

# **Destin Church of Christ**

## **Fall, 2018**

### **Lessons from I & II Timothy and Titus**

#### **Lesson 8 – “*Roles in the Church: Elders & Deacons*” – Part 4**

*Texts:* I Tim 3:1-13; 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9.

#### **II. Maturity**

The issue here is not that he might not be qualified, the issue is if you lift up a new convert in the church and give him a position with other mature godly men, he's going to have a battle with pride.

There is a maturity level and the role of pastor, elder or overseer is seen as one attained to by very mature men.

An elder in the church should be one who is mature spiritually.

The test of maturity or the standard of maturity can be also called the standard of humility.

#### **III. Reputation**

The man set apart to lead the church as an elder or an overseer must also be tested as to reputation. He is to be certified by the testimony of people as to his character. A man chosen to be an elder must have a reputation for righteousness, for moral character, for love and kindness, generosity, and goodness among everybody in the community that knows him.

I'm not saying they're all going to agree with his theology, because that's not the case. The people who know him know that he is a man of moral character. How can you raise a man to leadership, expect him to impact that community, if the community has no regard for his character. A man can't reach people who have no respect for him.

Another reference showing how important this outside reputation is in Colossians 4:5.

#### **IV. Home Life**

The Word of God affirms that those who stand in the place of spiritual leadership must have demonstrated the capability of such leadership in the home before they would be counted worthy to demonstrate it in the church. The family becomes the proving ground for leadership skills.

1 Timothy 4:4 affirms the consistency of the biblical roles of men and women. There are obviously shared responsibilities and duties but the head of the home is always the man.

A man, to be qualified to lead in the church, must demonstrate capability in administering in leading all of the resources within his own household, handling the people that are there, the assets that are there, and the funds that are there in a pattern for others to follow. His children must be under control and be respectful. When they reach the age where they make their own commitment to Christ, they must be believing children.

He is a leader in the family. His leadership involves three things:

- (1) Firmness or authority - Where there is disobedience, there must be immediate and negative consequences.
- (2) Wisdom - During the entire time of raising his children, he is a local neighborhood philosopher and theologian, and must communicate to them some rationale for their behavior.
- (3) Love - Their children ought to long to obey, because they enjoy the intimacy of an unhindered, an uninterrupted love relationship with the father, and that love has to be there.

If a man is going to lead in the church, he must have demonstrated in the home that he can exercise authority that makes it advisable to obey, wisdom that makes it reasonable to obey, and love that makes it delightful to obey.

Among all the qualifications for elders, one whose meaning is often disputed is “having faithful children.” Some say it must mean multiple children, others say at least one. Some say every child of the elder must be a truly faithful Christian. Others say that once they leave the house, they no longer count.

How many children must an elder have? How is the word “children” used today:

- If you see a sign which says: “On Sunday, children eat for free.” We understand that if someone only has one child, that child still gets to eat free.
- If we said “all those with children need to sign something,” it would be understood that someone with one child still needed to sign it as well.
- We use the phrase “children” to refer to offspring, whether many or an only child.

In the Bible ... Genesis 21:5-7, after Isaac was born, Sarah said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? (NIV). She used “children” in the plural, though she only had one child, Isaac.

It would be better for an elder to have multiple children for a few reasons:

- Children have different personalities, and that experience would help him in dealing with the different personalities within the congregation.
- Children have differences with each other (arguments, etc...) and helping his children overcome these differences would better prepare him for helping members in the congregation overcome their differences.
- Having multiple children will eliminate the “question” regarding whether Paul requires multiple children for the elders.

But because of the way this term is used, a man with only one child can fit these qualifications.

### **Must an Elder's Children Be Believers?**

Titus says a man is to have faithful children, or believing children ...”pistos”. (In Titus, “pistos” is used three times, two times in the sense of “trustworthy” or “reliable” (Titus 1:9, 3:8), and once as “faithful”. (Titus. 1:6)

1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are referring to the general submission and behavior of the elder's children. God has so designed the universe that the parental role of disciplinarian, model, authority, and servant-leader generally has a profound effect upon the behavior of the children. Paul does not spell out what this looks like in every case, nor does he spell out all of the specifics of what will disqualify an elder.

His children are to be respectful, controlled, and disciplined children. The children are to be such as to bring honor to their father and their mother.

### **If believing children of an elder, leave home and fall away from the church, should the elder step down?**

Some people cling to the notion that “once they leave your house, they are no longer under your control.” The idea is that once they leave the house, if they cease being faithful, they don’t count against you anymore. If this is true, then if they remain faithful, they don’t count for you anymore either. If this reasoning is true, then once they leave your house, they no longer apply at all (good or bad).

When Paul discusses “children” there is no line of demarcation that says they ever cease being your children. The idea that “once they leave your house they no longer count against you” does not agree with what the Bible has to say about children. (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-2; Matthew 15:1-4; Romans 1:30; II Timothy 3:2). The idea that “once they leave your house, they no longer count against you” also means that they no longer count for you either, and any elder with no children at home would have to step down immediately.

This does not say all of his children must be faithful Christians (though that would be the ideal). He must have shown the leadership and care of God’s word needed to convert his children to Christ. They do not cease being your children when they move out. It is when they move out that they give objective proof to their faithfulness. It is when they move out that they are the testimony to how they were raised. If most of the children stay faithful, then the father did something right in raising them. If most of them leave the faith, then the father was not a good leader and cannot lead the congregation.

The most important thing to remember is ... does he show the leadership needed in his family? If not, then there is no way he can be an effective leader in the church. If most of his children are faithful Christians, it means he places a lot of importance on following God’s word. If most of his children are not faithful

Christians, then it tells you he was not diligent in passing on the word of God to his children.

If an elder is unable by his influence over his own children to keep them on the path of righteousness, would you want such a man in charge of the souls of others?

If an elder's child leaves the church, that child is no longer faithful and can be accused of insubordination. That elder, responsible for the situation or not, is no longer qualified for the position of an elder. Hopefully, he will be able to work with his child and bring his child back to the Lord. If such is the case and he remains qualified in all other areas, then he can resume his duty as an elder.

***"How can you rule your children well if you don't have children, so people with no children can't be an elder."*** The assumption is most men will be married, have families, and have children. Consider this ... It is not a penalty to be single and certainly is not a penalty if God doesn't give you children. If there are no children present, that by God's design is not a disqualification. You can't have a problem with your kids if you don't have any kids. If you manage the assets and the household God gives you and that's only one wife, a partner for life, and no children are brought into that, in no way does that disqualify. Those are the assets God has given you and that is the family you have from Him. But where children do exist, they are to demonstrate control and respect for their parents. They need to fit within these qualifications.

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When it comes to elders, God identifies these men...their moral character, their maturity, their reputation, and their family life. The future of the church is predicated on the fact that these are the kind of people that must be in leadership. It is a constant and ongoing process.

*"Are there any of these kind of men?"* We need to pray that God will raise these kind of men up. The future of His church, and particular this congregation, depends on God bringing up these kind of men. God has a plan and He's doing it.

He's building those men and it's up to the church to recognize them, to put them in the place of leadership as the standard for all of our lives for His glory.

Next week: ***"Roles in the Church: Elders and Deacons" – Part 5***  
(1 Timothy 3:8-13)

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