ELDER QUALIFICATIONS

Titus 1:6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

“Blameless” translates a Greek word that means that there is nothing in the person’s life that can even be brought up as a charge against him. It does not mean perfect, but rather one who is trying to obey God in all areas of his life and one, who when he makes mistakes, is willing to acknowledge them.

“Faithful to his wife” is a paraphrase of the Greek which is literally “The husband of one wife” or “a man of one woman.” It forbids polygamy, which the Old Testament allowed and is often a problem on the mission field, and extramarital affairs. It also clearly indicates that only men are to be elders.

Jesus’ words Quoting Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:576A, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh,” seems to clearly indicate that the ideal is one man and one woman married for life.

Remarriage after the death of a spouse or after a divorce for legitimate reasons is not portrayed as sin in other passages and does not seem to be in view here. The fact that Paul encourages widows under 60 to remarry in I Timothy 5:9-15 would seem to support this, as would a literal translation of I Corinthians 7:27&28a (NASB), “Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry, you have not sinned.”

“A man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild or disobedient.” I Timothy 3:4&5 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)

To be made an Elder, a man must manage his children well. He must see to it that his children obey him and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect (not by yelling or violence). His children must be believers.

His children must not be open to the charge of being wild or disobedient (NASB “not accused of dissipation or rebellion,” ESV “not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination”). Ephesians 5:18 says getting drunk on wine leads to the word translated being wild in Titus 1:6. The idea behind the word translated disobedient is not being willing to be under authority.

Titus 1:7 Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

“Since an overseer manages God’s household.” 1 Timothy 3:14&15 Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

“Blameless” is the same word as in Titus 1:5

“Not overbearing.” Overbearing, according to Vine’s means, “one who, dominated by self-interest, and inconsiderate of others, arrogantly asserts his own will…one so far overvaluing any determination at which he himself has once arrived that he will not be removed from it.” Other common translations are self-willed, arrogant or stubborn. “My way or the highway” expresses the idea.

“Quick-tempered” translates a Greek word derived from the word meaning angry. “Quick-tempered” is by far the most common translation, but the root meaning of the word suggests one who is angry inside and whose anger comes to the surface with almost any provocation.

“Not given to drunkenness” translates *“paroinos,”* which literally means “tarrying at wine.” (Vines) That Paul is not absolutely forbidding the drinking of wine is obvious from I Timothy 5:23, “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and frequent illnesses.”

Without refrigeration, grape juice would naturally ferment, with a relatively low alcohol content. My research indicates it was normally mixed, one part wine to four parts water, and was the usual drink at meals. The alcohol would kill the things in the water that were harmful.

To drink weak wine mixed with water was better for one’s health than drinking just water but sitting around drinking wine with one’s friends could lead to drunkenness and the things that go with it. In I Timothy 3:2 Paul says that an overseer must be temperate (KJV sober), which means free from the use of intoxicants.

Taking anything into one’s body that impairs your judgment is wrong.

I Thessalonians 5:6-8 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

“Not violent” is literally “not a striker.” Other common translations are not pugnacious, not a bully or not someone who likes to fight. James 3:17&18 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

“Not pursuing dishonest gain” does not condemn earning money honestly but only gaining money through deceitful practices. Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Titus 1:8 Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

“Hospitable” translates *“philoxenos,”* literally “loving” *(“philos”)* “strangers” *(“xenos”).* The primary idea seems to be willing to put yourself out for (to love) people you don’t know.

“One who loves what is good” translates a Greek word made by combining the words for love and good. Enjoying watching and/or listening to evil being described or portrayed is spiritually unhealthy.

“Self-controlled.” Prudent, sensible or of good judgement in other translations. Proverbs 16:32 (NASB) He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.

“Upright” means someone who does what is right without partiality.

“Holy” combines the ideas of doing what is right with the qualities of being gracious and showing mercy.

“Disciplined” is very similar in meaning to the word translated “self-controlled.” It basically means someone who is strong enough to do what is right rather than what their desires or emotions want them to do.

Titus 1:9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

I Timothy 3:2 says an elder must be able to teach.

Things to Remember

An elder must be a man of one woman whose children believe and are not even open to the charge of being wild or disobedient. (If he can’t manage his children, how can he manage the church?)

An elder manages God’s household, the local church.

Most of the qualifications have to do with having godly character.

He must understand what the Bible teaches and be able to communicate it clearly, both to believers and those opposing Christian teaching.