



Studies on the Lord's Church, the "Called-Out" People of God

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# Lesson Outlines

Preface	1
1 Elders and the Lord's Church, Part I	2
2 Elders and the Lord's Church, Part II	6
3 The Elder's Relationship with His Children	10

# Preface

Christ's statement in Matthew 16:18 (“... *I will build my church*...”) is the foundation for this study. With decreased attention given to the significance of the church in the lives of Christians today, it is important that the Lord's people examine what the word of God says about the church. This class will study the church as presented in the New Testament, exploring the scriptures to help participants better understand the importance, organization, worship and mission of the Lord's church. These series of classes focused on the The Church and was presented by the shepherds May-August 2010.

# Lesson 1

## Elders and the Lord's Church, Part I

### Jerry Smiley, Author

*"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-13*

#### I. Introduction

Over the past several weeks we have been studying about the Lord's church and today, we want to look deeper into the divine organization of His body, the Church. It is through God that He has translated us from darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His dear Son. (Colossians 1:13) We are members and subjects of a kingdom not fashioned after the world. Whose King is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. He has all dominion and power in His kingdom, the church. In the early days of the church, many in Jerusalem and throughout responded to the preaching of the gospel and they that gladly received the word were baptized. *"praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."* (Acts 2:47)

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not **all have the same function**, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:4, 5) According to the grace of God, we all have different gifts to serve His purpose in the kingdom of God. And the Lord has set some in the church for the purpose of edifying the body and works of ministry. There were apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers set in place by God to build up the body of Christ. (Ephesus 4:11-13) (See Acts 14:23; Acts 15:1-2, 4, 6, 22, 23; Acts 20:17; Acts 21:18)

For this divine purpose, God has graciously and abundantly furnished his people with all necessary instructions, both with respect to the qualifications of the elders, and also with respect to the matter and manner of their teaching, and the conscientious and dutiful submission due.

#### II. The Nature of Shepherding

The Greek word "poimen" is translated "pastor" and "shepherd." Pastor and shepherd are the same. As well as, elder, bishop, overseer and pastor refer to the very same persons. The Greek verb "poimaino" is translated "to shepherd, tend the flock, (lead to) pasture, protect, nurture, feed, care for, and to be protector and provider." In general literature, shepherding and pasturing is used often for a ruler. In the OT and NT, God and Christ are pictured as the Good Shepherd and God's OT people (in the NT the church) are likened to a flock of sheep (Psalm 34:9-10; 74:1; 77:20; 78:52, 70ff; 79:13 80:1,11; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 23:3, 4; 31:10; Ezekiel 34:11-14, 23, 24; Micah 5:2,4; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Revelations 7:17). Pastors in the church will do well to follow the example of God and Christ. Pastoring a church is by definition a sacrificial role. This is clear from Jesus' laying down His life for the sheep.

##### A. Pastors, Teachers

*"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."* (Ephesians 4:11, 12)

**B. Apt to Teach**

*"Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach." (1 Timothy 3:1, 2)*

**C. Exhort**

*"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." (Titus 1:9)*

**D. Obey them that have rule over you**

*"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." (Hebrews 13:17)*

**E. Feed the flock, take oversight**

*"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;" (1 Peter 5:2 )*

**F. Bishops and Deacons**

*"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:" (Philippians 1:1)*

**G. Give heed over the flock**

*"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)*

**H. Elders rule well, labor in word and doctrine**

*"The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17)*

**I. Labor**

*"Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other." (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13)*

**III. Elder**

The word "elder" comes from the NT Greek word "presbuteros." Basically, the word "elder" carries the meaning of someone who is older in contradistinction to someone who is younger; someone who is experienced and not a novice; someone who is a role model and example of an ideal rather than someone who is not; someone who is mature and not immature; ripe instead of green.

Paul wrote qualifications for elders/bishops/pastors in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. On the one hand, the idea of a checklist that a candidate for elder must fulfill *perfectly* in order to be ordained as an elder is *not* what Paul meant. Paul meant that a candidate must have these qualities "**to a positive degree.**" On the other hand, neither every mature believer nor every old man was called to be an elder/bishop/pastor in the official sense. If an older man is not an official elder, it does not mean that he can't serve in other ministries.

Generally, an elder is not perfect but he is someone who is representative of the ideals of a group, nation, church, etc. Good administration skills and education are advantageous but an elder is much more than just a good administrator, academician or evangelist. An elder/bishop/pastor is a seasoned, mature role model who is respected and valued as a counselor. He is not perfect but he is a person who people say they want to be like. They say, "I want to be like him." Young people, even young ministers, haven't had the time for growth, maturity, experience, success and failure, sin and recovery, and rebound after a disappointment or betrayal. New believers are not tried and tested. Thus, they should not be an elder/bishop/pastor.

The idea behind the office of the elder is that of very high respect; a respect that does not come quickly or easily; nor does it come through academic education or force. Therefore, the term is used of older people, not younger. There is no particular age in terms of chronological years for all cultures but what fits culturally is appropriate. The term "elder" depicts one who lived through **most of life's stages and crises** and is a good example and role model of a Christian. Elder is older as opposed to younger.

**IV. Qualifications of Elders**

**A. Here is a trustworthy saying - 1 Timothy 3:1-7**

1. It is a true saying, that one who desires the work of an elder desires a good work. An elder / bishop / pastor / overseer holds a special meaning in the hearts of those who choose this ministry in the Lord's church. The relationships that are formed as an elder with the flock and with fellow elders can be a joyous experience. It is the images that we see of Jesus holding a young tender lamb that sets an example of good shepherding in the Lord's body. A good shepherd will carry the sheep on his shoulders if necessary. As elders esteeming others above themselves exemplifies the heart of Christ.
2. v. 2. *"Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach..."* An elder is to be blameless and irreproachable in his Christian life. It does not mean that he must be "perfect" but rather, he is truly living a godly life before all. Living blameless does not begin after one becomes an elder but he must have a good report before hand and a good report from those without the body. Someone could have a wonderful godly image around the members of the church but it may not hold true when in the presence of those outside the body of Christ.

An elder must be faithful to his wife. We are exhorted by the Apostle Paul, to love our wives as Christ has loved the church. Setting a good example and to fulfill the responsibilities of a husband to his wife holds true even for elder/bishop/overseer/pastor. An elder must be stable minded, not rushing to a conclusion but thoughtful and deliberate in his actions. He must be one of self control and of a good reputation. A leader who receives and is open to those of the flock, strangers and guests. A bishop/elder/overseer/pastor must be one who is ready and able to teach others the gospel of Jesus Christ and to instruct in the way of righteousness.

3. v. 3. *"not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money."* Not a drunkard but sober and vigilant as he must watch out for souls of those entrusted to him. Not easily angered or harsh but is gentle and patient to those who may not be so readily acceptable of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. But through his gentleness and patience may win them over through the teaching of the word. An elder should not be contentious but one who pursues peace and unity. In the early church elders were supported financially in laboring and teaching the flock. An elder is worthy of double honor which means financially supported by the church in the work of bishops/elders/shepherds/overseers. (1 Timothy 5:17) However, this is not often practiced among all churches today. An elder must not pursue this role for the purpose of the love of money or to be influenced because of the presence of a financial gain through their service to the Lord.
4. v. 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?)"* An elder must manage his own family if he is to succeed in shepherding God's people. Not by coercion or force but with a tender love and grace for his family. Otherwise, how will he take care of the Lord's church? It is the OT story of Eli, the prophet of God, who failed to restrain his sons' blaspheming of God. Because of this failure to govern his household, God removed Eli and his household. *Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, "The guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering."* (1 Samuel 3:14)
5. v. 6. *"He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil."* An elder must be one who is not a novice but who has journeyed the path of righteousness for some time. Even though one may be physically older as a recent convert, being a spiritually aged "tried and tested" is an important distinctive quality or trait of an elder. A spiritually aged elder is one who has known the "ups and downs in their spiritual walk, and recovery" to follow the way of righteousness and is not ignorant of the appearance of evil. A recent convert could face the same judgement as Satan himself, because it is easy to become conceited and arrogant when placed in the spiritual leadership as an elder.
6. v. 7. *"He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."* An elder must have a good general estimation by the public. The state of being held in high esteem and honor by those outside of the body of Christ holds a tremendous benefit in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a condemned world.

**B. An elder must be blameless - Titus 1:6-9**

There was unfinished work in Crete that required the services of Titus. Paul instruction to Titus was to appoint elders in every town. Many obeyed the gospel in Crete but without spiritual leaders appointed by God, they would be exposed to the teachings and practices of others who deny God. As Paul would put it, *"there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group."* (Titus 1:10) Such groups were causing disruption and confusion in the Lord's church. By appointing elders there would be those who would be able to hold firm to sound doctrine and defend against those who opposed it. Therefore, Paul outlines the same qualifications of an elder to Titus in Crete as he did to Timothy.

1. v. 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."*
2. v. 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. "*
3. v. 8. *"Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined."*
4. v. 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."*

## **V. Conclusion**

As it was in the early days of the church, Christians must diligently seek to follow God's plan for leadership of a congregation. It is He who has set in the church leaders to fulfill his purpose and will for the church. Elder/shepherd/bishop/overseers must firmly be watchful of the flock and to shepherd all members of the church, the body, through teaching and examples so that they may grow and mature in the fulness of Christ.

# Lesson 2

## Elders and the Lord's Church, Part II

### David Mills, Author

*"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yet, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."* Psalm 23 - KJV

#### I. Introduction

#### II. What We Will Consider

- A. The role of shepherds set forth in the Bible
- B. Christ as the shepherd
- C. the service of elders as shepherds

#### III. Words for Elders

- A. Bishop-Overseer (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:7) – from episkopos – meaning one who oversees, takes care of
- B. Presbyter-Elder (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 5:1, 17; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1) – from presbuteros – meaning one who is older, experienced
- C. Pastor-Shepherd (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:1, 2) from poimein – meaning one who shepherds

#### IV. Shepherds – a Common Figure in Scripture

- A. Abel was a keeper of sheep (Genesis 4:2)
- B. God recognized as a shepherd
  - 1. The Lord is my shepherd (Psalm 23:1)
  - 2. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel (Psalm 80:1)
  - 3. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd (Isaiah 40:11)
  - 4. As a shepherd... I will seek my sheep (Ezekiel 34:12)

#### V. Servants of God's people were shepherds. Ezekiel 34

#### VI. Christ, the Consummate Shepherd

- A. Birth announcement made to lowly shepherds (Luke 2:8-11)
- B. Christ was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, the shepherd king of Israel. David was Israel's shepherd. (Ezekiel 34:23)

- C. At Christ's birth, it was noted from the prophet Christ was the one "who will shepherd (poimein) my people Israel." (Matthew 2:6; 2 Samuel 5:2)
- D. Christ said he was the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep. (John 10:11, 14)
- E. Christ was (is) recognized as the great shepherd of the sheep. (Hebrews 13:20)
- F. Christ was referenced as the one shepherd. (John 10:16)
- G. Peter referred to Christ as the chief shepherd. (1 Peter 5:4)

#### VII. Some NT References Related to Shepherd Work

- A. Elders, according to Paul, were to feed (shepherd) the flock of whom they had been made overseers. (Act 20:28)
- B. Peter was told by Christ to feed (shepherd) His sheep. (John 21:15-17)  
Note: Perhaps Peter remembered what Christ asked him to do when he exhorted "the elders..." to "feed the flock of God..." (1 Peter 5: 1, 2)  
Barclay's Comments on 1 Peter 5:1-4 "When Peter spoke of Christ as the Chief Shepherd, many a thought and memory must have been in his mind. Jesus had likened Himself to the shepherd who sought at the peril of his life for the sheep which had gone lost (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7). He had sent out His disciples to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:6). He was moved by pity for the crowds, for they were as sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34). And, above all, Jesus had likened Himself to the Good Shepherd who was ready to lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:1-18). The picture of Jesus as the Shepherd was a precious one, and the privilege of being the shepherds of the flock of Christ was for Peter the greatest privilege that the servants of Christ could enjoy."

#### VIII. What Ungodly Shepherds Do

- A. Ezekiel 34 presents a vivid description of what the shepherds (i.e., kings, leaders) of Israel had done. Instead of being centered on the people, the shepherds had centered on themselves, feeding themselves and not feeding the sheep.
- B. Jeremiah states that the shepherds had misused the people (Jeremiah 23:13-17) and had scattered the people (Jeremiah 10:21; 23:1-4).
- C. Ezekiel 34 tells us that God was displeased that the shepherds had allowed the people to be scattered and allowed harm to come to them. Addressing the displeasure, God states the shepherds of Israel had not done their duty. They had:
  - 1. not fed the sheep,
  - 2. not strengthened the weak,
  - 3. not healed those who were sick,
  - 4. not bound up the wounds of the broken,
  - 5. not brought back those who were driven away,
  - 6. not sought those who were lost, and
  - 7. ruled over the people with force and harshness.

#### IX. What Godly Shepherds Do

- A. Ezekiel 34 says what God will be his people's shepherd, because of the abuse of the people by the shepherds. God says he:
  - 1. will seek the lost,
  - 2. bring back those who stayed,
  - 3. bind up the broken,
  - 4. strengthen the weak,
  - 5. destroy the fat and powerful, and
  - 6. feed with justice.

B. From Psalm 23:

1. Make sheep lie down in green pastures
  - a. After feeding the sheep, the shepherd has the flock lie down to digest what has been eaten.
  - b. Shepherds help us remember that before Christ sent out the disciples to teach the world, he told them to tarry for prayer and the power of God.
2. Lead sheep beside still waters
  - a. Sheep will not drink from swift water.
  - b. Shepherds know our limitations, our weaknesses, and do not force us where we cannot safely go. They know the places of nourishment and refreshment.
3. Restores souls
  - a. When the sheep hurt, the shepherd tends the wounds.
  - b. Shepherds carry us to the physician.
  - c. They help revive life in tired, weary sheep.
4. Lead sheep in paths of righteousness for His name's sake
  - a. Sheep get lost; need guidance
  - b. Shepherds lead, don't drive, away from the steep precipice, over which we might fall, to green pastures and still waters.
  - c. Even in difficult places, shepherds lead "in the right paths."
  - d. Shepherds climb the same hills the sheep climb.
5. With the sheep when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death.
  - a. When hardships and even death may be near, the shepherd gives the sheep comfort.
  - b. Shepherds are near when disappointment, loneliness, helplessness surround us, when death may be near, and at other times when we are compelled to pass through dark places.
6. Comfort with rod and staff
  - a. Sheep have no weapons; they are an easy prey; they easily become fearful.
  - b. Shepherds meet our fears and emergencies. Knowing that they know how to use the rod and staff (i.e., their skills that come from experience and wisdom), we gain comfort, believing they will take care of us. They are trusted.
7. Prepare for sheep in the presence of enemies
  - a. Shepherds know that wolves are on the lookout for sheep.
  - b. Shepherds don't lead in places that are dangerous, such as near steep ledges or rapid waters or poisonous plants.
  - c. Shepherds, knowing that danger lies all around, get rid of all that is harmful to the sheep, making the pasture safe for grazing. The pasture becomes a table prepared. Wolves and other that would harm are preventing from coming near the table.
8. Anoint each sheep's head with oil
  - a. Sheep will get hurt. They need ointment for their bruises, thorns pulled from their coats, etc. Each sheep is examined for possible infections.
  - b. Shepherds know that the world can deal cruelly and harshly with their flock. They know that the sheep grow discouraged and tired at times, that life can seem a burden.
  - c. Tender shepherds minister to the hurt, one sheep at a time ("my head," "my cup"). Sheep feel important. Jesus said "He calls his sheep by name." (John 10:3). Shepherds know the sheep.

C. John 10:1-5

1. Call his sheep by name (v. 3) – "Fuzzy, you're too close to the edge. Come over here." "Whitey, you ran too far ahead of the herd. There are wolves out there. Stay close to me." "Ann, don't you think you and Naida should tell one another that you are sorry?" "Eugene, that is a matter about which you should be praying." "Sister Hughes, you have been missing the assembly lately. Is there some problem that perhaps I can help you with?" "Wayne, I'll go by and visit your mother today."
2. Lead the sheep out (v. 3)

3. Go before them (v. 4)

#### X. Non-Shepherd Models from Lynn Anderson's Work

- A. **The Counterfeit Shepherd** – does not represent Christ.
- B. **The Hireling Shepherd** – after person gain. NT describes this shepherd as one who does not protect the sheep. (John 10:12)
- C. **The Devouring Shepherd** – fleeces and devours sheep with false teaching.
- D. **The Status-Seeking Shepherd** – thinks of the position, not the service; perhaps interested in authority
- E. **The Cowboy Shepherd** – uses force (spurs, fast horses, whips, and prods)
- F. **The Sheriff Shepherd** – uses badge and gun, enforces the law – *“don't take nuthin' off nobody.”*
- G. **The Pop-Manager Shepherd** – fast-lane approach; business world is the model; one-minute managers
- H. **The CEO Shepherd** – keep his distance; closed door work; gets things done with memos; likes to make policy decisions

#### XI. Closing Thoughts

- A. Don't confuse the Shepherd with the shepherds.
- B. Shepherds who pattern themselves after God will pattern themselves after His shepherding. *“He will lead his flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs in His arms, He will carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those with young.”* (Isaiah 40:11)
- C. Shepherds leave the ninety-nine and search for the lost one, *“and when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home.”* (Luke 15:5, 6)
- D. Sheep need shepherds they can know and trust. Lynn Anderson says, *“this kind of trust and allegiance can be gained only one way – by a shepherd touching his sheep, carrying them, handling them, tending them, feeding them – to the extent they smell like sheep.”*
- E. Shepherds are available, committed, and trustworthy. (Anderson)
- F. *“When godly, loving, gentle shepherds build authentic relationships with their flocks, then rise up and ‘lead out,’ (serve – David Mills) sheep hungry for biblical leadership (servanthood – David Mills) and wise guidance will willingly follow.”* (Anderson)

#### XII. References/Resources:

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## Lesson 3

# The Elder's Relationship with His Children

### David Mills, Author

*"... One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (KJV) "He must be one who manages his own household well and wins obedience from his children, and a man of the highest principles. If a man does not know how to control his own family, how can he look after a congregation of God's people?" (NEB) "He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?" (1 Timothy 3:4-5, NLT)*

*"... having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly." (KJV) "... the father of children who are believers, who are under no imputation of loose living, and are not out of control." (NEB) "... and his children must be believers who are not wild or rebellious." (Titus 1:6, NLT)*

#### I. Introduction

#### II. Requirements

- A. Ruling his own house well
  - 1. What this means
    - a. Having his children in submission with all reverence
    - b. His children submit to his rule with respect
  - 2. Why necessary
    - a. If a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church?
    - b. It is an indication of a man's potential to serve as an elder (I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17)
- B. Having faithful children
  - 1. What this means
    - a. Either children who believe, or children who are faithful (trustworthy)
    - b. Are they to be Christians?
  - 2. Why necessary
    - a. It reflects his ability to rule the house of God
    - b. It reflects his ability to oversee the children of God
- C. Not accused of riot or unruly
  - 1. What this means
    - a. (riot, Gr. asotos) an abandoned, dissolute life; spendthrift; extravagance; indulgence in sensual pleasure; prodigal son
    - b. (unruly, Gr. anupotaktos) disobedient; insubordination
  - 2. Why necessary
    - a. Accused children bring shame on the father (Proverbs 28:7)
    - b. Accused children bring doubt on father's ability to rule his house

### III. Must the children be Christians?

#### A. Various translations

1. "having children that believe" (ASV)
2. "whose children are believers" (NRSV)
3. "having children who believe" (NASB)
4. "whose children believe" (NIV)
5. "whose children are well-trained and believers" (Amplified NT)
6. "with children who believe" (Moffat)

#### B. Greek authorities' comments

1. "one who has become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and the of salvation (a believer)" – Thayer
2. "believing (in Christ), a (Christian) believer" – Arndt and Gingrich
3. "believing children, or children that believe" – Vincent
4. "believing children, or children who are believers" Wuest
5. "a believer, Christian" – Robinson

#### C. Bible commentators

1. "brought up in the true Christian faith" – Henry
2. "Believers, adorning the doctrine of the gospel by purity and obedience. There must be evidence that they have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Croskey, Pulpit Commentary
3. "Paul wants only men who have believing children, not men whose sons and whose daughters are still pagans. A handicap such as that would be too great for an elder." – Lenski
4. "The apostle required that the children of him who was to be ordained a bishop should be Christians, and of a sober behavior; because the infidelity and vices of children, at least in the eyes of the vulgar, bring some blame on their parents. And therefore it is added, in the next verse, 'for a bishop must be blameless.'" –MacKnight
5. "having children who share the Christian faith of their fathers and who adorn that faith with a godly conduct. A man whose children are still pagans or behave as pagans must be appointed elder." – Hendriksen
6. "It is not right or healthy for the elder to have pagan children. If the prospective elder accepted Christ late in life, he might not be at fault for the beliefs of his children, but he cannot ignore his relationship to them. If his children are pagan in their attitude and conduct, it will reflect on him and his service to Christ." –Dewelt
7. "If an officer should have unbelieving children, it might indicate that he was either careless as a Christian, or a recent convert; and if his children were insubordinate, it might indicate that the 'elder' lacked the ability to rule the 'household of God,' the congregation of believers." –Erdman

#### D. Summary

1. The testimony of translations, scholars and commentators favor that "faithful children" means Christians.
2. When a man's children are faithful Christians, there is good reason to believe that he has experience in
  - a. Raising others in the training and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4)
  - b. Ruling in such a way that inspires both obedience and emulation
3. When a man's children are not faithful Christians, there are lingering questions:
  - a. Is he at fault, not having been careful to watch over his children?
  - b. Has he had experience in raising others in the faith?
  - c. Has he had experience in inspiring others to follow his example?

### IV. Must there be a plurality of children?

- A. "Children" (Gr. tekna) literally means more than one child.

- B. The plural (children) can sometimes be used to refer to the singular (child)
  - 1. This is known as plural of class, or the plural containing the singular. Examples of this include (Luke 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:4)
  - 2. Paul appears to use it this way in 1 Timothy 5:10 and Titus 2:4
  - 3. This leads some to conclude that an elder can have only one child
- C. There are clear advantages to having more than one child.
  - 1. Children are different, which parents with multiple children know
  - 2. Raising multiple children requires dealing with diverse personalities, with challenging relationships and conflicts
  - 3. Having a plurality of children may better qualify a man for the challenge of leading a plurality of members of the church
  - 4. Having more than one child certainly removes any doubt that one has met the qualifications of having "children."

#### V. Must all of the children be Christians?

- A. Some suggest that an elder must have faithful children, but not all have to be Christians
- B. Yet questions may remain as to why there are unfaithful children
- C. Some scenarios might be less troubling, for example:
  - 1. A man has four children
  - 2. The two older children are Christians
  - 3. The two younger are young, but do have a childlike faith in God
  - 4. To the degree the latter are accountable, are they not "faithful" as well (though not yet Christians)?

#### VI. What if a child becomes unfaithful away from home?

- A. It appears that Paul was talking about children "adult" children, or children who were old enough to become Christians, not little children
- B. This seems to be evident with the words riot and unruly (wild and disobedient)
- C. The questions seem to be: "*Did the father give them a faith that will live for a lifetime?*" and "Did he inspire the love and respect of his adult children?"
- D. Lynn Anderson writes, "Warning, This children issue – while exceedingly important—can be pressed to unreasonable, legalistic lengths. Paul is not suggesting that an elder with four, balanced Christian children and one renegade is not qualified to be an elder. After all, adult children are free moral agents – fully capable of rejecting every good thing instilled by their parents. Neither is Paul suggesting that younger children acting out during adolescence disqualify a respected elder. Most people who have reared children to adulthood will understand that. So, the point of all this can be summed up this way: look for men who, over the long haul, have produced stable, believing families. To drive this point home, Paul finally raises the powerful rhetorical question: 'If anyone does not know how to manage his own family; how can he take care of God's church.?'"

#### VII. Resources:

- 1. Bible (American Standard Version, Amplified New Testament, King James Version, Moffat, New American Standard Version, New International Version, New Living Translation, New Revised Standard Version, The New English Bible)
- 2. Major Source: Copeland, Mark A. *Shepherds of the Flock: A Study of Elders in the Lord's Church*. ExecutbleOutlines.com. (MarkCopeland@aol.com)
- 3. Greek Helps (Arndt-Gingrich's Greek-English Lexicon; Robinson's Greek and English Lexicon; Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the NT; Vincent's Word Studies of the NT; Wuest's Word Studies of the NT)
- 4. Commentaries (Erdman's Pastoral Epistles of Paul: An Exposition; Hendriksen's NT Commentary (I & II Timothy and Titus); James MacKnight's Apostolical Epistles and Commentary; Lenski's Commentary on the NT; Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible)

5. Anderson, Lynn. *They Smell Like Sheep: Spiritual Leadership for the 21st Century*. Howard Publishing Co. 1997.
6. Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, Revised Ed.,