

THE ELDERS' FAMILY REQUIREMENTS

Text: Titus 1:5-11; 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 11

INTRO: It seems that most of the controversy that exists in determining whether a man is qualified to be an elder centers around the family requirements. I do not claim to have all wisdom or knowledge in this area, but I hope I may be able to offer some helpful considerations.

I. HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE. Lit. "one woman man."

- A. Much dispute. Most sectarian scholars do not believe an elder is required to be married -- just that he can't have **more** than one wife.
- B. Some brethren suggest the qualification was only meant to exclude polygamists.
- C. Virtually all brethren agree that a man who is divorced & involved in an unscriptural marriage is eliminated.
- D. Many are convinced that even a man who has been scripturally divorced & remarried is excluded.
- E. A few would even exclude a man who has remarried after the death of his first wife.
- F. Most brethren would exclude a man whose wife has died & he has chosen **not** to remarry.
- G. I surerest the literal "one woman man" may be the best guide. It tells us something of the **kind** of man he is -- loyal, dependable, supportive, trustworthy, honorable, honest -- not a skirt chaser, not one who takes lightly the commitments he has entered into.
 1. Obviously polygamists & those in unscriptural marriages would be excluded from serving as an elder
 2. Also, in the light of 1 Tim. 3:4-5, a man who never took a wife or raised a family would be excluded

II. FAITHFUL (OR BELIEVING) CHILDREN.

KJV & NKJ say “faithful.” Most other translations say “believing.”

A. The same sort of questions surround this qualification.

1. Must he have children -- or is it just saying that **if** he has children they must meet a certain standard?
2. Must he have a plurality of children, or is one child sufficient to qualify him?
3. Must his children be his biological children, or may they be adopted, foster children, etc.?
4. Must they be Christians, or simply “faithful” to their father. (This is a common approach among brethren.)
5. If they must be faithful Christians, **how faithful** must they be? Must they be as faithful as if we were considering them for the eldership?
6. Must **all** his children remain in the faith after they have left his home and established homes of their own?
7. Must **all** his children have reached the “age of accountability”?

B. A few suggestions.

1. A man must have reared a family in order to meet the criteria of 1 Tim. 3:4-5. It would make no difference whether those children were his biologically or were adopted. We want to see evidence of what **kind** of man & what **kind** of leadership he has exerted.
2. I am convinced that the translators all saw in the Gr. word PISTOS the idea of faith in God.

3. If he has children who have reached an age of accountability & have obeyed the gospel, I see no reason to be concerned if he has still more children not yet that old. This may be a matter of judgment, but I see no real issue here.
4. Children who have left his house & established homes of their own are no longer under his authority or direct influence. He cannot be held responsible for all the mistakes & errors they may make. **On the other hand** they will **always** to some extent be a product of their up-bringing. What they are now should not be ignored, but it should count much less than what they were when they were under his authority.
5. The inspired writer probably did not intend to make it essential for a man to have a plurality of children to qualify. Compare Eph. 6:1, 4; 1 Tim. 5:4, etc. Keep in mind that we are looking for a certain **kind** of man. Of course, a plurality of believing children will make a decision more obvious.
6. If, after leaving home, one (or more) of his children ceases to be a Christian, does this automatically disqualify an otherwise qualified man? NOTE: It doesn't even say "all his children must be faithful;" it says, "having faithful or believing" children.
7. How faithful? Believing what? God wants us to use common sense. Remember, we are examining his children to the extent that they indicate what **kind** of man **he** is

III. RULES HIS OWN HOUSE WELL. Gr. to stand before, to lead, to

maintain. He is a stable & a good leader. His family follows his lead, not because he is a tyrant & they are afraid not to, but because he is a good leader, has their respect & seeks what is for their good.

- A. Children in submission. Gr. a military term: to rank under. His maturity & experience count for something.
- B. Children hold him in reverence. They may not always agree with him, but they always respect him.
ILLUSTRATE: two boys. (1) I can't do that because of what my dad would do to me if he found out...
- C. Children not accused of dissipation. Gr. wastefulness, prodigality. Not like the wasteful, rebellious, prodigal son of LK 15.
- D. Children not accused of insubordination. Not unruly, disobedient.

IV. QUALIFICATIONS HIS WIFE MUST HAVE.

- A. Reverent. Trench says the word involves a combination of serious-mindedness with dignity. Vine suggests the word points to seriousness of purpose & self-respect in conduct.
- B. Not slanderers. Not one given to finding fault with the demeanor & conduct of others & spreading innuendoes & criticism in the church.
- C. Temperate. Sober, abstaining from wine, free from intoxicants.
- D. Faithful in all things, PISTOS. Faithful, trustworthy, reliable (passive).

NOTE: Some of the qualifications of the elder such as being hospitable necessarily involve his wife as well.

CONCLUSION: Remember the bottom line: we are looking for a certain **kind** of man. Let us work & pray that we may develop men of such quality, & utilize them to the utmost in the service of God.

La Porte, TX, June 3, 1979
Exton, PA, November 5, 1989
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, May 13, 2001