

## Appoint Elders in Every City

by Hendrik Joubert

In **Titus 1:5** the apostle Paul instructs Titus to appoint *elders* in every city; however it was not to be done indiscriminately. In verses 6 through 9 he supplies him with a list of qualifications for those who are to be appointed, and explains why men with these qualifications are needed.

**Above reproach** is a bold, strict quality which *should* be the goal of every Christian – elders *have* to be *above reproach*. In his letter to Timothy Paul adds that the *overseer must have a good reputation with those outside the church,... 1 Timothy 3:7*. The *bishop* should demand respect among Christians as well as non-Christians.

The idea that he should be ***the husband of one wife*** seems strange in that no Christian husband is allowed more than one wife. In the list of qualifications as given in the letter to Timothy we learn that the *overseer* should be ***one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity<sup>5</sup> but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?*** **1 Timothy 3:5**. There are two sides to every divorce. Whether the husband exercised poor judgment in choosing a life partner, or demonstrated a lack of ability to manage the relationship, it casts doubt on his ability *to manage his own household*. For this reason I believe this should be given serious consideration.

**Having children who believe** is another point of contention as some believe that he has to have *some* children (two or more) who believe, that it does not include all his children. The *some* is not in the text and it would seem that the record of competency is complete when the last child becomes a believer. Another point for consideration is what the children do after they leave home. This would seem to me to be the telling period, how strong his influence is when they are no longer under compulsion – ***under control with all dignity. Dissipation or rebellion*** is often displayed by one who leaves home. Should I (author) have a child who makes shipwreck of his or her faith I will consider myself disqualified. I can manage under compulsion, but not successfully instill the values of God in my household. My management style must therefore be under suspicion.

In a position of authority an *elder* should be one who respects authority. He should not be accused of *rioting* or *rebellion*. He should be one who handles authority with humility – a *natural* leader. The principle of submitting to authority may be clearly seen throughout the Scriptures. In the middle of a discussion on subjection to governing authorities the apostle writes: ***Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. Romans 13:2***. Submitting to God's authority is the ultimate form of subjection.

The elder must ***be above reproach*** specifically ***as God's steward***. No one should be able to level any charge which may indicate that he is not devoted to serving God in the way he executes his duties. Peter then goes on to point out that they will eventually report to the ***Chief Shepherd***. (**1 Peter 5:4**)

**Not addicted to wine**. Addiction is an interesting phenomena – it is interesting to notice how we will justify our practices. Controlled social drinking, at meals only, often leads to a little more – some who read this may experience some irritating emotions, feeling ready to debate the issue. Examine yourself and ask the question why? Social drinking is frowned upon by many believers and unbelievers, and for that reason I would want to be above reproach in this regard – ***It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your***

**brother stumbles. Romans 14:21**

**Not fond of sordid gain. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6:10.** A devoted steward of God should not allow himself to be distracted from his duty performed for his Master by the things of this life.

**Hospitable.** He should be friendly and approachable. **Loving what is good** suggests that he should be focused on the things of God. **Sensible.** Of sound mind, sober-minded and self-controlled are alternatives. **Just** has the sense of innocence and goes hand in hand with **devout** – to be pure or holy.

**Self-control** must be the most important characteristic one who would submit to a life as demanded by God needs. Denying your desires in favor of what the Lord would have you do lies at the heart of obedience. There is more than one area where self-control is needed by the elder. He is **to refute those who contradict**, or oppose the pure word of God. The elder should therefore also be one who is **holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching.**

To take on this serious responsibility should be a willing and calculated act: **It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. 1 Timothy 3:1**