

Fit to Lead
Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim 3:1-7

Remember playing basketball freshman year, seeing the team captains as larger than life
They were twice as strong, twice as quick, twice as physical, jump twice as high
And I admired how they handled themselves, both on and off the court
As I reflected in later years, I realized they needed to be that way, as captains, because
they set the pattern for the entire team
If they were lazy, so was the team; If they worked hard, so did the team
If they partied, so did the team; What they did, the team did . . .
Because they had the most influence and carried the most responsibility
That's very similar to elders in churches
Which is why God set the bar so high for the position/role of elder
And why we need to grasp the qualities that make them fit to lead

The bar is high

I think you'll see that as we read Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim 3:1-7
Noble aspiration – because they are aspiring to a labor of love and sacrifice
That's a high bar
Remember – Elders are those who have been formally/publicly recognized as having the
right and responsibility to lead and determine the affairs of the church
And God gives us a list of 19 qualities – 19 character traits, heart attitudes, and abilities in
order to determine whether someone is fit to lead
You can see those on your insert with a brief explanation for each – take a look . . .
Above reproach; Not arrogant, Gentle, Not greedy for gain, Self-controlled
Upright and Holy, Disciplined
Anyone eager to step up and be measured by these?
They are high standards for a high calling

While most of these qual's are subjective, there is one criteria that is very objective,
straightforward – *elders must be men*
Can't just throw that criteria out – dismiss it, ignore it, or rationalize it away just
because it's culturally uncomfortable . . .
Or because you've been burned by poor male leadership in the past
I'd love to *not* have to fight against the culture on this one, but I can't; we can't
Scripture is too clear and too compelling otherwise

Because when Paul refers to elders, he regularly uses gender specific pronouns like *he*
and *him*, and never uses feminine pronouns
And, he says elders must be the *husband of one wife* [literally, a man of one woman]
You have to do some serious interpretive gymnastics in order to rationalize that away
Or, you have to start with a low view of Scripture in the first place
I can't do either of those things, and neither should you

Not only that, but 1 Tim 2:12 says – *I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise
authority over a man*
The context of that passage is the church, and the two restrictions – teaching and having
authority – are the two primary characteristics of being an elder
So by saying that a woman should not open the Scriptures to explain and apply them in
mixed company, nor be in a position of leading men in the church . . .
He's saying that women cannot be elders or pastors

And you can't say that it's a cultural thing, because in the very next verses Paul cites the
creation order of God and the role reversal caused by Adam and Eve's sin, as the
basis for the restriction
For those reasons, elders must be men

That doesn't mean that a woman's *perspective* is useless
In fact, just the opposite is the case, and there's been far too much neglect of that
It doesn't mean that women are somehow *inferior* to men
Both were created equally in the image of God
It doesn't mean they are somehow *unequal* before God
Scripture assures us that men and women have equal access to the blessings of salvation
That in Christ there is no distinction

Grudem quote

*We must admit that evangelical churches have often failed to recognize the full equality of
men and women, and thereby have failed to count women equal in value to men. The
result has been a tragic failure to recognize that God often gives women equal or greater
spiritual gifts than men, a failure to encourage women to have full and free participation
in the various ministries of the church, and a failure to take full account of the wisdom
that God has given to women with respect to important decisions in the life of the church.*
Wayne Grudem (Systematic Theology, p. 937)

That's one of the reasons we take very seriously the wife of a potential elder
We know their perspective will be heard and *should* be heard by their husbands

Men-only as elders has nothing to do with ability, equality
It is simply the way that God has designed and ordained that his church be led
The bar is high because the responsibility before God is so huge

In using these qual's, we must guard against *abusing* them
They're not intended to be litmus tests

Litmus tests are out

You've seen litmus paper – determine whether acid or base; dip it in, boom, check it off
Elder qualifications are not meant to be check off's
If they were, no one could ever be an elder because no one has a perfect record in these
Have you ever been . . . undisciplined (you're out); lacked self-control (you're out)?
Trivial argument (you're out); Kids act out (whether yes or no, you're out)?
Clearly, these lists are not intended to be check off's for whether a person has ever sinned

Nor can they be used to DQ a person for the life/behavior they exhibited as an unbeliever
If that were the case, Paul and Timothy would not have qualified as elders
Nor would any of the other Gentile or Jewish converts
They all lived in sin previous to embracing Jesus
Instead, 1 Tim 1:12-13 tells us that Paul, as our example, was shown mercy by God, for
his former ways, and *still* chosen to lead and spread the word

Which is one of the reasons we can't take the *husband of one wife* qualification out of the
context of the entire list and apply it as a litmus test –
If it was an act of ignorance due to unbelief, then it's covered by the blood of Jesus

What's more, it's likely that this standard was originally intended to prevent polygamists from becoming elders because they didn't display a *singular* love, devotion, and commitment to their wives that God requires in marriage
That's the intent of this qualification – to ensure that a man displays a singular love, devotion, and commitment to his wife according to God's design for marriage
That's a far higher standard than any litmus test check-off ever will be

Think about it . . .

Just because a man has been married to one woman all his life, doesn't mean his marriage is a model of love and devotion
If a man is indulging in an affair, yet remains married, does he meet the standard of eldership? Obviously not

On the other hand . . .

If he's widowed and then remarried to another believer, he's not disqualified, because his devotion in marriage is not in question
If he was biblically divorced as a *believer*, that doesn't automatically disqualify him either, but it would most *certainly* heighten our hesitancy and increase our scrutiny
The question is not whether he has been married before, but whether the circumstances of his previous marriage were God-honoring and God-glorifying . . .

Begs the question – If they're not meant to be litmus tests, what *are* they meant for?

They are meant to help determine a pattern of godliness and maturity in a man's life
Litmus tests are out, and . . .

Godliness is in

Elders need to demonstrated a long-term pattern of *godliness* in their life

J. Oswald Chambers (Spiritual Leadership) – *Churches grow in every way when they are guided by strong, spiritual leaders with the touch of the supernatural radiating in their service.*

Godliness should determine their leadership role, not their social status

Should be chosen on the basis of their biblical convictions, not their business experience
Their humility, not their intellectual savvy; Their passion, not their personality

Should be men of prayer; Men who love Jesus; Men filled (controlled/lead) by HS

Men whose one pure and holy passion; whose magnificent obsession

Whose glorious ambition for their life; Is to know and follow hard after God

Being fit to lead as an elder is all about being the *right* man of God, with the *right* character and the *right* priorities

Quote – Samuel Brengle was a leader with the Salvation Army in the early 1900's

Speaking of spiritual authority and leadership . . .

It is not won by promotion, but by many prayers and tears. It is attained by confession of sin, and much heart-searching and humbling before God; by self-surrender, a courageous sacrifice of every idol, a bold embrace of the cross, and by an eternal, unfaltering looking unto Jesus.

Samuel Brengle, *The Soul-Winner's Secret*

That's godliness, and godliness is in when it comes to elders and spiritual leadership

The question is . . .

Where are you?

- Are you *striving* for these same qualities in your own life?

All of these qualities and characteristics are referred to elsewhere in Scripture, either in principle or by example, intended for all believers

Strive in the strength God provides to live according to the standards of your leaders

- Are you eager to *follow* the example of your elders?

Paul said in 1 Cor 11:1 – *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*

He commanded Timothy to *set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.* (1 Tim 4:12)

Told Titus – *show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works* (Titus 2:7)

The same admonitions apply to elders now – Be a good example

And you should be eager to *follow* good, *godly* examples

If you're not, go somewhere where you can

But I'd guess that your lack of desire has less to do with your elders than with you

- Are you willing to submit to your elders?

Heb 13:17 – *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

Requires trust – God really worked on me in this about 5 years ago

Had to trust that *God* put the men in place as my elders, and that under his direction, they would lead well

- Are you ready to *honor* your elders?

1 Tim 5:17 – *Let the elders who rule well, be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.*

God intends that we think highly of our elders; Treat them especially well

Defer to them; Respect them . . .

Due to their faithful labor of love and sacrificial leadership

You can do that most by striving for the same standards of godliness they do

Willingly submitting to their leadership; Eagerly following their example

If your elders are fit to lead, they're fit to follow

Close

Next week – Hypocrisy and shameful people