

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

October 28, 2018

Qualifications of Elders (4)

by Frank Himmel

Of all the qualification of elders, there has undoubtedly been more discussion and debate about what is required in the family area than in any other. Additionally, it seems as though these requirements have disqualified more men than any others. That being the case, there may be some tendency to appoint men who meet these criteria, regardless of their other qualities. That is a mistake. Let us now consider the family qualifications.

1. *The husband of one wife* (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). While that seems plain enough, not all agree on the application.

Some have interpreted this statement to mean that an elder may have only one wife in his lifetime, despite the general permission for widows (and widowers) to remarry given in Romans 7:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 7:39. Many modern commentators, noting that the Greek expression literally means a "one woman man," suggest that the emphasis is on marital fidelity. That may well be included, but "not an



adulterer" would have been a more straightforward way to say it if that is all Paul intended (a number who take this view deny that an elder must be married.) Some say it just means that *if* an elder is married he may have only one wife. That is not, however, what it says!

1 Timothy 3:5 is key in considering all the family qualifications. "But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" The purpose of all these requirements is to help us select the right kind of leaders, and a man's family is his best opportunity to show spiritual leadership in action. Keeping in mind the purpose of the family requirements will help us avoid extremes.

2. *One who manages his own household well* (1 Timothy 3:4). The requirement as stated in Titus 1:6 is "having children...not accused of dissipation or rebellion." The NIV renders that, "not open to the charge of being wild or disobedient."

A well-managed household begins with a husband and father who leads primarily by example, not just exercising his authority. His wife is "dignified, not a malicious gossip, but temperate, and faithful in all things" (1 Timothy 3:11). His children are brought up "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1). They are taught, watched, and corrected when necessary. The family is orderly and content. Its focus is on spiritual things.

3. *Having children who believe* (Titus 1:6). The KJV and NKJV say "faithful" children. Some have interpreted ▶

that as faithful to their earthly father; the reasoning is, that more exactly parallels 1 Timothy 3:4. Elsewhere in these letters, however, the term refers to being faithful in the sense of believers or Christians (1 Timothy 4:3, 10, 12; 5:16; 6:2; etc.). Most translations express that meaning here (ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV, ESV, etc.). More is required of an overseer's children than being under control: they must be Christians. Two questions often arise.

(1) Does the fact that Paul uses the plural term *children* require that an elder have a plurality of children? No. The word *children* is often used generically of offspring, regardless of number. That is the sense in every instructional passage in the New Testament, and there is no reason to take it otherwise here. The point is quality, not quantity. Remember the purpose of these requirements. And be consistent. If *children* requires a plurality, then a candidate would have to have multiple children who are wild and disobedient in order to be unqualified.

(2) What if a man's children become unfaithful after leaving home? Does that disqualify him? It might or might not. A father has no business trying to manage the households of grown, married children! These instructions, therefore, clearly point to the time when the children are part of his household. Later unfaithfulness does not necessarily reflect a deficiency in upbringing. (Proverbs 22:6 is sometimes cited to prove that it does, but proverbs are statements of what is generally true, not absolutes.) On the other hand, it may. Churches should carefully consider such

The Answers to Prayers

*I know not if the blessing sought
Will come in just the way I thought,
But leave my prayer with Him alone
Whose will is wiser than my own,
Assured that He will grant my quest
Or send some answer far more blessed.*

Some prayers are answered yes, and others are answered no. Some are answered just as we wish, others are answered in a different and better way. Some are answered by a change in other people, others are answered by a change in us. Some are answered by lifting the trial, others are answered by giving us strength to bear the trial. Some are answered very soon, some in years to come, and some await eternity.

“This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14).



situations on a case-by-case basis rather than making categorical assumptions.

These family qualifications are important, but no more so than those relating to character, ability, experience, or reputation. All are necessary to the important work of overseeing God's people. Let's work and pray toward the development of these attributes. ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	David Gray	Mark Clifton
SONG LEADER	Sam Walters	Daven Daniel
OPENING PRAYER	Clifton Lefort	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Brian Wilson	
CUP	Josh Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Bruce Williams	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Steven Turner
CLOSING PRAYER	Kerry Gray	Albert Harrison Sr