

Welcome To

Malvern Bible Chapel



The Role of Biblical Elders

Part of the Teaching Series: The Church

Acts 20:17-31

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Titus 1:5-16

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The Role of Biblical Elders

Introduction:

- 9th lesson in the church series. Previously we looked at:
- Who or what is the church? Where do I belong in the church (spiritual gifts)? Who is in charge of the church? Four marks of a healthy church. Lord's Supper. Baptism. Witness and worship. Leadership (Shepherds/Elders).
- This will be part 2 concerning the role of biblical elders.
- The 3 primary texts will not be read entirely but we will summarize the role of biblical elders contained in them.
- We will also look at the way MBC is organized (polity).
- Finally we will review how biblical elders are chosen.

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- Three words translated “elder” are used interchangeably, and always in the plural:
 1. **Episcopos** (emphasize authority & duty to provide oversight)
 2. **Presbuteros** (emphasize the maturity of experience)
 3. **Poimén** (emphasize the feeding, protecting & leading—shepherd)
- Five ways that protestant churches are organized (polity):
 1. **The Episcopal system** (governance by a hierarchy of bishops)
 2. **The Presbyterian system** (governance by a hierarchy of elders)
 3. **The Congregational system** (governance by the congregation)
 4. **The Non-governmental system** (no recognized governance)
 5. **The Biblical eldership system** (autonomous governance by elders)
- Distinctives of eldership at MBC: plurality; parity
- Priesthood of all believers (**1 Pet. 2:5**)
- Elders not democratically elected (or removed) by vote.

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- A number of terms describe biblical eldership, and taken together they paint a fairly complete picture of the distinctive leadership in our local church. They are:
 - (1) Pastoral leadership
 - (2) Shared leadership
 - (3) Male leadership
 - (4) Qualified leadership
 - (5) Servant leadership
- [See outline (revised) of the “Polity 101” message given 5/30/2010.]

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Body of Lesson:

- Focus today mainly on what constitutes qualified leadership.
- Requirements are mainly listed in three passages:
 1. 1 Timothy 3:1-7
 2. Titus 1:5-9
 3. 1 Peter 5:1-4 (looked at last week)

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1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV)

¹The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

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Titus 1:5-9 (ESV)

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

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Body of Lesson:

- Focus today mainly on what constitutes qualified leadership.
- Requirements are mainly listed in three passages:
 1. 1 Timothy 3:1-7
 2. Titus 1:5-9
 3. 1 Peter 5:1-4 (looked at last week)
- In these passages many (24) qualifications are mentioned. Today we will group these into 3 broad categories:
 1. Moral and spiritual character
 - Above reproach (being a one-woman man, if married), integrity, self-control, spiritual maturity, spiritually devout, righteous, a lover of good, gentle, stable, sound-minded, not contentious hospitable, and morally above reproach before the non-Christian community.

¹For an excellent review of this subject, see: <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-biblical-qualifications-pastoral-eldership-titus-15-9-1-tim-31-7-1-peter-51-4>

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1. Moral and spiritual character

-Above reproach (being a one-woman man, if married), integrity, self-control, spiritual maturity, spiritually devout, righteous, a lover of good, gentle, stable, sound-minded, not contentious hospitable, and morally above reproach before the non-Christian community.

2. Abilities

-Able to manage his family household well, provide a model of Christian living for other to want to follow, and be able (not necessarily spiritually gifted) to teach and defend the faith.

3. Spirit-given motivation for the task

-Desire to love and care for God's people and to serve willingly; the Holy Spirit, not the church, must place elders as overseers of His flock.

-The Spirit plants the pastoral desire in a prospective elder's heart and then gives him the compulsion and strength to do the work, as well as the wisdom and appropriate gifts to care for the sheep that God purchased at great cost—the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

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- What is the procedure used at MBC if a new elder must be selected? The process can be viewed in several stages:
 1. The existing Elders Committee is responsible for identifying those adult male believers in active fellowship in the assembly who consistently demonstrate the qualifications for elders enumerated in **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:6-9**, are energized by the Holy Spirit (**Acts 20:28**) and who reflect the pastoral and leadership inclinations Paul counseled his young protégé, Timothy, to develop.
 2. Candidates qualifying in Stage 1 will be interviewed by the Elders Committee to determine if he has sufficient interest and availability to serve the assembly as an elder.

A candidate's wife also should be qualified. Although Paul does not specifically mention the qualification for an elder's wife, he does so regarding a deacon's wife (**1 Tim. 3:11**). We believe an elder's wife should be no less qualified.

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- Elder selection process (cont.)¹:
 3. If, after time to consider this possibility and pray about it, the candidate is interested in proceeding, an announcement will be made to the assembly that consideration is being given to having the named candidate join the Elders Committee. The assembly will be given opportunity for anyone to voice concerns or make other comments to the Elders Committee.
 4. After one month if there are no unresolved issues that would hinder the candidate from serving as an elder, the Elders Committee will reach a final determination on the candidate's qualifications, motivation and performance. That decision, if affirmative, will indicate the specific date the appointment as elder is effective. A dedication or investiture may be arranged accordingly. At any time prior to joining the Elders Committee the candidate may elect to withdraw from consideration.

¹ From *Elder Selection Process at Malvern Bible Chapel*, approved Feb. 15, 2011.

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Application:

1. The believers meeting here at MBC are God's flock of sheep, not a herd of cattle, and as such we need to be shepherded by God's chosen overseers.
2. God gives clear guidelines for the character qualities and abilities of those He chooses, equips, and empowers by the Holy Spirit for this essential leadership work. "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop/elder, he desires a good work." Challenge: Which men will step up?
3. Those spiritual overseers must constantly remember that they are serving the needs of the God's flock as His under-shepherds and are accountable to God, the Chief Shepherd, for their leadership. (See **Heb. 13:7, 17**)

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Hebrews 13:7, 17 (ESV)

⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

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.