

CHAPTER 11

That Could Serve As An Elder

The qualifications of an elder are given in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:1-9. A careful study of these verses will show that an elder (bishop) is to be the kind of man studied in this book — a God's man. It is possible for one to show himself A MAN (in God's sight) yet never qualify to serve as an elder in a congregation. This is because marriage and a family are requirements for an elder. It is an area where skills are acquired that prepares one to "take care of the house of God" but not requirements for being a man of God. . . a Christian.

We have studied man's duties, according to God's will, as a husband and father, which must be discharged by every man of God who is married and is a father. If one never marries or has a family, he can show himself A MAN in other areas, and be approved of God, but would be without valid experience necessary to serving as an elder. Let us now look at the qualifications of an elder (bishop), observing how they relate to "showing thyself a man" in all areas.

Character Qualifications

Character qualifications of a positive nature include (1) holy (saintly, deeply religious, pure); (2) Just (in judgment, equal, do right) - manifested as husband, father, citizen, and in business; (3) Self-control or patient (gentle, fore-bearing), in all areas; (4) Vigilant (Involves soberness, temperance, but reaches further to moral alertness — watchfulness — be circumspect); (5) Of good behavior — orderly (Dignified, respectable, orderly life); (6) Sober-minded (prudent, discreet, temperate); (7) Temperate (self-control, sober, patient).

Negatively, one is (8) "Not given to wine (Ma-Paroinon: "ma" not by no means; never at any time; "paroinon: Not subject to — addicted to"); (9) No brawler (quarrelsome over wine); (10) No striker (pugnacious, ready with a blow, quarrelsome, contentious); (11) No lover of money (Greedy of filthy lucre. . . eager for base gain); (12) Not covetous — free from avarice (See chapter 10); (13) Not self-willed — have his own way. . . always pleases self (See Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8); (14) Not soon angry-prone to. . . ir-

ritable.

Every one of these qualities is involved in showing thyself A MAN-of God. Naturally, no essential quality of a man of God could be lacking in the character of one who serves a congregation in the capacity of a bishop-elder-shepherd.

Other Requirements

Beside these positive and negative character features, there are some other specified things that must be true of the one who serves as an elder. He must not be a "novice," or new convert. He must be "apt to teach" (skilled at. . . ability). One can be a MAN-of God without these two qualities, at least for a while, but he cannot be ordained an elder in a congregation. "Given to hospitality" is another requirement of an elder. While this is a virtue of any Christian, it is especially essential to one's properly tending the flock of God. An elder must have a good reputation — be "without reproach". . . "blameless." This, of course, should be true of every God's MAN.

One serving a congregation in the capacity of an elder must "be sound in the faith. . . hold fast the faithful word." This is to be true of every Christian, but especially so of an elder. Bishops must not be in the process of growing from weak to strong, but firmly established in the faith, prepared and ready to "convict the gain-sayer."

According to the qualifications laid down in the text, one appointed an elder is to be one who "desires the office of a bishop." This matter of "desire" is a prerequisite of all acceptable service to God. Everything is to be done "willingly" or because one want to do it, "not grudgingly or of necessity."

It should be born in mind that all character qualifications, and others here mentioned, with the exception of "novice," are relative in their nature and absolute perfection is not required or possible.

Family Qualifications

It has been previously stated that family relations (marriage and children) are not essentials to being A MAN of God. They are, however, essentials in qualifying one to serve as an elder in a congregation.

An elder is to be "the husband of one wife." He is, therefore, a married man — married in harmony with God's word. If a man's wife dies and he, in time, marries another Christian woman, he

would still fulfill the qualification — "Husband of one wife."

The scriptures further specify that an elder must be one "having faithful children (children who believe). . . not accused of riot or unruly. . . Ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." While "children" is plural, the plural is often used in scripture and other literature to include the singular. See Eph. 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:10; and Gen. 21:7. Also, note this principle in Rom. 16:16 concerning "churches of Christ." One congregation would be a church of Christ. The requirement seems to involve "obtaining experience in ruling. . . prove to others you can rule. . . control your children, whether by one or a dozen.

"Believing children" would involve children who have obeyed the gospel. They are "in the faith."

Having his children in subjection. . . not accused of riot or unruly" does not mean there must never be an occasion of disobedience or sign of "unruly" action, but as long as the father deals with the situations so that a general pattern of subjection on the part of children is manifested, the father's qualification is valid.

Actually, a careful study of the qualifications of an elder will show that overseers (bishop-elder) in a church are men who have shown themselves A MAN of God.

Class Suggestions And Questions

1. Why would an unmarried "Man of God" never be qualified to serve as an elder?
2. List 7 positive character qualifications of an elder.
3. List 7 negative character qualifications of an elder.
4. What is the meaning of "not a novice?"
5. Explain the meaning of "Apt to teach."
6. Why is "given to hospitality" especially essential for an elder?
7. What does "without reproach" — "blameless" involve?
8. Explain the importance of "sound in the faith" — "hold fast the faithful word" for elders.
9. Discuss the matter of "desire," not only for the office of a bishop, but as it relates to any and every service of God.

10. Are all these requirements, except "novice," relative and what does that mean?
11. List family qualifications and what is involved in each.

CHAPTER 12

That Could Occupy The Office Of A Deacon

As with elders, so it may be said of deacons, if one shows himself a man in the various areas studied in this book, he will be the kind of man a congregation would select to serve in the offices designated for a local congregation in the New Testament.

The qualifications for one occupying the office of a deacon are stated in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-4. That such an office exists in a local church is obvious from 1 Tim. 3:10, 13 and Phil. 1:1. "Using" this office involves service ("used" — 1 Tim. 3:13) and wisdom (Acts 6:3) in material matters (Acts 6:2-3). Deacons are responsible for the "how" and "doing" of the material functions of the church; the "who" and "what" having been determined by the elders.

"The administration to the physical needs of the church goes further than just to the looking after the widows, orphans and poor. Constant service is needed at every worship service. Ushers are needed. The preparation of the building and all elements of the worship, such as the emblems for the Lord's Supper, the distribution of song books, distribution of tracts, etc. must be done. This is directly the work of the deacons. The preparation of the building — heating or ventilating — must be done. The general care of the grounds and buildings comes directly in line with the nature of the work of the deacons. Preparation for baptizing believers is also a part of the work of deacons. In general, the nature of the work done by deacons is easily determined, but the specific duties are assigned by the elders." (*Scriptural Elders & Deacons* — Phillips, p. 227).

Men become deacons by being selected by the congregation and appointed on the basis of their having the required qualifications (Acts 6:3). The word "likewise" in 1 Tim. 3:8, as the apostle goes from the qualifications of an elder to those of a deacon, signifies that it is just as important that deacons have stated qualifications as it is for the elders to be properly qualified; not that their qualifications are the same, but the importance of them is the same.

Character Qualifications

The deacon is to be "grave" (august, venerable, honorable, serious demeanor, dignified, vs frivolous, flighty, trivial, silly); "Not double tongued" (A straight forward man; not saying one thing to one and something else to another; no talebearer, not deceitful in speech); "Not given to much wine" (not addicted to—under the influence of); "Not greedy of filthy lucre" (eager for base gain, no lover of money, not avaricious); "Hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (Hold with a clear conscience, stability in that which was once for all delivered to the saints — Involves (1) pure conscience, (2) The faith, (3) no vacillating); "Blameless" (One against whom no evil charge can be sustained, without reproach); "Of honest report — Acts 6:3 (Good reputation); "Full of the Holy Spirit" (Bears the fruits of the spirit — Eph. 5:18); and "Filled with wisdom" (work in harmony with New Testament principles).

Family Qualifications

There are also some family qualifications given for a deacon. He is to be the "Husband of one wife" (Scripturally married), and "Ruling their children and their own house well." The word rule is from *Proisten* (Gk.) which means "to stand before — to attend to." In other words, one selected to occupy the office of a deacon must be functioning well in the family management position. The thing managed is "house," involving a wife and children. How many children and how long one must have been managing well are not revealed. Man ought not to set specifics here when God has not done so. There is suggested a difference in the qualification for a deacon and an elder, in that an elder's children must be old enough to be believers and not accused of riot or unruly.

The deacon's wife must have certain characteristics, or she would disqualify her husband. She is to be "grave, not slanderous, sober, faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11).

First Be Proved

1 Tim. 3:10 says these (deacons) are to "be first proved; then let them use the office of a deacon." The word "first" is from *Proton* (Gk.) and means "at the first — before serving." The word "proved" is from *dokimadzo* and means "to test, examine, scrutinize." There can be no doubt as to the meaning of this requirement. Questions have been raised, however, and various opinions stated as to the how of this proving and the length of time involved. Obviously some time would be involved —

enough to watch and observe. Besides observation on the part of the congregation, testimony from other people and places who had occasion to observe could figure in the scrutinizing process.

There is no time period stated in Scripture, but as long as it takes to do what is required would naturally be involved, whether it was a relatively short period of time, or longer. On this matter, brother H.E. Phillips says, "I think, some very good things in his book.

"The first thing we notice about this list of qualifications is that they are not as rigid as those for the eldership. This means that the nature of the work of a deacon is not the same as that of an elder, and that it does not require the maturity and advancement in experience for the deacons as it requires for the elders. . . The idea of younger, less mature and experienced men in the deaconship than in the eldership is found in the qualifications and duties." (Scriptural Elders & Deacons — Phillips, p. 259).

"Different people under different circumstances require different periods of time to prove them. The time element is not the important thing. Ordinarily men may be known well enough in a year or two to know whether or not they are qualified to serve as deacons. But they must be proved whatever length of time is necessary." (Ibid., p. 286).

In conclusion, let us observe that any man with a house (wife) and children who has "shown himself a man" in the areas studied in this book is qualified to occupy the office of a deacon. While youthfulness, immaturity, and circumstances may keep some who are truly men of God from serving as a deacon, whoever is appointed, must be a "God's MAN."

Class Suggestions And Questions

1. List scriptures showing that "deacons" is an office in the church.
2. What statements suggest the nature of a deacon's service?
3. Enumerate some of the activities involved in the service of deacons.
4. How does one become a deacon in a congregation?
5. List and explain the character qualifications of a deacon.
6. List three family qualifications for a deacon.
7. Explain the qualification — "First be proved."

8. How may this "proving" be done? Is there a time period involved and if so how long?
9. Wherein are the qualifications for a deacon not as rigid as those for an elder?
10. If there is something in your life other than immaturity, or marriage and family that would keep you from serving as a "deacon," would it not also keep you from being a "God's MAN?"

CHAPTER 13

"By Honoring Mother And Father"

The Law stated, "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12). Paul wrote the Ephesians, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:1-3).

The duty of these texts is applicable to both men and women, but any study of duties particularly assigned to men would of necessity include this one. Any man who fails here does not show himself A MAN. . . of God.

These duties are not limited just to siblings in the home, but apply throughout one's life, or the life of parents. Certainly, the young man at home is included, but men with homes of their own are still obligated. Mark 7:6-13 tells of grown men who were violating this duty. Men who fail in this matter are listed in scripture with the vilest and most wicked apostates (Rom. 1:23; 2 Tim. 3:2). Disobedience, in the Old Testament, called for the death penalty (Deut. 21:18-20).

The particular duties involved are two in number — (1) honor, and (2) obey, yet they are actually tied together.

"Obedience is the duty, honor the disposition of which the obedience is born. Where the disposition to obey is lacking, there will be no obedience in the true sense; any conformity to the will of the parents will be wanting in the proper attitude that should characterize obedience" (Annual Lesson Com., G.A. — 5/26/46, p. 151).

Honor (Honour)

The word "honour" is in the Greek "Time, noun; Timao, verb" and means "primarily a valuing. . . esteem" — (Vines). It is bestowed upon Christ (Heb. 2:9); upon man (Heb. 2:7); to all to whom it is due (Rom. 13:7); to wives by husbands (1 Pet. 3:7). Involved in the word's meaning is also the matter of material sustenance (1 Tim. 5:3, 17; Mark 7:8-13; Jno. 19:26-27).

"There is a degree of affectionate respect which is owing to parents that no person else can properly claim. For a considerable time parents stand, as it were, in the place of God to their children, and therefore, rebellion against their lawful commands has been considered as rebellion against God. This precept, therefore, prohibits not only all injurious acts, irreverent and unkind speeches to parents, but enjoins all necessary acts of kindness, filial respect, and obedience. We can scarcely suppose that a man 'honors' his parents who, when they fall weak, blind, or sick, does not exert himself to the uttermost in their support. In such cases God as truly requires the children to provide for their parents, as he requires parents to feed, nourish, support, instruct, and defend the children, when they were in the lowest state of helpless infancy" (Adam Clark Com., Vol. 1, p. 405).

One definition of the word honour (Time—Gk.) according to Vines, is "to hold in high esteem." Some parents make it difficult for their children to do this because they, by their actions, are not "honor-worthy." Because of parental dishonesty, falsehood, intemperance, crimes, selfishness and ungodly living, some children find it difficult, rather than easy, to "esteem" their parents. The parent supposed in the text is one who is honor worthy. Children may discharge certain duties they have in honoring their parents, but when it comes to "holding in high esteem," this may be made practically impossible by the parents ungodliness. Parents who seek to follow God's instructions in rearing their children will naturally be held in high esteem by their children. If not, the children are guilty of a high crime in the eyes of God and could not be considered a "man" or "woman" of God.

Obey

Ephesians 6:4 calls upon children to obey their parents in the Lord. All obedience is to be rendered as "unto the Lord," in harmony with His will. With the Christian, the Lord is the authority behind every command. To disobey commands that are in harmony with the Lord's will coming from a God ordained authority, is to rebel against God. Because God is the supreme authority, obedience to delegated authority is always limited. The delegated authority — parents, powers that be, elders — could demand something contrary to God's will. In such case, the Christian must not violate his conscience or go contrary to God's will, so would have to disobey — "Obey God rather than men."

In dealing with children, commands from parents that are impractical and that surpass a child's capacity actually impose no

duty, but is action that provokes wrath or discouragement (Eph. 6:4).

Children who "talk back to" parents, do as they please, ignore and speak disparagingly of them are actually disobedient children. Failure to honor and obey parents is among the blackest of sins (Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:2; Ex. 20:12; 21:17; Lev. 20:9).

Why Honor — Obey — Parents?

The commands of God to man are always for man's own good. Besides being a command of God, the rewards of obedience show why it should be rendered.

Eph. 6:2 says concerning this command, "It is right." Nature confirms this. Infancy demands someone with knowledge and wisdom to direct. . . to be obeyed. This dependency and submission naturally builds into one a feeling that parents are to be obeyed and revered. This reciprocation is certainly right. And, of course, anything commanded of God is right. He demanded it in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:12) and Christ made it a part of His will (Eph. 6:2), even exemplifying it in his own life concerning his mother (Jno. 19:25-27).

Another reason for honoring father and mother is the promise attached to it. The original promise was "live long in the land promised. . . that it may go well with thee in the land" (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). Disobedience would result in it going ill with one. There is also longevity of life involved in the promise. This is not literally and universally true, for some who obey and reverence parents die young, but it is a general truth.

It is generally true because obedient children are saved from numerous vices, crimes, and "pit-falls" that shorten life. They are directed into, and commit themselves to, virtuous habits that are conducive to long life. Besides these things, the righteous are under the providential care of Him who regards even a fallen sparrow and numbers the hairs of our head (Matt. 10:29-30). Too, remember that disobedience, under the Law, carried the death penalty — the sudden ending of life.

The good of the community in which we live may be listed as a reason for obeying the command now under study. Godly families, observing this duty, are stabilizing influences in any community.

The greatest reason for obeying any command of God is "to be right with God — to please God." Children cannot fail to "show

piety" to their parents without offending and insulting God. It is interesting to note that the word "piety" (to reverence; to show piety toward — Vines) is used in scripture with reference to both God and parents (1 Tim. 5:4; Acts 17:23). It is, therefore, "impious" to disobey a command relating to either God or our parents.

Failing To Honor Parents

It would be well to note how many fail to honor parents. Jesus showed that some in his day were disobeying this command by not providing for their parents, excusing themselves by calling what should have been used for this "Corban." They claimed it was a gift — had been promised to God. Jesus said, in this way they rejected the word of God by their traditions (Mark 7:3-13). God's man will never leave his parents to be cared for by a benevolent church or community, excusing himself with "I pay taxes — make contribution to the church."

Far too often, there are those who disobey this command by flagrant disobedience and outright rebellion to parents.

Failing to show respect is still another way of disobeying this command. Speaking disparagingly of them, not remaining silent while they speak, not giving to them the best seat, and neglecting to visit, write, or call are just some actions that fail to "honor." These failures show a lack of gratitude. God, in speaking of the action of His servant, said "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord" (Lev. 19:32). "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother: and all the people shall say, Amen" (Deut. 27:16).

Many males are today looked upon as real MEN, because of their physical appearance, popularity, or material success, but because of their failure to honor their parents they are far from being A MAN-of God. If you would "Show Thyself A Man," don't neglect this duty.

Class Suggestions And Questions

1. What are the commands of Ex. 20:12 and Eph. 6:1-3?
2. Are these commands limited to children at home?
3. How are the rebellious described in Rom. 1:23 and 2 Tim. 3:3?
4. Define the word "Honour."
5. List two things (duties) involved in the word "honour."

6. Why is a failure to obey parents equal to disobedience to God? When would disobedience be justified?
7. Discuss the responsibility of parents in making demands or giving orders.
8. Give four reasons as to why one should honor father and mother.
9. How were some violating this command in Mark 7:9-13?
10. List some other actions that show disobedience to this command.

