

# Where Are The Qualified Elders?

Why are there so few elders in the church today? There are many reasons. First, there are some members who do not want them. They do not like authority. They want an equal say in the business meeting. They want to be elders themselves but are not qualified. Therefore they exaggerate the qualifications to the extent that no human alive could meet them.

Secondly, There are others who do not want elders because they had a bad experience with an unqualified eldership in the past. Rather than seeing this one group as unfaithful they condemn the Lord's plan and reject any and all elders.

Thirdly, there are few men who are willing to make sacrifices in their youth so they would be qualified when they get older. They attend sparingly, marry hastily, study infrequently, and do not take the church seriously.

But the number one reason we do not have elders today is that we do not have dedicated members. Elders are drawn from the church membership. Therefore the church must have a number of faithful Christians to make up the resource pool from which the elders will be drawn.

Let's suppose for a moment that we have a congregation of **100** members. I am not talking about attendance. This number does not include visitors, children, or shut-ins. We have **100** able bodied members who have been baptized into Christ and are listed in the church directory. It should be easy to pull **2** or **3** qualified elders out of such a number. Right?

Well, since the majority of the congregation is women our number is reduced. Let's say we have **60** women. 1 Tim. 3:2 says the elder must be *the husband of one wife*. This removes all the women from consideration. It also removes all the single men. Let's say we have **10** of them. Now our pool is down to **30**.

The man must be old enough to be an *elder* (as the term suggests). We are not given a specific age, but he *cannot be a novice* (1 Tim. 3:6). We remove **10** more from our list because of their youth.

He must be a parent and not a new parent. His *children* must be old enough to be *faithful* (1 Tim. 3:4-5). The way he has reared his children (with the help of his wife) shows his abilities. We drop **10** more from our number. These either have no children, small children, or unruly children.

Our number is now down to **10**. Are we starting to feel like Abram trying to find ten righteous men in Sodom? We are down to **10** men and have not yet started looking at the spiritual qualifications. This is one reason we get so many unqualified elders. We appoint older married fathers without considering their spiritual maturity.

Of the **10** remaining men **2** have hot tempers (*no striker, brawler, or impatient* men are allowed: 1 Tim. 3:3). **3** of the men that are left frequently miss services as they volunteer to work overtime on Sunday, or they spend their weekends at their lakefront property. (Elders *cannot be covetous* and should be good *examples* and *blameless*: 1 Tim. 3:2, 3, 1 Pet. 5:3). **2** of the other men spend five months away in a warmer climate (hard to be *vigilant* when you are not present: 1 Tim. 3:2).

We are now down to **3** possibilities in a congregation of **100** members. **2** of these men have never taught the Bible in a class or in their homes (They are not *apt to teach*: 1 Tim. 3:2).

This leaves **1** man, but the Bible teaches we must have a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). But the **1** remaining man is too timid to *convict* anyone of false teaching (Titus 1:9), so he would not be qualified anyway.

The lack of qualified elders is evidence of an unfaithful membership. We have become too worldly in our congregations. We see the qualities of elders as impossible because we have shrunk so far away from them. Either we will reduce the qualifications to appoint worldly men; or we must change our membership into a spiritually minded group today, so we can appoint qualified elders tomorrow.

Steve Niemeier recently developed a lesson book entitled "Committed to Spiritual Growth". He correctly identifies the problem in most modern congregations. It is not that we have too few members but that we have too few **active** members.

Our brethren cannot even get to worship services regularly because of ballgames or visitors. We struggle to find Bible class teachers and when we find them we discover the parents are not bringing their children to class. We lose our children as soon as they leave for college. We have couples divorcing because they do not follow God in their homes. We cannot find volunteers to clean, repair, or mow. We are so busy with relaxation and recreation that we find no time for dedication.

When are we going to wake up! Do we really feel our children will be faithful in the future with our current example? Do we really believe a congregation will exist in fifty years with the way we are headed? Does it matter to us? Do we really expect to get to heaven if it does not?

How can we encourage you to start taking your walk with Jesus seriously? Until the members become committed to the Lord the church will not grow. It is active members who invite their neighbors to services. It is active members who prepare and teach quality Bible classes. It is active members who encourage the weak and increase the number of workers in the church. We can start being active by attending all the Bible classes and worship services. We must learn, grow, and use our talents while we have health and life left in us. Just Do It!

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