what you are in the dark is what you are when the light is on.
6. Paul ends the list by reminding Tim the devil is looking for an opening to attack leaders of the church.
7. So he must pick men that when the attack inevitably comes, will provide no evidence to support the charge.

F. Deacons – Vs. 8-13

1. Next Paul gives a list of qualities to look for in selecting **deacons**.
2. As I mentioned, the list is similar so we'll just read it without comment & wrap it up this morning.

⁸ 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. ¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

III. CONCLUSION

A. A Strategic Moment

1. It's important that we've looked at these things today because they provide a great picture of spiritual maturity & something we **all** ought to aspire to.
2. But I want to end on a little different note & ask that you'd use this to pray over on behalf of myself, the staff here at Calvary, & our elders.
3. These are dangerous & difficult days, days the Bible foretold would come.
4. This is the moment in which God has called & privileged us to live & minister.
5. CC has an important role to play in this Community.
6. The battle is heating up, & as is always true in war, the enemy will try to take out our command & control – the spiritual leadership.
7. I **need** you to pray for me. The elders **need** you to pray for them. The pastors & staff need you to pray for them.

B. Give It – Know someone going to a church w/disqualified leaders – do them a favor & get them out of there Give them a CD.