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## **Preface**

One of the most important subjects discussed in the church today is the Eldership. There have been many books written on the qualifications of elders, but seldom, if ever, are these six particular questions answered in detail, if at all. These are but a few of the major questions implied by the qualifications. This chapter provides some details about how to implement the specified qualification.

I invite your careful study of the evidence supporting the conclusions reached. Please help me find the truth more perfectly by offering any critical comments. You can help me by answering three questions for me. Did I misuse any scripture, ignore any pertinent scripture or use any faulty logic in reaching my conclusions? Your help is greatly appreciated.

Some of these comments and conclusions in this chapter may be new to you but I pray that you will read through all the evidence before making any decisions about the merits of a particular conclusion or any judgment about the value of the overall work.

## Introduction

You will notice from the table of contents we will *not* be discussing all of the qualifications of the elders. Rather we are looking in detail at some of the questions implied by several of those qualifications. This distinction must be kept in mind as you proceed.

The qualifications for elders from both Timothy and Titus are itemized below for comparison. The qualifications from Titus are listed out of sequence from the text for easy comparison with the matching qualification from the Timothy text. Please read down the list from both sources. Look at each qualification. Are there any unknown words? Are there any uncommon words? If you read any of these words in any other context would you have any difficulty understanding the meaning? Probably not. Why in this context is it common to say or imply that a particular item is “difficult” to understand. The words mean what they say. None of these words has a special, ancient or esoteric meaning in these passages.

### 1 Timothy, chapter 3

*Now the overseer must be:*

*above reproach,  
the husband of but one wife,  
Temperate,  
Self-controlled,  
Respectable,  
Hospitable,  
able to teach,  
not given to drunkenness,  
not violent but gentle,  
not quarrelsome,  
not a lover of money.  
He must manage his own family well and  
see that his children obey him with proper  
respect.  
If anyone does not know  
how to manage his own family [Gk. household]  
how can he take care of God's church.*

*He must not be a recent convert.  
He must also have a good  
reputation with outsiders,*

### Titus, chapter 1:5-9

*An elder must be:*

*blameless, [used twice, v. 5 and v.6]  
the husband of but one wife,  
not quick-tempered,  
who is self-controlled,  
upright, holy and disciplined  
he must be: hospitable,  
  
not given to drunkenness  
not violent,  
not overbearing,  
not pursuing dishonest gain.  
man whose children believe, and  
are not open to the charge of  
being wild and disobedient,*

*one who loves what is good,  
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.*

As we begin this study I ask for your patience. Because elders are usually, and should be, the most respected and loved members of the congregation and therefore there should be a hesitancy in saying anything that is critical. Please consider that I am not talking about any elder in particular. I am just trying to understand what the Bible says about this particular question regarding the qualifications of all elders in general. As you read this it will be most natural for you to apply these comments to the elder(s) you know and love and therefore you could possibly take offense to some comment or choice of words. I only ask that you please remember that I am trying to discuss a very emotional subject with as much objectivity as possible. Your understanding is greatly appreciated.

From the previous list of qualifications for elders we see that only two of them are physically measurably, i.e. he must be married and have Christian children.

When an elder's wife dies it is undoubtedly the most stressful time in his life. The elder and his wife are a team like any Christian couple, but the position of elder requires much more support, cooperation, and encouragement from his wife than is generally the case. When his wife dies it is, practically speaking, impossible for the elder not to spend some time "adjusting." During this time the thoughts expressed in this paper are probably not given much time or consideration. If this subject is discussed beforehand and all the elders are in agreement and a procedure is in place *before* it is needed, then the widower can step out of office with grace, receiving the love and well deserved appreciation from the congregation for a job well-done. This will allow a very difficult situation to be handled with brotherly love, respect, kindness and much less pain for the elder and the congregation. This is another reason for giving these matters serious attention now.

## **I) When an elder's wife dies, should he resign?**

The first of the two measurable qualifications is that an elder must be the husband of but one wife. This is measurable. This fact is easily established. But in recent years this translation "the husband of one wife" has been challenged. Some have said the literal and actual translation should be "a one woman man."

### **A) How should $\mu\alpha\iota\sigma$ $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$ $\alpha\nu\delta\rho\alpha$ (of one woman/wife man/husband) be translated?**

Let us look at the various versions to see how consistent they are. The following translations use the word *husband* and/or *wife* in translating this Greek phrase:  $\mu\alpha\iota\sigma$   $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$   $\alpha\nu\delta\rho\alpha$ .

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John Wycliffe bible of 1382, John Purvey bible of 1395, William Tyndale bibles of 1526 and 1534, The Geneva Bible of 1599, **King James Bible of 1769, KJV (1873), NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV, ESV,** Phillips, NEB, Hugo McCord, Weymouth, Diaglott, New world Translation, Young's Literal Translation, The Amplified Bible, the Living New Testament (paraphrased), The Living Oracles (by Campbell, MacKnight and Doddridge). These **23** translations give the requirement that the elder/overseer *must be* married.

Wuest's New Testament, an expanded Translation gives "a one-wife kind of a man [that is, married only once]," but in his Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, v. II, Pastoral Letters, p. 54 he translates 1 Timothy 3:2 as "a one-wife sort of a husband." Again implying the man must be married.

Duay Confraternity ("must be ... married but once"), Moffatt ("must be only married once"). These **two** translations require marriage, specifying only once is allowed.

The Jerusalem Bible (... "not have been married more than once."). This is the only version I could find whose translation did not require marriage, nor forbid it. But if marriage occurred then it can only have happened once, implying that even this translation recognizes the marriage implication of these words.

Please notice several implications from the above list. **First**, if someone takes a stand that "the husband of one wife" from all these translations since 1382 through the current ESV (over 618 years) is *incorrect* then certainly there must be a great deal of evidence available to support this new translation of "a one woman man." Yet, all the *normal, regular, respected* translations (**King James Bible of 1769, KJV (1873), NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV, ESV**) have "The elder must be ... the husband of one wife..." Who is/are the person or persons who can now say that all these Greek scholars for over 600 years made the same mistake, on this same phrase, but now this new translation is correct? Would anyone suggest that all these Greek scholars did not know that **γυναικος** means either woman or wife and that **ανδρα** means either man or husband?? When the whole purpose of any new translation is to provide different words for a better or more clear understanding of the Greek and yet not one of these translations chose to use "one woman man" as an *acceptable* translation. How can any Christian who loves the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) now think this new idea is a valid translation without any evidence to overturn the consistent translation of "a husband of one wife"?

What is the evidence offered to support this new idea? Where are the translators, the Greek scholars, the lexicons who/which agree with this non-marital expression (one woman man)? Where are the established facts and clear logic from which this conclusion is deduced? So far those who suggest this new translation have not provided

any evidence that it is anything other than a rather unusual interpretation. Even this interpretation is presented without sufficient evidence.

**Second** implication from the above list of translations is: if "the husband of one wife" is an *incorrect* translation then God has allowed error to prevail for all these years with no way for Christians to obtain the truth on this subject. Would God do that? Was God unable or unwilling to make the "truth" available to all who sought it? Did 2 Corinthians 1:13,

*13 For we do not write to you anything you cannot read or understand,*

not apply to these passages in 1 Timothy and Titus for the English speaking world? How can God's Word thoroughly equip (NIV), completely furnish (ASV), us unto every good work if we don't have access to a valid translation for over 600 years, 2 Timothy 3:16-17? Of course there is no problem with God's character or ability if "one woman man" is just another recent innovation in an effort to force a translation to condone a particular practice.

But maybe the objector says that "the husband of one wife" is not wrong, it is just that *one woman man* is also correct. That's impossible! One translation requires an elder to be married, the other does not require this marriage. They both can not be correct! Either God requires an elder to be married or he doesn't. We must decide which is true. We **MUST** make our decision based on what the scriptures say and that is why we are putting so much emphasis on the translation.

**Third** thing to notice about the translations is: The Chinese Union Version says "one woman husband," Today's Chinese Version says "he ...wife," Recovery Chinese Bible says "one wife husband." How are the millions of Christians in China going to understand the truth if they, too, have no *accurate* (?) translation saying "one woman man?" We must also consider other languages.

The Latin Vulgate, a 4th century translation from the Greek into the Latin, say "unius uxoris virum." The Latin dictionary gives "uxor -oris f. [a wife]; 'uxorem ducere' , [to marry a wife]." Therefore "unius uxoris virum" can only be translated literally as **a one wife man**, or **a one wife husband**. Is the Latin Vulgate also in error? John Wycliffe translated it, *the husband of one wife*, when he made his English translation directly from the Latin Vulgate. It would be very interesting to see how this Greek expression was translated into other languages!

**Fourth**, another source for the meanings of Greek words is the Interlinear where the Greek is given on one printed line and the English, word for word, translation is given on the next line. I looked at four interlinears: Berry's Interlinear (1897), "of one wife husband;" Marshall's Interlinear (1958), "of one wife husband;" Comfort and Brown

Interlinear (1990), "of one wife a husband;" Mounce and Mounce Interlinear (2008), "of one woman man."

Three of the four gives the same as all the translations listed above. Although I could find no translation that gives us "one woman man" there is one interlinear which says that, i.e. Mounce & Mounce (2008). Because of the date of this interlinear we must at least consider the possibility that this is just a recent innovation with no new evidence to support it. I send an email to Bill Mounce on April 9, 2012 and on May 22, 2012 requesting the evidence which allowed this new translation, to date he has provided no information supporting his new *one woman man* translation. Please see **Appendix D** for a complete copy of our email exchanges and a detailed refutation of Mounce's position on translating this phrase. His position is stated in his commentary on the Pastoral Epistles.

**Fifth**, the next source for Greek definitions we will check is the Lexicons:

**Thayer's**, " ἀνὴρ, 1. b. as a husband: ...1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6."

**BDAG**, "ἀνὴρ, an adult human male, man, husband - a. in contrast to woman *man* ... Especially husband ... 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; 5:9; Titus 1:6."

**TDNT**, v. 1, p. 362 ἀνὴρ in the NT. "Examples of 4. [from the previous page, where the meaning of the word is husband] are found in ...; in the passages dealing with office-bearers ... (1 Timothy 3:2,12; 5:9; Titus 1:6.)"

**Vine**, v. 3, p. 34 ἀνὴρ "...; as a husband ...Titus 1:6

In every case the authority says that ἀνὴρ should be translated as *husband* not *man* in 1 Timothy 3:2,12; 5:9; Titus 1:6!! Are they all *incorrect*? If yes, there must be a huge amount of evidence to overturn the collective evidence listed above. To my knowledge the evidence to refute the majority has yet to be introduced.

**Sixth**, Dictionary of New Testament Theology: V.1, p.496; V. 2, p.563, 580 all three articles give 1 Tim 3:2 and/or Titus 1:6 as scriptures referring to the married relationship

**Seventh**, If we follow good principles of translation we can translate these three Greek words, *μιας γυναικος ανδρα*, ourselves. The last two of these three Greek words each have two actual and literal meanings. All lexicons give both "woman" or "wife" as meanings for the second word and "man" or "husband" as meanings for the third word. Therefore there are **four** possible "literal and actual" meanings for this phrase:

- 1) of one wife husband
- 2) of one wife man
- 3) of one woman husband
- 4) of one woman man

Of these four choices, the correct one can only be determined by the context. This is the most basic rule used in all translating activities. Almost every word in any language has more than one meaning. Any particular meaning of any given word can only be determined by the context in which it is found. The context (1 Tim. 3:1-13) is clearly discussing a marital relationship because of the children and/or household mentioned in verses 4, 5 and 12, and wives mentioned in verse 11, and the parallel passage in Titus 1:6. Therefore, "of one wife husband" is the most likely choice of the above four possibilities. That is probably why we have total unanimity in the previous list of translations as *husband of one wife*.

However, any of the first three options would be acceptable since a *of one wife man* is a man with one wife, i.e. married; and a *of one woman husband* is a husband of one woman, i.e. married. In order for a person to choose option 4, i.e. *one woman man*, he must have *some* support from the context. What word or group of words from the context require, support or even allow a non-marital (one woman man) translation for  $\mu\alpha\iota\sigma \gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma \alpha\nu\delta\rho\alpha$ ? So far, this evidence has also not been shared with us.

**Eighth,** An elder who has lost his wife is a widower. A widower does not have a wife, else he could not remarry without having two wives. The word wife describes a relationship which can only be maintained by a live person. Consider Romans 7:1-3:

*1 ¶ Do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to men who know the law—that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? 2 For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. 3 So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.*

and 1 Corinthians 7:39:

*39 ¶ A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.*

Once dead their position of wife (or husband) is vacated, allowing for a possible scriptural remarriage. This has nothing to do with the love and respect one has for the departed spouse. Love, admiration, devotion and respect will remain (maybe forever) but the relationship of spouse no longer exists once death occurs, else the living spouse could not ever remarry. Therefore, an elder whose wife has passed on, no longer has a wife and is therefore, no longer a husband. Both the law of man (Income taxes, Parental responsibility, Property ownership) and the law of God (Romans 7:2-3, 1 Corinthians 7:39) recognize that death breaks the bond of marriage and frees the survivor to marry

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another. Although after a long happy marriage a man may still “feel” married after the wife dies, he is not.

However, if we can *retain* a person as an elder who is not a husband because his wife just died, why can't we allow a man to *become* an elder whose wife just died “recently.” We must accept the words of the Holy Spirit as they are written, else face His condemnation because we ignored them, Galatians 1:8-9, James 3:1, 1 Corinthians 4:6.

*Ninth*, what does "one woman man" really mean? If Paul is here allowing a *one woman man* to remain in the eldership why would he not allow such a man to be considered for the eldership? Most will agree that the context of children and household duties imply that to become an elder, the man must be married.

We usually only think of this situation after the elder has been an elder for several, if not many, years. But if these scriptures allow an elder to remain after several years of service, these same scriptures must also allow a man to remain an elder after any length of time, even a few years, or logically even after a few days. This is a necessary conclusion because no time limit is given, inferred or even hinted.

Would Paul really be including in this phrase a man who was raised only by his mother and therefore had a great deal of respect, honor and love for her? After the death of his wife this man had no interest in women his own age but cared for and spent all his spare time with his mother. This man is definitely a one woman man. Is this man included in Paul's description of a "one woman man" in Timothy 3:2 or Titus 1:6? Would anything in the context allow for the inclusion of this man in Paul's description? Of course not! No one would think that! Maybe because of the context which implies the elder must be devoted to his wife.

It seems even if all the evidence to the contrary is ignored and we use *one woman man* as the translation, the contextual implication and common sense still limits this phrase to a married man! An elder whose wife has died is not married.

*Tenth* reason for rejecting this new idea is we would be setting a terrible precedent if we allow "a one woman man" to receive our endorsement or even casual acceptance just because someone says it is "a valid alternative translation" of the Greek. To be consistent we would have to allow the following reasoning: a) Every translations for over 600 years translate the Greek word *Psallo* as "sing." Some now want to say "yes, but another legitimate translation is 'sing with the option to play'" and thereby justify instrumental music in the worship service. Please notice the parallels: The consistency of translations for over 600. The claim that this new understanding is a valid translation. The complete absence of linguistic, historical and scholarly testimony to support this new *translation*. Should we accept this new claim only because good and

sincere men make it? This is the type of thinking which gave birth to denominationalism.

**Eleventh** reason for rejecting *one woman man* as an acceptable translation is the absence of evidence to support it. Some say that the phrase cannot mean a marriage relationship because there is a perfectly good Greek word, *gamos* (γάμος), which means marriage which Paul would have used had he meant to imply simply a marriage relationship. Therefore the real meaning of the phrase is to be faithful and dedicated to one woman.

It is always very dangerous, if not fatal, to base a translation on what the author would or should have done under certain conditions or what he intended to say. We can never know what was the intent of the author if we are not told in the text. We only know what he *wrote* at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

To summarize this argument, it says:

Since the word *gamos* is not used, the phrase cannot describe a marriage relationship. The phrase cannot mean *married* because if He had meant married he would have said *γάμος!*

If this reasoning is valid then:

Since the word *πιστος* is not used the phrase cannot describe a faithful relationship. Since the word *εγκαινιζω* is not used the phrase cannot describe a dedicated relationship. The phrase cannot mean *faithful* and *dedicated*, because if He had meant that He would have said *πιστος* and *εγκαινιζω!*

In every language there are many words and phrases to express the same idea. To try to limit the Holy Spirit to the words we think are the "right" ones is to once again demonstrate the truth of the old saying:

"The biggest difference between God and us is, God never thinks He is us"

Paul was not "simply" saying married. What if Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, wanted to say that an elder: 1) had to be married, 2) married to only one wife, committed, dedicated, loyal and faithful to that one woman 3) not married to another man, 4) not married to several men, 5) not married to several women, 6) not married to a child?

How would he have chosen to say all of those things? Since it was written for all peoples for all time, having the foresight to know all possibilities, might the Holy Spirit have chosen the one phrase "of one wife husband" to accomplish the teachings of each of these ideas? Three out of the four literal possibilities would also accomplish this. If Paul had just used *gamos* he would have had to list all other possible married situations

mentioned above as unlawful marriages. What the Holy Spirit said was much more clear and succinct. We would expect no less from the Holy Spirit.

### **Summary of translation evidence.**

In view of the overwhelming evidence listed above, we must consider it proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the expression "one woman man" is neither required nor allowed as a translation of the Greek words  $\mu\alpha\iota\sigma\ \gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\nu\delta\rho\alpha$  found in the two passages we are discussing, 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6. A wise man once said "Experience suggests, however, that an old tradition must not be too quickly rejected; our ancestors were not all fools." (Will Durant, *The story of Civilization*, v. iii, p. 556)

If someone chooses to believe, teach and publish that  $\mu\alpha\iota\sigma\ \gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\nu\delta\rho\alpha$  should be, or even **can** be, translated as *one woman man* in our context without an abundance of evidence to support this new idea he will face Christ at judgment with the charge of violating Galatians 1:8-9:

*8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

Unless this understanding (one woman man) can be found somewhere in a translation from the first few centuries, we run the risk of a very serious offense to God by teaching something that was not part of the Gospel "preached" by Paul and "accepted" by the first Christians from Galatia. Please seriously consider the following logic:

**If** we agree that God's word teaches that "an elder must be ... the husband of one wife," **Then** no man can be an elder when he is not the husband of one wife.

As Christians, we cannot accept speculation as fact, theory as evidence nor assumption as truth. We must do the work and find the preponderance of evidence to substantiate our beliefs, else we will probably be perverting the Gospel of Christ.

**B) Since the translation is: *of one wife husband or husband of one wife*, we now ask if "one woman man" is an allowable interpretation of  $\mu\alpha\iota\sigma\ \gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\nu\delta\rho\alpha$  ,**

If the evidence and laws of translation do **not** allow for "one woman man" as a translation, can it then be considered as a valid interpretation? The intent of a passage never negates the meaning of the words translated! The translation of the Greek is, literally: "*the elder must be ... of one wife husband.*" We only know the intent of a passage if the scriptures tell us. What contextual evidence do we have to assure us of the

intent of this phrase? We can speculate, theorize, and discuss any possibilities as interesting research, but to teach, preach and/or publish a conclusion as to the meaning of a phrase based on a speculation as to the intent of the writer (The Holy Spirit) is untenable, at best, and dangerous at worse, James 3:1, Galatians 1:6-9.

Some say *the intent* of the our phrase is to say that a husband must love, honor and be faithful to his wife, so we should therefore put all the emphasis on the intent (one woman man) and ignore the meaning of the actual words which say the elder must be married. Should the intent, even if we know it, negate the meaning of the words? This speculated intent (to be faithful to his wife) is true of all Christian marriages. ***So by using the actual translation the desired intent is maintained.*** The actual translation in no wise hinders, negates nor even tarnishes this claimed intention of the passage, i.e. He (the man) must honor and be faithful to his wife. Yes, we know that the Pharisees obeyed the letter of the law while ignoring the spirit of the law, and were condemned for it. But please remember that following the spirit of the law does not negate the need to follow the letter of the law. We don't choose which to follow, we must follow both the letter of the law and the spirit of the law.

We must be careful when we stress the intent of any passage. If the intent is not specified, we can never be sure what it is. A wise man once said: ***"The biggest difference between God and us is: He never thinks He is us!!"***

The Bible was written by the Holy Spirit for all people for all time, not just the actual persons who received it. If we should decide on the intent of this passage, and then teach this intent, which has a direct impact on the practices of every local church and find out on judgment day that *our* chosen intent was not what God intended, we will be judged more strictly (NIV), receive the heavier judgment, (ASV), James 3:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:10.

After all is said and done, maybe the only intent of this phrase is to ensure that the elder ***must be*** "the husband of one wife," i.e. married according to Christian guidelines. What evidence is available to prove otherwise?

The second reason we can not use the claimed intention to deduce the meaning of a passage is: the faulty precedent it would set. For example: For two thousand years Greek scholars have known and printed that baptism means immersion. But some now say "Yes, but the intention was just to symbolize cleansing. We can do that with any amount of water. No need to immerse when we can accomplish the intention by any application of water." Can we allow the *claimed* intention to override the clear meaning of the words? This process is exactly the same as those who claim the intention of 1 Timothy 3:2 is just to ensure dedication to the wife, and this assurance is maintained even after the death of an elder's wife, therefore we can ignore the actual meaning of the Greek words because we are maintaining the *claimed* intention.

If we validate, acknowledge or give any credence to this faulty process we are opening the door to all matter of fallacious conclusions and thereby negating God's Holy Word!!

**Summary of interpretation evidence.**

We have demonstrated that the intent of a passage cannot contradict or nullify the actual meaning of the words. It has also been demonstrated that the intent can only be known if the text specifies what the intent really is. To simply state the intent and then act on it alone, disregarding the meaning of the words is pure speculation and unacceptable for all who love the truth.

If this *reasoning*(?) of accepting the claimed intention of a passage as justification for a given translation then to be consistent we must accept sprinkling for baptism, instrumental music in our worship services and many more equally unscriptural practices.

This type of *reasoning* is untenable in any area of investigation but, additionally, is eternally dangerous when done while dealing with God's word.

We have proven that "an elder must be ... the husband of one wife" is the correct translation and the only valid interpretation, therefore I ask that you please consider the following logic very carefully.

**If** we agree that God's word teaches that "an elder must be ... the husband of one wife,"  
**Then** no man can be an elder when he is not the husband of one wife.

This logic can be applied to each qualification listed for the elder (of overseer), for example:

**If** we agree that God's word teaches that "an elder must be blameless (NKJV)."  
**Then** no man can be an elder when he is not blameless.

Since this (being blameless) is a subjective qualification, that is, one which is a matter of judgment, it is more difficult to apply the above logic. However, this same difficulty is present when the elder is installed. If it is generally accepted by congregation at installation that the candidate is blameless, then this same consensus is required to keep him in office. If the congregational consensus is that he is no longer *blameless* then he must resign.

If this evidence seems inconclusive, then think of the *only* other alternative: An elder can remain in office even when it is generally accepted by congregation that he is not

blameless. Could we then say we are following The Word which says "an elder must be blameless..."

If these simple "IF ... THEN" statements from the previous page are not true then you could never ask an elder to resign under any circumstances, unless he is disfellowshipped (1 Corinthians 5:1-11). Life tenure is the only alternative if these "IF ... THEN" statements are not true!

Any dismissal or resignation of an elder is a correct and necessary inference, 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7 ("an elder (overseer) ***must be*** ..."), when he loses any of his qualifications.

Some want to say that sin is the difference. If a qualification is lost due to sin then the elder should resign, if it is lost not due to sin that he does not have to resign. This is dealt with in detail, below under section C: Some Objections Answered, objection 3. I will just say here that this comment is contrary to logic, violates common sense because with just a little thought any of the qualifications could be lost because of sin, or could be lost without sin, and, also, this reasoning is unscriptural, i.e. not based on scripture.

Several objections to the conclusions reached in sections A and B are answered in the following section.

### **C) Some Objections Answered**

**Objection 1), If an elder's wife dies how can we ask him to resign, after all, "he is still the same man"!**

It has been asserted by some that an elder does not have to resign after the death of his wife because he is still the same man as before her death. After having been married for 56 years to a wonderful Christian wife, I find this statement to be stunning and totally unbelievable or else a very sad commentary on the married life of the man in question.

When two Christians marry they become one flesh, but that is not the only way in which they merge. Because of their mutual love, honor and respect they influence each other in every area of life! This mutual edification, encouragement and influence is a constant force in their changing lives. I think I can safely say that no man after being married for many years to a Christian wife will ever be "the same man" after that wife dies. The constant presence of a Christian wife is also a constant encouragement, balance, influence and sometimes "muffler." She dulls the pain from insult and embarrassment experienced by her husband as he lives the life of a church leader. She is uplifting during times of depression caused by the many present day troubles of most churches. She provides a different perspective when weighing the options of many decisions

required of an elder. She is the source of laughter in times of gloom. She contributes hope when it seems to be lacking. She offers inspiration when the passion seems to be gone. She adds to his spiritual knowledge in daily Bible studies and discussions. She assists in growing closer to God during regular mutual prayers. *Her regular private prayers for him are the source of his strength as a blessing from God.*

When that constant influence is removed the man is never "the same" as he was with that influence. Maybe that is why an elder is required to be married, i.e. the constant and direct effect of a wife is beneficial and needed and necessary. Would any elder say that the influence of his wife was negligible or will not be missed? Would any man, after a long happy marriage to a Christian woman say after her death that her future contribution to the man's attitudes, efforts, initiatives and decisions would have been minimal or not needed nor missed? Would any Christian man say he will make the same decisions, act with the same way, show the same love, give the same consideration to all questions as he did before his wife died? Anyone who can answer "yes" to any of these questions has missed out on the greatest blessings of life and is making a very critical statement about his departed wife and/or their marriage.

Does the teaching of Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 apply to marriage?

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

If one falls down, his friend can help him up.

But pity the man who falls and has no-one to help him up!

Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Even if all human nature and all scriptural teaching about the caring and loving nature of a Christian marriage are ignored and someone can be found that answers all, or any, of the above questions in the affirmative, ... the Bible still says that the elder "**must be**" a husband (present tense verb, implying the state of marriage must be current), regardless of all the human instincts which some may think run contrary to this plain statement..

**Objection 2), Does 1 Timothy 5:9 gives us another view of how to translate 1 Timothy 3:2?**

*NIV- 5:9 No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband...*

*ASV- 5:9 Let none be enrolled as a widow under three-score years old, [having been] the wife of one man, ...*

The Greek translated (NIV) "**has been faithful to her husband**" or (ASV) "*having been the wife of one man*" is ενος ανδρος γυνη, literally "of one husband wife." The translation of this phrase is supported by the exact same evidence as "of one wife husband" in 1 Timothy 3:2, see details above under **I A**.

Please note in the Greek the verb associated with "faithful to her husband (NIV)" or "the wife of one man (ASV)" telling us *when* the condition must be true is absent in 1 Timothy 5:9, but inserted as "has been" by the NIV or "having been" by the ASV. The verb is specified in 1 Timothy 3:2 where it is present tense, i.e. **must be**. In Greek the verb 'to be' is often not present, it is to be understood from the context. Since the verb is missing here in 5:9, we must decide if Paul is saying to be enrolled as a widow, she: **a) must be** (present tense), **b) must become** (future tense), or **c) must have been** (past tense) "the wife of one man (ASV)"? Since she is now a widow we cannot pick option **a)** which would imply that she must not be put on the list of widows until she has a husband, therefore not being a widow any more. The verb cannot be in the future tense, option **b)**, because she needs the assistance now and that assistance cannot depend on a future condition being met, especially the condition of remarriage (*must become* the wife of one husband) which would mean she would not then qualify for assistance as a *widow*. Either the present tense or the future tense would also imply no one would ever be enrolled on the list, since they can't be enrolled until they become a wife again, thereby negating their qualification as a widow!

Therefore our choice of tense must be option c) past tense, the same as the tense for "raised children," "showed hospitality," and "washed feet ...." in the next verse. If the past tense is used then the translation of 1 Timothy 5:9 would literally be: "**No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, was the wife of one husband ...**" The phrase "wife of one husband" is understood in exactly the same sense as the "husband of one wife" as stated in 1 Timothy 3:2 as a requirement for an elder. The big difference is that for the widow these words are describing a past condition while for the elder it is describing a current condition.

The following is a rather detail discussion of the Greek grammar as it pertains to the translation of γεγονυια, ενος ανδρος γυνη. This discussion is for the purpose of refuting the position that our phrase should be translated *a one man woman* instead of *a wife of one husband*. If you don't have an interest in a detail Greek grammar discussion feel free to skip to Objection 3.

Some have said: (**A**) the verb giving the tense (or time frame) for our phrase is not really missing, but that the perfect participle *gegonuai* (γεγονυια) applies to the phrase *wife of one husband* (ενος ανδρος γυνη), not to the previous phrase (*not less than sixty years old*). This position has the perfect participle providing the tense or time frame for the marriage as a past event with a present result. They follow up by saying (**B**) the perfect

participle must be translated, in this context, as covering a present or current condition. Based on these two positions the following reasoning is pursued:

Step 1. If ενος ανδρος γυνη describes a current relationship then it cannot imply a married condition because the subject is a widow, meaning she has no husband, i.e. unmarried. Therefore we cannot use the words *husband* or *wife* in our translation of our phrase ενος ανδρος γυνη.

Step 2. Since our phrase ενος ανδρος γυνη is the same as the phrase in 1 Timothy 3:2, with just the male and female nouns reversed, then it too (the qualification of an elder) cannot describe or require a married relationship.

We will discuss each of these four (A, B, Step 1, Step 2) points separately .

A) Can we ignore the comma following *gegonuai* (γεγονυια)? This comma implies that the editors of the Greek text thought the participle modified the previous phrase ("not less than sixty years"). Since these editors were/are not inspired, could their placement of the comma be in error, and why does it matter anyway? Yes, of course uninspired men can and do make mistakes all the time! We must however, look at all the evidence before reaching a decision about the comma placement. The placement of the comma is very important because it implies which phrase should be modified by the perfect participle γεγονυια. Any Greek text having the comma after the participle is implying the participle should modify the previous phrase "*not less than sixty years,*" not the following phrase "*of one husband wife.*"

This is very important as it lies at the very heart of the total argument. If γεγονυια does not modify *of one husband wife*, it cannot give the time frame of this phrase and we have no reason to assume our phrase must be, or even can be understood to be a description of a current condition. Thus the context would prevail and since our subject, *a widow*, implies previously married **and** currently **not** married, our phrase would be a description of a past condition, not a current one. Problem solved. All the translations for the past 600 years were all correct in saying "having been" or "has been" married faithfully! But has the placement of this comma been consistent over the years? Yes it has!

Looking at the various Greek manuscripts we have:

- 1) The second, third and fourth (corrected) Editions of the United Bible Societies, the latter used by Brown & Comfort's Interlinear;
- 2) Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, Weymouth (THW) with many other manuscripts compared;
- 3) Mounce's Interlinear: A compilation of four Greek Texts (The UBS, The TNIV, The NET Bible and the Textus Receptus);

4) Berry's Interlinear: The Stephens, 1550 plus the Elzevir, 1624. Note on p.11 "4. Points.- There is no authority anywhere for the punctuation. There are few or no points in the ancient copies, and editors naturally differ in their system of pointing. We have been obliged to punctuate for ourselves as we judged best. We have not attempted to note the difference in the punctuation of the various editors, except in places where it materially alters the sense;"

5) Marshall's Interlinear: 21st edition of Eberhard Nestle's *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

These few examples are by no means exhaustive, but of such variety and time span as to give pause to any serious Bible student, especially since I could find not one exception. They all, every single one of them, place the comma after the perfect participle γεγονυια. These Greek manuscripts consistently, since 1550, indicate the opinion of the editors that γεγονυια should describe or modify the phrase defining the age of the widow, not the phrase defining the personal relationship of the widow and her previous husband.

Since the placement of the comma is not inspired, every translator has the option, yea the obligation to consider the implication of this comma and how to describe this personal relationship, either as a past or present condition. Let us check the various translations:

John Wycliffe bible of 1382, John Purvey bible of 1395, William Tyndale bibles of 1526 and 1534, The Geneva Bible of 1599, **King James Bible of 1769, KJV (1873), NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV, ESV,** Phillips, NEB, Hugo McCord, Weymouth, Diaglott, Young's Literal Translation, The Amplified Bible, the Living New Testament (paraphrased), The Living Oracles (by Campbell, MacKnight and Doddridge), James Moffatt, Duay Confraternity, The Jerusalem Bible.

All 25 of these translations give the marital condition as a past experience as is obvious from the context since a widow is, by definition, a woman with no current husband. For someone to say ενοϋ ανδρου γυνη is describing a current situation for the widow and therefore cannot mean a marriage relationship is to say that all the Greek scholars just presented are all consistently wrong, and do so with no evidence to substantiate their claim. The objector must also believe something for which there is no supporting evidence, i.e. the perfect participle is modifying the marriage relationship rather than the age requirement.

**B)** The second stage of this objection is to require the translation of this perfect participle as if it is describing a present condition, which is my no means necessary. All Greek students know translators have two options in translating the perfect tense. It can be translated with words such as *having* or *have* which emphasize the action was in the past (I have married). Or, the perfect can be translated with the focus on the present

result (I am married). This decision must be determined by the context. What word or group of words necessitate, support or even allow this perfect participle, *in this context* to be translated with emphasis on a possible present result?

The widow had been married. The widow is not currently married. This requirement for the widow to have been faithful and dedicated during the marriage in order to get church assistance is perfectly reasonable. To *require* that same attitude after the death of the husband goes against human nature and her being allowed to remarry, Romans 7:1-3. If remarriage is normal and acceptable then the widow must be allowed to become friendly with another man. Is the widow violating her marital oath to the first husband if she "flirts" with another man? (And how friendly can she become before it's flirting?) To what degree do we allow this friendship to develop before she is removed from church assistance because she violated the instruction to be (present tense) faithful and dedicated to her former husband? And based on what evidence do we decide?

**If** ενος ανδρος γυνη is a required current condition, **Then** the widow must maintain the same degree of *circumspect social distance* from other men as she did when she was married.

This would imply she could not talk too frequently (how to define?) with a man, meet him for lunch, have a "date" with him, nor spend time alone with him, even on a park bench. These things are all *normal, reasonable associations* for single people, but now is forbidden because the widow is financially unable to support herself. This is certainly an unreasonable position, but it is required if ενος ανδρος γυνη is understood as a current requirement for church assistance and it translated as faithful and dedicated to her "one man."

Any widow may choose to maintain this same degree of *circumspect social distance* from other men for various reasons, but to imply that God requires it in order to gain assistance from the church is simply unsupported.

This entire concept of requiring a widow to maintain her faithful and dedicated attitude to a passed-on-husband is unsupported by scripture (Romans 7:1-3, 1 Corinthians 7:39), logic or common sense.

Repeating here for convenience, Step 1. **If** ενος ανδρος γυνη describes a current relationship **then** it cannot imply a married condition because the subject is a widow, meaning she has no husband, i.e. unmarried. Therefore we cannot use the words *husband* or *wife* in our translation of our phrase ενος ανδρος γυνη.

We have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that ενος ανδρος γυνη applies to a past condition, therefore the conclusion in Step 1 is false. Since Step 2 (from page 17) is based on the conclusion of Step 1, the conclusion from Step 2 is also false.

## Summary

The erroneous logic of 1 Timothy 5:9 just discussed follows this procedure:

- 1) The perfect participle modifies or describes the man-woman relationship.
- 2) This man-woman relationship is a current relationship, because of the perfect tense.
- 3) Since the subject (a widow) is unmarried, the man-woman relationship cannot be describing a current marriage relationship.
- 4) Because this man-woman relationship cannot refer to a married relationship, the same phrase in 3:2 cannot require a current marriage relationship for the elder.

Steps 1 and 2 have been proven invalid by the weight of Greek scholarship over the last 600 years. Step 3 is true, it describes a previous marital relationship, terminated by the death of the husband. Step 4 has been proven invalid, the man-woman relationship described is a previous marital relationship and therefore strengthens the decision that 3:2 requires the elder to be married.

I pray that all scholars will love the truth more than their knowledge of it.

**Objection 3) It has been said "a man must be married to become an elder, but doesn't need to remain married in order to remain an elder."**

What evidence is offered to substantiate this claim? What scriptural fact is presented from which this conclusion can be logically deduced? What scriptural example of another similar situation is presented? What verse or group of verses teach this qualification is short-term or only momentary? On the contrary, this qualification is implemented with the present tense verb, *must be*, which implies a current **and** future condition.

The verb "**must be**" is present tense, meaning that anytime anyone reads this verse the statement must be true. Yes, there is an exception to that general rule. 1 Corinthians 14:1 says "...eagerly desire spiritual gifts." This is a present tense verb. Does this imply that we today should desire spiritual gifts? No, because there are many verses that explain that spiritual gifts were temporary, e.g. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. Only the Bible can specify that a command is temporary. There are many scriptures and much logic that specify that spiritual gifts are no longer available. Where are the scriptures or logic that teach, imply or even hint that any of the qualifications of the elders are temporary?

Anyone who reads the command "*must be ... the husband*" and concludes that after a wife dies the widower is still qualified to be an elder is probably too greatly influenced by his love, sympathy and respect for the elder in question thinking that if he resigned it

would be an additional stress, pain and loss that he should not have to endure. But if this plain teaching from Paul was taught regularly and each elder knew it and a plan was in place to implement the resignation of any widower, the process could go smoothly with the proper honor, love and respect for the elder and with much less stress on the widower and on the congregation.

Reviewing 1 Timothy 3:1-2:

***Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, ... etc.***

If the Holy Spirit had wanted to convey the idea that the marriage was required but only for the candidate, He would have maintained the subject from the first sentence, i.e. *anyone* (who desires to be an elder). He did not. He changed the subject to *the overseer*. Why? No word is in the Bible by accident. Each word (in the Greek) was chosen by the Holy Spirit. If He had wanted to convey the idea that this qualification only applied to the candidate for the office he would have maintained the subject from the first sentence, leaving out the underlined section in the previous scriptural quotation and said something like:

***Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task and must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, ... etc.***

This wording would imply that the qualification only applies to the candidate, not necessarily to the elder once he is installed. There may be several other words or groups of words to convey the message that the qualification is only temporary. None of these other choices of words were used. The Holy Spirit changed the subject from *anyone* to *the overseer* and used the present tense verb and specified that "an elder must be ... the husband....," i.e. the *elder* must be, not the *candidate* must be. How then can we refuse to accept what the Holy Spirit says and change His wording in a human effort to *improve* His message by saying or implying that this qualification is only temporary?

If objection **3** is true, does this same logic apply to our corporate worship, i.e. must we sing? If we stop singing (I don't mean between songs, but deciding not to sing at all in our worship service) is our worship still acceptable to God? For example, in our church we always sang at every worship service. If we decided to no longer sing in our corporate worship. Is this worship still acceptable because we at one time did sing, or must it be continued at every service because our command to sing is a present tense, Ephesians 5:19? Every command to Christians, i.e. **to grow** in the grace and knowledge, 2 Peter 3:18; **Honor** your father and mother, Ephesians 6:2; Husband **love** your wives, Ephesians 5:28 are in the present tense. Could we say we are following any of these commands if we only did them for a while then stopped? 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 both

say an elder "must be" married. How can we then say that if he is no longer married, he still meets this qualification?

What example is there where a command is given in the present tense but is no longer effective after a certain time limit or a special event, without contextual evidence to specifically justify its temporary nature? (See the example of 1 Corinthians 14:1-3, above)

What example from world affairs can be cited to validate the assumption made in objection 3)? Is this true in the military? Would any business accept a president according to certain qualifications and then say it is all right to remain after losing one of the qualifications? Could any professional sportsman continue after it is proved he did not have some specific qualification?

If this objection 3) is valid, can an elder remain in office if his wife leaves him, through no fault of his own, or after an elder gets a scriptural divorce? The elder is devastated. He still loves his, now ex-wife. He is still a *one woman man*. He is no longer married but was during many years of service as an elder. Can he remain in office? Please don't dismiss this question as if it could not happen. It can happen. I have seen it happen!

What if an elder has only one child, and that child very sadly and unfortunately dies while in High School? He had a believing child to become an elder, can he remain an elder with no believing children, in reality no children at all? **Objection 3)** would imply "Yes, he can."

Be careful how you answer the last two questions. If 3) is correct you could have a man with no wife and no children serving as an elder, possibly for many years. If a congregation and eldership do this they will have a difficult time facing Christ on judgment day to give an account of everything done while in the body, 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Please forgive a few rhetorical questions. If 3) is correct why would an elder have to maintain any of the qualifications? If he were "apt to teach" when accepted as an elder, must he retain that characteristic after becoming an elder? If he had a good reputation from outsiders when accepted as an elder must he retain that reputation after becoming an elder? If his children at home were Christians and obeyed him when he was accepted as an elder must his children retain that relationship to him if he is to remain an elder?

In answer to these questions it has been said "yes, if he loses any of the other qualifications the elder must resign, because in losing the others qualifications sin is involved, therefore the elder must resign even if the elder repents of the sin. But since losing one's wife is not a sin he should not be forced to resign. This position is incorrect for three reasons: 1) Several other qualifications can be lost without sin, 2) If the

position was true, it implies that all Christian men unqualified for the eldership would be living in sin until they qualified, and 3) Some Scriptural and/or Logical evidence must be offered to prove: a) Loss of a qualification due to sin implies leaving the office of elder and b) Loss of a qualification due to non-sin implies no resignation is necessary.

1) Several other qualifications can be lost without sin, for example: a) To lose the qualification of being "apt to teach" is not a sin. The aptitude could have been lost through bad health or loss of desire, neither method of losing this eldership qualification is sin. b) If an elder's child, after he becomes an elder, refuses to be obedient, it is not a sin for the elder. c) If an elder loses his "good reputation" from outsiders it is not necessarily a sin, it might be because his political party is looked down on by all his acquaintances due to changing political circumstances after he was installed as an elder. d) If an elder has a non-Christian child who reaches the age of accountability, yet refuses to obey the Gospel, it is not a sin for the elder. But after a certain *reasonable* length of time the elder must resign. These four examples of an elder losing one or more qualifications, not due to sin, would all require an elder to resign. Therefore the fact that losing a wife is not a sin has nothing to do with whether the elder should resign. The point is losing the qualification, not how it is lost.

2) The objector in saying that losing certain qualification(s) for the eldership is due to sin, therefore, for this reason, the elder should resign. For example, if an elder lives so that he is no longer *above reproach*, it must be due to sin. Not necessarily! He may take an unpopular stance on a Biblical question, and maybe even be correct, but loses his reputation with the majority of the congregation due to his very unpopular position. Other qualifications such as being *temperate*, self-controlled, respectable, etc. might all be lost because of personality differences, political views or any number of reasons that are not sinful. The whole point of having qualifications is to select men for the job who are accepted as examples to follow by the congregation and respected as their shepherds.

The Holy Spirit listed the correct qualifications to accomplish His purpose. The Holy Spirit is saying men like this can be leaders and elders, those men who don't have these characteristics should not be elders. There is no reason given for having or not having these qualities, it simply says only men who have them can be elders. No mention of circumstantial evidences that may imply an exception to His rules. Since no exceptions to His rules are stated, we can not conger up any.

If for an elder to lose his standing of being *above reproach* is necessarily due to sin, or is sinful in and of itself, then all of us who are not *above reproach* are leaving in sin! The same can be said of all the other subjective qualifications. This necessarily implies that any who are not qualified to be elders are living in sin until they meet the qualifications of elders. Surely not even a casual Bible student would accept these necessary implications, Therefore **Objection 3)** must be false.

3) Some Scriptural and/or Logical evidence must be offered to prove: a) Loss of a qualification due to sin implies leaving the office of elder *and* b) Loss of a qualification due to non-sin implies no resignation is necessary. To merely say this is no evidence that it is true. Where is the scripture or logic which can be used to prove these two necessary implications from **Objection 3**)? We cannot fall victim to the world's practice of accepting hypothesis as evidence, theory as fact, nor accusations as truth. Without this evidence we must reject **Objection 3**) as false.

It has also been said that since there are no instructions on how to initiate the resignation of an elder then we cannot do it when the wife dies. We have no instructions on how or when to install an elder either. Yet, we use the purpose for, and qualification of, elders to imply the importance and the necessity of having them and then use prayer and wisdom to establish a procedure that works and is acceptable to the congregation. Why shouldn't we do the same thing for a resignation procedure?

We also have no scriptural procedure for removing an elder who becomes a drinker, begins swearing, is found guilty of any crime and sent to jail, or a thousand other sins that all would agree would require removing him from the office of the eldership. Therefore if we can't ask an elder to resign when his wife dies because we have no scriptural procedure to do so, then we cannot ask him to resign for any reason. Surely no one would agree with this necessary implication from this argument, therefore it cannot be used to justify **Objection 3**).

Finally, how would the logic of **Objection 3**) be applied to the widow being served in 1 Timothy 5:9? Could we say that a woman needs to be a widow to be added to the list, but does not need to remain a widow to remain on the list? The answer is so obvious someone might say "Of course she must remain a widow, the list is for widows! If she remarries she is no longer a widow and must be removed from the list of widows!!" If this logic is valid for the widow why not for the elder? To be put on the list of elders a man must be married, if his wife dies he is no longer married and must be removed from the list. Compare the following two commentaries on the indicated scriptures:

**Timothy 5:9**

Of course she must remain a widow,  
the list is for widows!

If she remarries she is no longer a widow  
and must be removed from the list.

**Timothy 3:2**

Of course the elder must remain married,  
the list is for married men!

If his wife dies he is no longer married  
and must be removed from the list.

Can any sincere Bible student accept the statements about one scripture while rejecting the statements about the other? If so, our reasons must be very convincing else we will have a difficult time when we face Christ to explain those reasons, 2 Corinthians 5:10:

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

**Objection 4) The qualification to be married is like the requirement to have children, when the children leave home it is the same as when an elder's wife dies, i.e. no need to resign.**

Some have said that the qualification to be married is "like the requirement to have children," it is temporary, i.e. when the children leave the home an elder is still qualified to be an elder. The conclusion is when an elder's wife dies he is still qualified to be an elder, because it is the same as when his children leave home. In other words losing his wife is the same as losing his children, i.e. neither event disqualifies the elder. This conclusion is false for three reasons: 1) It is logically arbitrary, 2) It ignores the differences between the two qualifications, and 3) It is unscriptural.

Before we discuss the reasons for the above conclusion being false we want to restate the importance of the question. This is a doctrinal question: The qualifications of elders. This decision will probably effect every congregation of the Lord's people. The elders, by definition, are older. Therefore it is only a matter of time until this question will be faced in almost every congregation. Having scripturally qualified elders is most important, as exemplified by the very qualifications themselves. If we implement these qualifications in a way unspecified by the Holy Spirit, we are in very grave danger of receiving severe judgment.

1) The conclusion that the qualification of an elder being the husband of one wife can be handled with the same supposed exception as the qualification requiring children is strictly arbitrary, therefore unjustified logically. Why couldn't I say, with the same authority:

- a) The "husband of one wife" is the same as the need to be hospitable, i.e. if the elder loses that qualification he must resign. Or,
- b) The "husband of one wife" is the same as the need to be "apt to teach," i.e. if an elder loses this ability he must resign. Or,
- c) The "husband of one wife" is the same as the need to be "above reproach," i.e. if an elder loses that quality he must resign. Or,

Why can't this specific qualification (the husband of one wife) be compared to any of the other qualifications and say when an elder's wife dies it is the same as losing the "tied to" qualification and would necessitate resignation? Why isn't this procedure as logical as saying we must handle "the husband of one wife" as we do the requirement for children? Where is the verse or group of verses, the word or group of words that say or

even imply that we should handle these two qualifications *the same*, while handling the others in a different manor? We must have some type of valid evidence to justify asking an elder to resign only if certain qualifications are lost, but no need to resign if certain other qualifications are lost.

Absent any scriptures to the contrary, *wouldn't it be most reasonable to handle all qualifications the same*, i.e. if any of the qualifications are lost the elder must resign?

2) We cannot ignore the many differences between these two qualifications (husband of one wife and the requirement of children) even though they are sometimes illogically tied together.

a) We are not told why an elder must be married. Maybe the Holy Spirit expected that any mature Christian would know why. But, contrariwise, we are told why he must have children, 1 Timothy 3:5 NIV.

*5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)*

This fact has many implications. We all know that children provide many blessings, challenges, joys, heartaches, pleasures, and training opportunities; for the children *and* the parents.

We will only mention here the benefits to the potential elder. Raising children is great training for the potential elder, preparing him to also train the congregation in spiritual growth as he trained his children in spiritual growth. Any father knows how much he, himself, grows as he raises his children. As his children mature his "oversight" diminishes as planned by his own desire, human physical nature and God's command.

All of us want our children to "grow up," and become mature and accept more and more responsibilities for their own actions and decisions. And as such they need less and less "oversight" from their father. Of course this fatherly influence continues throughout life, but we all agree this influence diminishes as the children grow older and leave home. This change is planned, desired and natural. At some point along this growth process the father is considered by the congregation to have managed his family well and therefore meets this one qualification to become an elder. At this point the children have fulfilled the purpose specified in 1 Timothy 3:4-5. (Please don't misunderstand, this is not the only purpose for children. It is just the only one we need to discuss here.)

Not only is this growth planned, desired and natural it is **COMMANDED** by God:

Genesis 2:24 *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

Matthew 19:5 *and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?*

Mark 10:7 *'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,*

Ephesians 5:31 *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."*

I quote all these passages here to emphasize the commandment to *leave* father and mother and be united with his wife. The separation of the children from the controlling influence of their father is commanded by God. Is it possible that the importance of this message contributed to the fact that the Holy Spirit wrote it four times.

Please also note the words of Paul in:

1 Corinthians 11:3 *Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

This passage teaches many lessons but the one point to mention here is the father is not noted, implying adult persons are no longer under the spiritual guidance of their physical father.

Additional support can be gained from:

Ephesians 4:14 *that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ;*

This passage is definitely talking about spiritual children and spiritual growth, but it has such clear spiritual meaning because the physical parallel is so well known and accepted.

So much emphasis has been put on this point in order to prove children leaving the home is natural, planned, desirable and command by God, in contrast to the fact that the elder's wife dying while he is in office is NOT planned, NOT natural, NOT desirable and especially NOT commanded by God!

How then can anyone say we must react to the death of the elder's wife in the same way as we react to his children leaving home as they mature? The purpose for an elder being married is never fulfilled, it is always *being* fulfilled. The need for the wife's presence beside her husband is never fulfilled by another nor diminished by time, if anything it is enhanced by time.

When two Christians marry they become one flesh, but that is not the only way in which they merge. Because of their mutual love, honor and respect they influence each other in every area of life! This mutual edification, encouragement and influence is a constant force in their changing lives. I think I can safely say that no man after being married for many years to a Christian wife will ever be "the same man" after that wife dies. The constant presence of a Christian wife is also a constant encouragement, balance, influence and sometimes "muffler." She dulls the pain from insult and embarrassment experienced by her husband as he lives the life of a church leader. She is uplifting during times of depression caused by the many present day troubles of most churches. She provides a different perspective when weighing the options of many decisions required of an elder. She is the source of laughter in times of gloom. She contributes hope when it seems to be lacking. She offers inspiration when the passion seems to be gone. She adds to his spiritual knowledge in daily Bible studies and discussions. She assists in growing closer to God during regular mutual prayers. *Her regular private prayers for him are the source of his strength as a blessing from God.*

Assuming we should allow an elder to remain in office when his wife dies because we allow it when his children leave home is unreasonable, illogical and scripturally unauthorized.

3) Assuming we should allow an elder to remain in office when his wife dies because we allow it when his children leave home is unscriptural! It is unscriptural because there is NO scripture that commands it, teaches it, implies it nor even hints at it. Please brethren let us not practice something with no Biblical support.

Surely no more evidence is needed to prove **Objection D)** is erroneous and contrary to Scriptures, logic and common sense.

## **II) How many Christian obedient children must an elder have and for how long?**

In 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and Titus 1:6 we have the following information:

*3:4. He must manage his own family well and the see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family [Gk. household] how can he take care of God's church.*

*1:6b. a man whose children believe, and are not open to the charge of being wild and, disobedient*

The second qualification that is physically "measurable" is that an elder must "see that his children obey him...." In this section we will discuss three questions: A) How many

children must an elder have? **B)** How long must his children obey him? and **C)** How many of his children must obey him?

**A) How many children must an elder have?**

The question often arises about the number of children a man must have in order to meet this qualification. Many times a plural, e.g. Children, of necessity includes the singular. For example for an elder to be hospitable he must show hospitality (“Gk. n. Love to strangers,” Thayer). Which means showing love to strangers. Now we all understand that this plural, strangers, of necessity includes the singular. No one would exempt an elder from showing hospitality if there was only one stranger in church on a given day by saying that the elders only have to show hospitality to strangers, plural.

Another example for our consideration is a common announcement at church: “be sure to meet all of our visitors today.” All would know that the instruction would still be obligatory even if we only had one visitor that day, i.e. the plural would of necessity include the singular.

Does the Greek also have this same general rule? Consider the following examples:

- 1) 1 Cor. 7:14 ***“For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”*** The word *children* here is used in the exact same sense that it is used in Titus 1:6. We all recognize that the condition of unclean or holy children applies regardless of the number of children, whether one or more. The only reasonable conclusion is that the number of children is not the issue, but rather the current condition of the children, i.e. “Holy.” It is not possible to conclude that if such a couple has only one child, that one child is unclean because in order to be “holy” there must be more than one, i.e. “children.”
- 2) In 1 Timothy 5:3 we have: ***“Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need.”*** This plural “widows” of necessity includes the singular, else we would have congregations ignoring this instruction if they only had one widow. Hopefully all will agree this command is applicable even if only one widow is in need.
- 3) Matthew 22:24 ***“Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him.*** If a man had only one child could the Jews have said he did not have children and therefore his brothers must marry his widow?
- 4) 2 Corinthians 12:14 ***Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all,***

*children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.* If only one child, then he must save up for his parents, but if children then they do not have to save up for the parents? Should we say parents do not have to save up if they have only one child but they *must save up* only if they have more than one?

- 5) 1 Timothy 5:4 *But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.* If a widow has but one child, must that child take care of the widow, or is this true only if there are “children”? Verse 16 of this chapter clarifies this for us. *“If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.”*
- 6) 3 John 4 *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.* Of course the more children walking in the truth the better, but if only one child is walking after the truth, is there then no joy? What if in a given congregation John only had one child (in the faith), is this verse saying he would have joy in that one walking in the faith or is this verse only talking about plurality?

Although I believe the foregoing evidence is conclusive for the subject under discussion (if a man is qualified in all the other respects and has only one child and that child is a Christian, this singularity would not disqualify him) we must be careful not to generalize it more than the context warrants. When speaking of a specific past experience we can use these same plural words in the sense that they were designed for, i.e. to mean more than one. I will just give three examples: visitors, widows, children.

- 1) “I just left brother Steele’s hospital room. Since he had visitors I did not stay long.” Since I was there and saw the people involved and chose the plural word “visitors” I would mean more than one.
- 2) “Our church recently gave a party for the widows in our church.” Since again, this is a specific past event and was witnessed, this context obviously means more than one.
- 3) “I just visited my friend Jim but we couldn’t have a serious discussion because his children were making so much noise.” Again, I was there, it was a particular event in the past and I choose to use the plural, therefore the meaning is more than one.

When reporting about a specific historical event the plural in most, if not all, cases means plural only, as in the above three examples. But when talking about a general conditional future event, where the number is uncertain, the plural usually, if not always, includes the singular as in the six examples on the previous page.

To determine whether or not a specific plural word “includes the singular” requires a serious study of the context and a sincere love of the truth.

### **B) How long must an elder's children obey him?**

How long must an elder's children obey him? The short answer is: They are to obey him as long as they are children! Not as long as they are **his** children, for as long as they live they are *his* children, but they must obey him as long as they are children. As long as they are considered children then they must obey him. The Holy Spirit was wise enough to know that some young people "grow up" quicker than others, therefore He did not specify an age when the children would no longer be thought of as children. It is also a universally accepted axiom that as children age in years they should begin to make decisions for themselves and gradually be less and less *obedient* to the parents. This lessening of obedience has nothing to do with love, honor and respect, all of which usually **grow** with age. Most children will seek the advice and counseling of their parents as long as they live, but even that need decreases with age and an independent life. This all happens as they spend more time away from home in school, sports, college and finally after marriage (which requires *leaving* his father and mother, Matthew 19:5) they are "on their own." This is the general rule, but its application in a particular instance must be decided on the details of each case.

To what degree or how much should children be obedient to their parents? Titus 1:6b helps us here. The children must obey to the point that they ***are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.*** This only tells us that the children do not have to be perfect (as no one is!) but good "enough" not to be charged as ***wild and disobedient.*** Again, each case on its own merits, to be decided by the congregation.

These comments certainly seem to be reasonable and consistent with common sense, but do the scriptures teach or condone this position? Two very well known passages will help us in this study, Ephesians 6:1-4 and Matthew 19:4-6.

Ephesians 6:1 (ASV) ¶ ***Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. 2 Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), 3 that it may be well with thee, and thou shall live long on the earth. 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.*** -- [v. 1 Only children must be obedient, not an only child?? v.4 father can't provoke children, but OK if only one child?? -cb]

Matthew 19:4 (ASV) ***And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two***

*shall become one flesh? 6 So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

Paul says in the Ephesians passage ***Children, obey your parents in the Lord.*** Since we know there is no *filler* in the Bible, why did Paul add ***in the Lord*** to his admonition to the children to obey their parents? This adds a condition to the instruction. Children obey when the obedience agrees with the Lord or is in harmony with the teachings of the Lord or obey in such a way that pleases the Lord. Later at the end of verse 4 Paul tells the fathers to ***nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (ASV), or bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord (NIV).*** This chastening, admonishing, training and instruction must also be done in harmony with the teachings of the Lord. It is assumed that all will agree these passages encourage a degree of self reliance and independent thinking (a greater degree as the child grows older). Thus implying less influence from the parents proportioned to the age of the child. This is only talking about the degree of *obedience*, not the degree of love, honor and respect that ever child should give his parents which should never end, and usually ***grows*** with age. When does this degree of obedience reach zero? Maybe never, each case on it's own merit. When does *obedience* phase into *influence*? Maybe Jesus tells us in Matthew 19:4.

In this famous passage about marriage and divorce Jesus says ***For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.*** Does this help us in deciding a point at which obedience might evolve into independence? Surely no one would think that "leaving his father and mother" refers only to the physical location. Instead, there are many areas of life in which this advise to *leave his father and mother* can/should be applied. It seems obvious that obedience is one of those areas. It is therefore argued that an elder's children should be obedient to their father in a lessening degree throughout life, with marriage being the termination of that process. This is especially true with the woman, as she must be obedient to her husband after marriage, not her father, Ephesians 5:22-33.

In 1 Timothy 3:5 Paul gives us more information to consider. ***"5. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family [house (ASV)] how can he take care of God's church."*** The Greek word for "family" or "house" is from οἶκος. For this usage in 1 Timothy 3:4 ff. Thayer gives "2. by metonymy *the inmates of a house*, all the persons forming one family, a household:..." BDAG: "2. *household, family.... manage one's own household* 1 Timothy 3:4 ff." This sentence begins with εἰ δε which implies an extension or continuation of the previous sentence. Verse 4 talked about family and children obedience. This is followed by the parallel expression to manage his *household*, implying the family mentioned in verse 4 was the family in his household. When a child leaves the household the obedience mentioned in verse 4 would not apply.

We have shown that the command to be obedient to the father (who may be an elder) changes over time and is in the ending phase when the child leaves the household and/or marries.

### **C) How many of his children must obey him?**

The short answer is: all of them. But we have just established that the degree to which they must obey him varies with the age. Therefore all his children must obey the (nominated) elder to varying degrees, depending on their age. This just shows the wisdom of God as He wrote the scriptures. These general terms can be applied to all people at all times! But this generality is also a very big burden! It means that we, the congregation, must make decisions, sometimes very hard decisions!! When an elder's children are quite varied in ages how do we decide if they are all obeying him to the proper degree? Sometimes the answer is obvious. Often much time, prayer and consultation are required to make this decision. This difficult procedure is the only option, barring the simple acceptance into the eldership of all men with children (whether or not they obey him to the proper degree), thereby ignoring the actual words of the context. The final decision is based on that which is generally acceptable to the congregation and which maintains harmony in the local family of God. This subjectivity is required since God could not specify the age and degree of obedience required for each child in order for the father to become an elder because in different societies and in different families the answers would be different, i.e. unique to each situation. But with prayer and the proper Christian attitude a local church can and must make this difficult and subjective decision.

If any of these conclusions are rejected, any alternative position accepted must have more or better evidence to support it else you are accepting a position with less evidence than the alternative. The action of accepting and/or following a position with less evidence than the position you rejected is totally untenable for any who love the truth because by so doing you will be guilty of accusing God of supporting the truth with less evidence than a false alternative.

### **III) How long must an elder's children be Believers for him become or remain an elder?**

The only scripture we have to help answer this question is Titus 1:6: (NIV) *An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe, and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.*

The Greek *τεκνα εχως πιστα*, is translated by the NIV as *a man whose children believe*. It is literally "children having believing," according to four Interlinears: Berry's,

Marshall's, Brown & Comfort's and Mounce's. The ASV translates this as *having children that believe*. Mounce's translation, contained within his interlinear, gives us: *having believing children*. Because of this consistent support we conclude that the ASV translation is accurate, clear and easy to understand, hence we will use it to study.

In any Bible study we must remember that God wrote the scriptures for all people for all times. This verse is no exception. It was written so that any person in any society in any country could understand the meaning through prayerful and diligent Bible study. God knew that at the present time in America (and in all other times and places) some elders would have children who did not remain faithful after they left home. What would this mean to the future of the elder?

In this section we will be discussing three questions: **A)** The Definition of "children that believe," **B)** How many of his children must be believers? and **C)** Must the elder's children remain faithful for an elder to remain in office?

#### **A) The Definition of "children that believe,"**

We will use the same definition for children that we established in section **II**, i.e. the general plural which includes the singular. The practical meaning is "however many he has" must believe. Since both types of children, obedient and believing, are necessary for a man to become an elder, this context would seem to imply that the word *children* is used in the same way for both requirements. Any different meaning for the word *children* in the phrase *having children that believe* would require strong evidence to overcome the implication of sameness because both usages are in the same context. We conclude therefore that *children* means "however many he has."

Does requiring the elder's children to believe mean they must be Christians? We all know that a person must believe before he can become a Christian, John 1:12, Mark 16:15-16. Both Apollos and the disciples Paul found in Ephesus (Acts 19) were believers, yet not Christians until baptized. However when this is true the context always makes it clear. But when *believing* is an adjective modifying a person it seems the context always implies Christian, ex. *believing masters*, 1 Timothy 6:2; *believing husband*, 1 Corinthians 7:14; *believing man or woman*, 1 Corinthians 7:15; *believing wife*, 1 Corinthians 9:5. We conclude therefore that *believing children* means that they must be Christians.

#### **B) How many of the elder's children must be believers?**

If we note the phrase *having children that believe* is followed by *and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient*, we see the same children that are required to believe are also required to be obedient. Since we have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that all the children at home are the ones who must be obedient (see II B and II C,

above) it follows that all the children at home must be believers. The one exception in both cases (belief and obedience) is enough age to understand what is required of them. This also follows from the general rule that when a group is mentioned in the Bible without any restrictive modifiers in the context or elsewhere, it means all of that group. For example: the Elders mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 means *ALL* elders, teachers in James 3:1 means *ALL* teachers, fathers in Ephesians 6:2 and Colossians 3:21 means *ALL* fathers, etc.

Therefore when the word *children* is used in Titus 1:6 it means all children at home because there are no other restrictions or limitations to this group in the context and no other scriptures elsewhere that make this group more inclusive or more restrictive. However there is one exception demanded by the definition of the word *Christian*, i.e. the child must be old enough to understand and choose to obey the Gospel. This is an exact parallel to the obedient children, i.e. they must be old enough to understand before they are required to be obedient to their physical father. There is one additional requirement for a child to obey the heavenly father. Not only must he be old enough to understand, he must also want to follow the heavenly father, manifested by repentance, confession and a willingness to accept baptism..

This parallel might be expressed in summary as:

Obedience to his physical father

Required of all children at home, but degree varies with the physical age after birth.

Increase in physical age implies decrease in obedience to physical Father, phased out as child leaves the home.

**One exception:** If too young to understand his physical father then no requirement to be obedient!

Obedience to his Heavenly father

Required of all children at home, but degree varies with the physical age, after the new birth.

Increase in physical age implies decrease in spiritual influence of the physical father and increase in obedience to heavenly Father as spiritual growth increases.

**One exception:** If too young to understand his heavenly father then no requirement to be obedient as a Christian!

**C) Must the older children of the elder remain faithful for an elder to remain in office?**

We must all remain faithful to the point of death if we are to enter Heaven, Revelation 2:10. Being faithful is the only way to have joy in this life. The Christian life is the only life that provides hope, confidence, contentment, peace of mind and joy! The saddest, most painful, and most stressful situation, and the one which is the most difficult to endure for every parent is having a Christian child who does not remain faithful to the Lord and to the Lord's church.

In the previous section, III B, we decided that for a man to become an elder all his children, at home and of age, must be Christians and obedient. This conclusion, in effect, answers question C also, i.e. for an elder to remain in office his children must be faithful as long as they are of age and at home. This is true because we only have one phrase, and one context in which to understand this phrase. Since the phrase *having believing children* is followed immediately by *who are not accused of riot or unruly* without any introductory or separating words we must conclude that the subject has not changed. The *children* that believe are the same *children* that are not to be unruly, i.e. must be obedient. We have proven that the *children* that are to be obedient are the ones at home and old enough to understand. Therefore the *children* that must believe are the ones at home and old enough to understand.

Parallel to the discussion about children's obedience to their physical father decreasing with the age of the child, so also will the father's influence, spiritually, decrease with the age of the child. Again, this is right and good. God, and hopefully every Christian parent, wants a child to grow into their own faith and not retain the dominance of their parent's faith,

Ephesians 4:15 ***"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."*** and

1 Peter 2:2 ***"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation..."***

Just like a child grows away from his parents in the area of obedience in the physical world, by the design and desire of everyone, he should also grow up in the spiritual realm. Thereby reducing, by the design and desire of everyone, the influence of his parents in keeping with the above scriptures to the point of his own spiritual maturity. Just like the separation from parents in the physical realm is over a period of time, so it is with the spiritual realm. In both cases the length of time varies with the child and other circumstances. Each case on its own merits, to be decided by the local congregation as it applies to the qualification of elders.

To complete this section we must discuss what some people say about Proverbs 22:6 (ASV) ***"Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it."*** Is this proverb yet another qualification of an elder? Some think it teaches if at any time any of an elder's children become unfaithful, he is at that time

unqualified and should resign from the office of elder. They take this proverb to mean that if the child of an elder is not faithful his father/mother did not "train him up in the way he should go," and then conclude therefore that the elder must resign.

This application of Proverbs 22:6 makes two mistakes, namely, 1) Proverbs are not literal exceptionless laws but figurative generalization, and 2) this proverb has nothing to do with the qualifications of an elder.

**1) Proverbs are figurative, not literal.** Every word in the Bible is God breathed and therefore correct, true and must be followed. Many of the words and sentences are figurative, i.e. the meaning is something other than what the literal words say. When reading the parables of Jesus we all recognize this. In the parable of the sower Jesus is not teaching about how to farm, though the literal words are talking about farming. His meaning is about preaching/teaching The Word and how it is received.

The definition of the word "proverb" in both English and Greek is *a saying the true meaning of which is hidden in figurative language*, see Appendix C for complete details of this definition. Proverbs 22:6 is giving a general truth and, thereby, encouraging all of us to do everything we can to raise our children according to the teaching of Jesus, so that they will be happy in this life and receive Heaven in the next. It is a general teaching we must strive to follow, not a literal law, because no one knows or understands how to raise children at the time of raising, unless you require spiritual maturity of all parents who are only 20 to 40 years old. After our child rearing days are over, we can never be sure if we obeyed this proverb (except, "to the best of our ability") but, instead, based on our later wisdom we usually recognize our past mistakes and plead with God, and our children, for forgiveness.

We, and I think most parents, made a few mistakes, some of us made many mistakes in raising our children. If our children remain faithful does that mean we "raised him up in the way he should go," or just that our children used their own free will, our *little* or *much* encouragement, and their own love for God to overcome our mistakes and choose to live faithfully? Likewise, if our children fall away does that mean we failed as parents or just that our children ignored our teachings, discipline and advice and used their own free will to choose to follow the ways of the world? The only alternative to this last thought is God removing the child's free will if we do indeed follow the proverb to "train up a child in the way he should go."

True Proverb: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it."

Questionable conclusion: "If I fall away it is my parent's fault for not raising me properly." See 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 1:13-14. In real life we all know humble, faithful devoted parents who did all they could and still had a child who fell away.

Questionable conclusion: "If I remain faithful, it is because my parents raised me properly," John 14:15, 1 John 2:4, Romans 6:17. In real life we all know adults who were faithful until death, but were raised by very bad, even atheistic parents.

Questionable conclusion: Jesus must not have trained up the apostles in the way they should go, because Judas fell away. Or do we contend that the proverb only applies to physical children trained up in "the way he should go" in the physical society. Did Jesus not have the wisdom, power and motivational force to "raise" the apostles correctly?

In the previous pages we have given the evidence for concluding that *believing children* should mean Christian *children*. In one sense once you are a Christian, you are always a Christian. You can still be lost for any number of reasons, but you are still a Christian, else to repent and return to the church you would have to be baptized again. Should this phrase, *believing children*, then be understood as *faithful Christian*? If so, we would have to know, for example, not just that the child was attending church, but that he was attending from love and devotion to God not from ritual or peer pressure? We would also have to ask if *faithful Christian* means he could not believe any false doctrines, and then debate which unusual beliefs were really sufficiently false to disqualify his father from being an elder. Can we understand *having believing children* to mean *having Christian children who are always faithful*? It seems this is only possible by ignoring a) the fact that Proverbs 22:6 is, after all a proverb and b) the general teaching about the sins of a person are the sole responsibility of that person, 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Maybe the only unquestionable conclusion from Proverbs 22:6 is: God is teaching us by this proverb to love, discipline (Hebrew 12:7-10), and encourage with all diligence and wisdom (James 1:5-8) our children as we strive to nurture them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord, Ephesians 6:4, .... period.

## **2) This proverb has nothing to do with the qualifications of an elder.**

One reason we know this proverb has no connection with an elder's qualifications is that ***we can never know who followed it!*** Many children are faithful in spite of their parents, not because of them. This is especially true if the parents were alcoholic, drug addicts or just plain ignorant of the social skills needed to raise children and chose not to ask for God's help.

Likewise many children fall away in spite of all the parent's love, prayers, encouragement and discipline because, after all, they do still have free will. Any individual must make his own decisions about serving God. Yes, it is true that a child's upbringing has a great deal to do with how difficult or easy ***some*** decisions are, but no upbringing can prevent the temptations of the devil.

If Jesus can be tempted then anyone can be tempted.  
If any man can be tempted then any man with free will can sin.  
If any man can sin then any man can sin enough to fall away.

This can not be prevented by upbringing! The chance of falling away can be reduced, not eliminated, by godly rearing, thus the importance of proper parenting. But to conclude that if an elder's child falls away it is because the child was not "trained up in the way it should go" by his parents is misapplying God's Word from a proverb and ignoring all the scriptures that teach each person is responsible for his own actions. But if we also assume that this proverb is an additional qualification for elders, then someone has to determine when and to what extent the elder has followed it. It seems this would be very difficult if not totally impossible to do.

#### **IV) Must an elder, himself, personally possess each qualification listed?**

I hesitate to write this section because the answer seems so obvious. But because I personally had this experience I fear that this misconception might be widespread.

I was talking to a very good friend, a person whom I admire a great deal. He has been a faithful, conservative preacher for over fifty years. We were discussing the qualifications of a particular elder we both knew. It was my judgment that this elder, though a good Christian man, did not meet the last qualification mentioned in Titus chapter 1, verse 9 which says *“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.”*

We both had known this elder for a long time. We both knew that this elder did not have the proper attitude nor the scriptural knowledge to refute those who oppose sound doctrine. My friend's response was “Yes, I know, but if he has some one he can use to do that for him, it is OK for him to remain as elder.” I was stunned into silence. After a few days I wrote my good friend the following letter.

“Dear Brother:

I had to think about what you said regarding the responsibility of an elder to be able to refute false teachings as mentioned in Titus 1:9. You said, if I understood you correctly, that a person would meet this qualification if he had access to someone else who could do this for him. That is, he did not have to have this ability himself as long as he knew the truth and had someone else that could do the refuting for him. Is this true for any other qualification? For instance:

1) Must the elder himself, personally, be blameless? Or could he have another that would act and speak for him in such a way as to be blameless?

- 2) Must an elder himself, personally, be hospitable? Or could he have another that would act hospitably for him?
- 3) Must an elder himself, personally, “love what is good?” Or could he have another that could do the “loving” for him?
- 4) Must an elder himself, personally, be self-controlled? Or could he have another person do this for him?
- 5) Must an elder himself, personally, be upright, holy, and disciplined? Or could he have another person that could meet these qualifications for him?

The implication from your statement is that it would be OK as long as he got it done?

If he doesn't have to do the “refuting” himself, why must he do any of the other things described in the previous verses of Titus 1?

What other command are individuals given that could be delegated to another and be acceptable to God? Consider these examples:

- 1) Study to show yourself approved to God.
- 2) Pray without ceasing.
- 3) Repent and be baptized...
- 4) Go unto all the world..... Yes, we know that one person can't cover the entire world personally, but the meaning of this passage is that everyone must go somewhere, even if it is just to his next door neighbor. Is this command fulfilled by hiring a missionary to go for us, while we go nowhere?

What would your answer be? If we can choose a method of fulfilling one of God's commands by getting (letting, hiring or asking) another person to do it in our name, why can't we do the same thing with ANY of His commands?

If asking someone else to do the refuting for him is acceptable to God, then why even list this as a qualification? Anyone can ask some one else to do it! Why even mention this at all as a personal qualification for the elder? Or do you mean that *if* there is no one available to be asked, then the elder himself must do the refuting and if he can't, then and only then can this qualification be a restriction to his serving? Your thoughts on this subject will be greatly appreciated.

Your brother, ...”

I am sad to report that I never received a reply.

**V) Can we *elect* those who are to be considered by the congregation for the eldership?**

Good and virtuous men can differ on scriptural matters. I'm sure we all know brothers in Christ or even denominational people, who are "as good as they get" but differ on certain scriptural matters. I've heard the story that Bro. Lipscomb and Bro. Harding differed and even publicly debated on some subjects. They would ride to the debate in the same carriage, have the debate, and then ride home in the same carriage ... as friends. I hope we can also display this same attitude of brotherly love as we discuss this question, which is very emotional for some.

In discussing this matter I'm trying to focus only on the question at hand, not on the personalities, character or the motive of the people involved. I know, as Christians, we can disagree without being disagreeable. Let us pray for this type of attitude in this discussion.

I've been in the church for over 68 years. I've seen a lot of "fads" come and go. Some harmful, some just a nuisance. Usually the majority recognize that it is just a fad and soon return to the simple New Testament pattern. Unfortunately, in almost every case some are "carried away by every wind of doctrine" and have their salvation put in jeopardy by fads. This recent innovation is very serious because it alters God's plan for the leadership of each congregation of His people. As is well known, no congregation can rise above it's leadership. Knowing that, God planned for each congregation to be autonomous, so that "one bad apple (church) wouldn't spoil the whole bunch (universal church)."

Whether the conclusions in this chapter are correct or incorrect, someone is in grave danger of changing the Gospel and therefore in danger of reaping the consequences of such a change. (Rev. 22:18-19) I feel, therefore, that we must reconsider the matter of requiring a certain number of people to put a name forward before that person can be put before the congregation for consideration to be an elder or deacon.

If the procedure of requiring a certain count is scriptural then I am sinning by condemning it. If it is not scriptural then some are changing the Gospel by practicing it. So let us all, please, try to examine this question with as much openness of mind and brotherly kindness as possible.

Let us first examine the meaning and the use of the word "vote" to describe this procedure. The American College Dictionary says: "Voting. v.i. to express or signify the will or choice in a matter undergoing decision, as by a voice, ballot, or otherwise." (see additional definitions in the Appendix A). Since this counting procedure is to express or signify the will or choice of the congregation in the matter of the decision of who should be put before the congregation for consideration to serve as elders, it is

consequently, a voting process. For convenience I will use the word "vote" when referring to this procedure. I do not do this to be confrontational but simply because I think it is a correct use of the word and it is more succinct than trying to describe the procedure each time I want to refer to it.

My understanding of the procedure is the following: someone writes a name on a piece of paper, expressing his/her desire about who should be selected as an elder or deacon, and it is later counted along with other such papers, and the number of pieces of paper (or votes) determine whether the person is to be put before the congregation for consideration for the office for which he is named.

And each Christian's vote must be equal. One person, one vote (It's the American way). This means that young people i.e., teenagers, or even younger, get their votes given equal weight to those who are spiritually mature. Those Christians who only attend Sunday morning services have equal voice as those who attend all the services, teach Bibles classes, and evangelize the lost. The best that can be said of such a system is that it is fraught with the possibilities of abuse i.e. anyone who chooses to campaign for votes is much more assured of getting the "right" number. At its worse it allows the least spiritual members (which are usually the majority, -- just check the attendance on Sunday morning vs. Sunday night) to decide who the leaders will be.

I must say that of the people I have talked to about this, no one uses the word "vote" to describe the process. As a matter of fact, they generally denounce the use of this word. But if someone writes a name on a piece of paper and it is later counted along with other such papers, and the number of pieces of paper determine the legitimacy of a potential candidate for an office, how can it not be a "vote." If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's most likely a duck! An ancient Chinese proverb says "The beginning of wisdom is calling things by their right names." We have but to look up the word in the dictionary (see Appendix A) to determine if, indeed, the process under discussion is voting.

If Christians could just learn to accept what God said and quit trying to improve His word it would solve most, if not all, problems in the church today.

This process of voting ends up adding an additional qualification to the list penned by Paul. This process is therefore wrong. If Paul, and the Holy Spirit who inspired him, wanted to say that a certain number of people had to submit a name before the named person could be considered for the position of elder he would have said so.

We sometimes let our subconscious make decisions for us without our explicit examination and approval. I think maybe this is one such time.

Do we really think that God is incapable of stating such a simple thing as the number of people required to make a suggested candidate a legitimate candidate? Using Acts 6 as an example, it would have been so easy to say one of the following:

- 1) "...men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom *and supported by most of the church,...*"
- 2) "...men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom *and supported by those of the church over forty years of age,...*"
- 3) "...men of good report *by other men of the church*, full of the Spirit and of wisdom,..."
- 4) "...men of good report *by the married men of the church*, full of the Spirit and of wisdom,..."

I'm sure you can think of even more ways of saying it. The point is: If God had wanted to add this qualification He could have done so with only a very few words. But He **did not** so choose. Why then do we feel compelled to help God out by adding a new requirement to those listed in His word?

If the number of "supporters" should be a concern for elder selection, then Paul could have easily said so. It is not like the word or idea of support is unknown to God or uncommon to the scriptures. God uses the word for a group supporting a person (1 Chr. 11:10, Ezr. 10:4), a group supported by one person (Romans 11:18), Monetary support of Paul (1 Cor. 9:12) and no support of Paul (2 Tim. 4:16).

I'm sure that some will object: "Aren't you making a mountain out of a mole hill? What's the big deal? Since it is obvious that an elder can't serve effectively unless he has congregational support we are just stating the fact up front and setting the rules to ensure that we don't get an elder that doesn't have that support." But can't you see in the statement of this objection is the admission that someone has added a new rule to God's law? And, yes, this is a big deal!! Salvation is at stake! cf. Galatians 1:6-9

Is there any doubt that this process in actually adding a qualification to those already listed in God's word? Some say that since there is no detailed process given by God to install elders we are, therefore, free to install them anyway we want. But requiring a certain number of votes is not a method of installation, it is a method of **preventing** installation. If this process of requiring a certain number of votes was not in place and everyone who was suggested to be an elder was put before the congregation for their evaluation as to their scriptural qualifications, then certainly those who had many votes would be considered along side of the ones with few votes.

Now, if we add the additional process of requiring a certain number of votes, the end results are changed **only** by the fact that those with few votes are NOT put before the congregation for consideration.

**Bible Study Prerequisites,** HERMENEUTICS FOR US COMMON FOLKS  
Chapter 4 | Applied to questions about the Eldership

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Therefore, this whole idea of counting votes is *not* just another method of installing elders, it is a method of preventing certain men from becoming elders. It is a limiting process! It is, by definition and application, adding to God's word another qualification (requiring a certain number of votes) to the list that God gave us in His word. Thereby changing the Gospel, which is strongly condemned by Paul in Galatians 1:6-9.

No amount of legitimate oversight or exercising of judgment or responsibility by an elder or Eldership can justify an addition to God's word. Consider the following scriptures:

**Romans 16:25-27** *"Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him-- to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."*

The proclamation of Jesus Christ is found in the prophetic writings, which were written by the command of God so that all may believe and obey him. We can believe and obey him by adhering to the prophetic writings. Not the prophetic writings **plus** the rules and regulations of men, regardless of who those men are.

**Gal 1:8-9** *"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- (7) which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! (9) As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"*

Notice how Paul defines a "different gospel." He says that some people are trying to *pervert* or corrupt or change the Gospel of Christ. Anytime anyone perverts, corrupts or changes the gospel of Christ he is preaching a different gospel and will receive the indicated punishment. Notice the punishment. Eternally condemned! That is a description of hell. The most severe punishment! This instruction is so important Paul, under inspiration, repeats it very clearly a second time. There can be no mistake, no misunderstanding. Anyone who perverts, corrupts or changes the Gospel will spend eternity in hell.

Since this is so important we should look at what it takes to pervert the Gospel.

Webster's New World Dictionary gives the following definition of "pervert:" *"1. to cause to turn from what is considered right, good or true; misdirect; lead astray;*

*corrupt. 2. to turn to an improper use; misuse 3. to change or misapply the meaning of; misinterpret; distort; twist"*

These definitions say that any change to the Gospel is a perversion of the Gospel. We simply cannot add any rule or regulation to God's word and at the same time avoid the consequences specified by Paul. Because it is God's word i.e. from God and therefore perfect, even the slightest change is a perversion. A change includes additions as well as deletions, Rev. 22:18-19. When God specifies a list of qualifications for an office then all of those must be used and only those can be used as qualifications to be applied to the men being considered. Any attempt to add an additional qualification is perverting the Gospel and will be rewarded by the specified consequences for that act.

**2 Tim 3:16-17** *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, (17) so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

Please consider verse 17. Appointing elders is certainly considered by all to be a good work. This being so, Paul says here that the scriptures will give us every bit of the information we need to conduct or execute this good work. But the scriptures are completely silent about the procedure of counting votes to determine the legitimacy of a candidate. Therefore this process of voting is not a good work, therefore must be abandoned.

If an Eldership can add a qualification to those listed in scriptures, can they also add rules to:

1) Our giving. Since God did not set a limit, could the elders say we **MUST** give 10%, or any other specific amount or percentage? If no, then they cannot require a certain number of votes for the candidate to the office of elder.

2) Term of elders. Since God didn't set the length of term, could the elders say that there must be a five-year term length? If no then they cannot add qualifications to the scriptural list written by Paul.

3) Communion. Is one cup OK? Could the elders say we **must** use one cup? If no, then they can't set limits on the number of elders or add qualifications to the scriptural list written by Paul.

4) Could we say that all who meet the qualification of: believing, confessing, repenting and being baptized can serve as Christians? Of course we would all say yes!! Could the elders say that in addition to that we are going to have a vote and only if you get enough votes can you serve as a Christian, i.e. on the benevolence committee, or at the Lord's

table, or as song leader, or church secretary? If no, then the elders cannot require a certain number of votes before a qualified Christian can serve as an elder.

5) The number of elders. Since God did not specify the number of elders in a given congregation could the elders say "this congregation can only have three elders?" If no, then the elders cannot require a certain number of votes before a qualified Christian can serve as an elder.

If it is said that this voting process is just a means of determining the "congregational support", then I present the following objections to the process for your consideration:

1) This procedure is usually not clearly explained to the congregation. People don't know the details of this procedure and how it is applied and used. Therefore, knowing that someone else has turned in a name, a person may not feel the need to also turn in the same name.

2) If the number of votes needed for consideration is not known, this leaves the system open to the charge of being manipulated so that the needed number can be changed to include or exclude any particular name.

3) It is said that the number of people who turn in a name is used as a valid measure of the number of people who will follow the leadership of the person in question. This is not true because many people are willing to follow any name turned in, but enter no name themselves. Also, many who turn in no name would be willing to follow a particular person, but just didn't turn in the name, maybe because "I meant to, but just didn't get around to it" or "I thought my name was on the paper my husband turned in," or "I thought surely he would be accepted so he didn't need my support," etc. There are many reasons a person might not turn in a name, not at all indicating an unwillingness to follow. If this objection is rejected and this voting process is still considered to be a valid measure of congregational support, then I ask why have the second vote when the person is "put before the congregation" for their approval? The support has already been given by the first vote! Or else:

4) This first voting process is not needed, because it's purpose is accomplished in the "second phase" of the process when we "put the names before the congregation for consideration." In this "consideration phase" we express our wish or our discernment or our judgment of the person's qualifications to serve. We thereby get the whole congregation to participate and express their will as to whether the person in question has, or meets, all the qualifications listed by Paul. To my knowledge everyone agrees that this "second phase" is scriptural, practical and, for good measure, meets the "common sense" test. Why then have the "first vote" which *requires* something that the Bible does not.

5) This voting system is open to manipulation by someone who is very gregarious, who could, even unconsciously, be "campaigning." Such a person could therefore easily get the "required number" while a more humble person (who might even be more qualified), who did not "campaign," would get too few votes to be considered.

6) If this voting system is entirely controlled by the elders, it leaves them open to the charge of letting in only those who are liked by them.

7) If measurable congregational support is so important why is there no attempt to measure it after someone becomes an elder? If the congregational support is necessary to become an elder why is it not also necessary to remain an elder? If, over time, that congregational support is lost, does the person at that point cease to be an elder? The voting system is faulty if it provides no means to measure a person's support after one becomes an elder. If measurable congregational support is so important there should be some way to measure support on a continual basis.

And I am sure if we tried and observed the voting process closely, we could come up with even more difficulties with this system.

Of course, most of the above mentioned objections could be overcome with several alterations to the system, such as:

A) Tell the congregation a fixed number or a fixed percentage that is needed for a person to be considered.

B) Allow the process to be controlled by a committee other than the current elders.

C) Allow more than one name on each piece of paper and allow more than one person to sign that paper. This would make it easier for the congregation and encourage participation.

D) Every so often use the same measuring device to determine congregational support for the existing elders. Of course, the exact same instructions should be given to the congregation and the exact same procedure followed in evaluating these votes.

Although these suggested changes would eliminate several of the above listed objections, I can't think how to solve objections 3, 4 or 5, above. But any system requiring a certain number of votes, however changed, cannot overcome objection 8, below.

8) Voting to select who will be considered for the Eldership is unscriptural.

Some might say that this voting process is not adding another qualification to Paul's list. As a matter of fact, they say, it is not a "qualification" at all. But Webster's New World Dictionary says: "qualification: a modification or restriction; limiting condition. A condition that must be met in order to exercise certain rights." (see Appendix A for

additional definitions) Unless we are guilty of making up our own definitions, this voting process is a qualification, one unauthorized by the Holy Spirit.

If a person cannot become an elder without going through this voting process, then it is a requirement. A requirement that is not mentioned anywhere in scripture, therefore, it is unscriptural.

The only reason we don't have instrumental music in worship is:  
the Bible does not authorize it!

The only reason we don't have clapping with our singing is:  
the Bible does not authorize it!

The only reason we don't have a bishop over the elders is:  
the Bible does not authorize it!

The only reason we don't have a national church hierarchy is:  
the Bible does not authorize it!

The only reason we don't have a "closed" communion service is:  
the Bible does not authorize it!

The only reason we don't have a required vote to be accepted into the church is:  
the Bible does not authorize it!

One reason we shouldn't have a vote to validate candidates for the Eldership is:  
the Bible does not authorize it!

**2 Thess. 2:9-12** *"The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, (10) and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (11) For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie (12) and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness."*

The lawless one comes and deceives those who are perishing. Note the reason they are perishing: "because they refuse to love the truth." Jesus said "sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth," John 17:17. Anything not in the word, is not spiritual truth. Look at the results of not loving the truth: God will send a strong delusion *so that* they will believe the lie and *be lost*. Yes, this delusion will come from God and those who believe this delusion will be lost eternally.

I actually believe that some Christians think of themselves as knowing so much that they could not be deceived, even if the delusion is sent from God. They think they could see through it and know that it was a delusion, implying that they are smarter than God. They are so smart that not even God could deceive them. How foolish! One of the biggest differences between us and God, is that: "He never thinks He is us."

We must love the truth at all costs. We must love the truth even if it hurts. We must love the truth even if we have to change. We must love the truth even if we have to give up control or power. We must love the truth even if it is humiliating. Can we really say we love the truth if we are willing to change it or not follow it exclusively? We must be willing to give up anything and everything that interferes with the demonstration of our love of the truth. Because if we don't, the consequences are severe and eternal.

Maybe one reason the congregation is not told by God to decide this matter, based on a vote of congregational support, is that in many cases the congregation, as a whole, is prone to weakness and a lack of spirituality. Consider: *a)* In the past it was true that in some congregations many would not turn in a black person's name for consideration as an elder. In other words, the person did not have the support of some of the congregation because he was black. If he met all the scriptural qualifications, should he not be allowed to serve because of the prejudice of part of the congregation? ***In this case the congregation is wrong.***

*b)* What if a man is a conservative Republican in a liberal Democratic area and some Christians didn't turn in his name for this reason. Should we let the politics of the man in question determine his qualification to serve as elder? If the congregation is wrong should we let these "wrong" people veto the installation of a qualified Christian to serve as elder?

If ONLY qualified Christians (according to I Tim. 3 and Titus 1) can serve as elders, then ONLY those who qualify can serve. If the Bible teaches that "only qualified people can serve as elders" and if there is no Bible instructions on how to limit the number of qualified people that are to serve then the only logical conclusion is that ALL who qualify, according to I Tim. 3 and Titus 1, can serve. If this conclusion is not correct then the only other possibility is that the number of men who serve can be restricted by ANY means, because without scriptural guidelines any reason is as good as any other.

It is my hope that this chapter will help us to study and discuss this issue with clarity and in Christian love for each other and God's truth.

Please consider the following syllogisms closely:

- A) 1. Any condition or circumstance required in order to be accepted for a position, to exercise a certain right or be admissible to an office is, by definition, a qualification.
2. A certain number of persons from the congregation are required to turn in a name before that named person can be considered for the office of elder.
3. Therefore, requiring a certain number of persons from the congregation to turn in a name before that named person can be considered for the office of elder is a qualification for the office.

- B) 1. Any action commanded or inferred for a Christian by God's Word, is a good work.  
2. Appointing qualified men as elders is inferred by I Tim. 3 and Titus 1  
3. Therefore, appointing qualified men as elders is a good work.
- C) 1. God's Word completely equips us for every good work. 2 Tim. 3:16-17  
2. Appointing qualified men as elders is a good work.  
3. Therefore, the Bible completely equips us for the task of appointing elders.
- D) 1. God's word completely equips us for the task of appointing elders  
2. God's word gives us a list of qualifications for elders. (I Tim 3 & Titus 1 [please note Titus 1:9])  
3. Therefore, that list is a complete list of qualifications.

If God gives us a complete list of qualifications, and if man adds to that list, such addition is but the suggestion of men and will incur God's wrath, Matthew 15:9, Gal. 1:7-9, Rev. 22:18-19.

### **Suggested Additional Reading:**

"Caring Enough to Correct" by Jimmy Jividen  
"The Church and its Elders" by J.B. Myers  
"The Eldership" by J.W. McGarvey  
"A Re-Evaluation of the Eldership" by Dayton Keese

### **Appendix A - definitions**

#### **The American College Dictionary:**

Qualification: ...a required circumstance or condition for acquiring or exercising a right, holding an office, or the like.

Vote. n. a formal expression of will, wish, or choice in some matter, whether of a single individual, as one of a number interested in common, or of a body of individuals, signified by voice, by holding up the hand, by standing up, by ballot, etc.

Voting. v.i. to express or signify the will or choice in a matter undergoing decision, as by a voice, ballot, or otherwise;

#### **Webster's New World Dictionary (third edition):**

Qualification: ...a condition that must be met in order to exercise certain rights.

Vote. n. **1** a) a decision by a group on a proposal, resolution, bill, etc., or a choice between candidates for office, expressed by written ballot, voice, or show of hands, etc.

b) the decision of an individual in the group

Voting. v.i. **1** to express the will or a preference in a matter by a ballot, voice, etc.

**Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, international edition:**

Qualification: ...the act of qualifying, or the state of being qualified. That which fits a person or thing for something.

Vote. n. **1** A formal expression of will or opinion in regard to some question submitted for decision, as in electing officers, passing resolution, etc.

Voting. v.i. To cast one's vote; express opinion or preference by or as by a vote.

**Thorndike - Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary:**

Qualification: ...that which makes a person fit for a job, task, office, etc.

Vote n. **1.** a formal expression of a wish or choice

v. **1.** give or cast a vote

**The Century Dictionary, v. 5 & 6:**

Qualification: ...That which qualifies a person for or renders him admissible to or acceptable for a place, an office, or an employment;...

Vote n. A suffrage; the formal expression of a will, preference, wish, or choice in regard to any measure proposed, in which the person voting has an interest in common with others, either in electing to fill a certain situation or office, or in passing laws, rules, regulations, etc. v. i. To give a vote; formally to express or signify the mind, will, or choice in electing a person to office, or in passing laws, regulations, and the like, or in deciding as to any measure in which one has an interest in common with others.

**VI) "Obey your leaders ...," Hebrews 13:17. When to, and when not to?**

**NIV**

*17 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.*

**KJV**

*17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

**ASV**

*17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.*

It seems from the use of the word *leaders* in verses 7 and 24 and the context of the whole chapter that the leaders spoken of here are the elders. Are there any restrictions or limitations on when or how we are to obey our elders?

We will consider this question as part of a broader subject of how and when to follow all God's commands to obey/submit to different categories of humans, i.e. a) citizens obey the government, b) Wives obey your husbands, c) children obey your parents, and d) congregation obey the elders.

In every aspect of our lives we must always follow God! If there is ever a conflict between what God says in His word and the advice/instruction/laws/commands of any man, we always follow God! This obvious guideline must be remembered as we study "When to be obedient of the government, husbands, parents or elders?"

Another question to consider is how to solve any conflict between these separate categories of masters to which we must be obedient? If the government tells you to vote and your husband tells you not to vote, or if a young couple wants to have children and the parents tell them "not a good idea," or the elders tell you to come to worship and the government says "No," etc., etc., etc. Although difficult, is it always possible to resolve these conflicts. But there are very few general rules that apply to all such cases. Each case must be resolved based on it's own individual circumstances with an open mind, Bible study, much Prayer and even sometimes fasting! But God **WILL** assist you in this quest! Because qualified elders are mature Christians their advice should always be dependable and less often in error, but in every case of conflict the previous paragraph must always be followed. Let us now look at the individual human masters the Lord has given us.

**a) Obey our government**

Please read the complete context of Romans 13:1-7, verse one reads:

*Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.*

Most people realize that if our government orders us to (for example) lie, cheat or steal we should not do it because God's commands override man's instructions, even the government's, Acts 5:29. We don't apply Romans 13:1 to any government rule or regulation which conflicts with any of God's Laws. In other words this verse has exceptions. Of course these exceptions must be specified in other verses of the God's Word, not based on the whim of man's opinions. This is a perfect example of a very important rule of Bible Study: We must read all the verses that deal with a particular subject before reaching a conclusion on that subject. For example, should our salvation be based solely on Ephesians 2:5b or must we also consider Acts 2:38?

The Holy Spirit guided Paul as he told us to submit to government authorities, knowing that any exceptions to this general rule were specified by other scriptures. Is there a danger that sometimes we may want to take this verse literally, without any exceptions, simply to save us the trouble and stress of deciding what the exceptions are and when and how to apply them?

**b) Wives obey your husbands**

As always, please read the complete context of Ephesians 5:22-33, verse 24 reads:

*Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

Again, most people realize that if any husband tells his wife to (for example) lie, cheat or steal she should not do it because God's commands override man's instructions, even her husband's, Acts 5:29. We don't apply Ephesians 5:24 to any husband's suggestion or instructions which conflicts with any of God's Laws. In other words this verse has exceptions. Of course these exceptions must be specified in other verses of the God's Word, not based on the whim of anyone's opinions. This is a perfect example of a very important rule of Bible Study: We must read all the verses that deal with a particular subject before reaching a conclusion on that subject. For example, should our expectation of answered prayer be based solely on John 14:13-14 or must we also consider James 1:6-7, 4:4?

The Holy Spirit guided Paul as he told wives to submit to their husbands, knowing that any exceptions to this general rule were specified by other scriptures. Is there a danger

that sometimes we may want to take this verse literally, without any exceptions, simply to save us the trouble and stress of deciding what the exceptions are and when and how to apply them?

Please forgive the obvious duplication of the above evidence. Although I will not repeat it for the next two categories, all that is said in the previous two paragraphs would certainly also apply to the third and fourth examples which follows.

### **c) children obey parents**

Ephesians 6:1 "**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**" Are there any exceptions to this command? Based on the previous two examples we would probably say "yes." What, then, are the exceptions and when does the Bible specify these? The first exception is noted in this verse immediately after the command to obey, i.e. "in the Lord." This simply confirms our conviction that no child is told by God to submit to their parents in sin. Another obvious consideration is the age of the child, the younger he is the more obedience and the less questioning of his parents. Growing up is the normal and desirable, and even commanded human process. As the child grows older and especially when he marries he is "to leave his father and mother and be united to his wife," Matthew 19:5. This separation has a tremendous effect on the child's obedience to his parents.

We have learned that anytime God tells man to obey/submit to another human there are always conditions/limitations/restrictions. The obvious ones are the ones already mentioned, i.e. any sin. We are never to follow the directions of any man to commit sin. Remember the context of these three examples as we discuss the next one.

### **d) Congregations are to submit to their elders**

It has been said by some that any action not specifically mentioned in scriptures is a matter of opinion, therefore we must obey the elders regarding such action, without exceptions. If this reasoning is valid then consider these additional examples:

- 1) Since instrumental music is not mentioned specifically, using it is a matter of opinion. **Therefore** we must obey the elders in this regard, Hebrews 13:17
- 2) Since we are not told the method of travel while doing mission work, it is a matter of opinion. **Therefore** we must obey the elders in this regard. We could travel first class air, cruise ship or private jet!
- 3) Since investing church funds is not mentioned specifically, doing so is a matter of opinion. **Therefore**, the elders could invest church funds in the stock market or any private business.
- 4) Buying lottery tickets with church funds is not mentioned in the scriptures, doing so is a matter of opinion. **Therefore** elders could buy lottery tickets with church money!

5) Giving church funds to a political campaign is not mentioned in the Bible, doing so is a matter of opinion. **Therefore** the eldership could contribute church money to any political candidate they favored.

Do these examples give us reason to consider whether God cares how His money is spent by the church (elders)? Do we have any teaching in His Word regarding the limits to the flexibility of how His money is dispersed? Is every opinion of the elders valid?

Do men, even elders, ever have an *invalid* opinion? Since all men today are **un**inspired, we must answer the question "Yes," sometimes even elders have invalid opinions. If this is so then we must accept or reject an elder's opinion based on the evidence. Only the opinion which has the best supporting evidence must be adopted. But once we start questioning the decisions of the elders, at what point does it stop? This is a good and valid question, but it is valid in both directions. "At what level does it stop" in allowing them to make decisions without questioning them? Can they decide anything, regardless of the results or implications? We obviously all agree that if the elders agree that instrumental music can be used in the worship service we must **not** submit to that decision. What, then, is the basis for deciding when to submit and when not to?

It seems the only reasonable answer is: Each case must be decided on its own merits. Yes, we all agree elders are just men who sometimes make mistakes. All mistakes should **not** be handled the same way. If an elder says something unkind in anger, he has but to apologize and it's forgotten. If he does it consistently, over a period of years, at some point he must resign, having lost the qualification to be self-controlled (1 Timothy 3:2) and not be quick-tempered (Titus 1:7). If the eldership spends money on some project that later proves to be unwise, they have but to apologize and it's forgotten. If it happens over and over again, and more and more money is involved with each incidence, is there a point when the congregation must "influence" the Elders to change their minds?

If the eldership decides to pay a preacher \$75,000.00 per year and you disagree and express that to the elders and if they do not change their minds, then forget it, it's over. If they agree to pay him \$150,000 you may object more strenuously and talk to others before giving up. But if they decide to pay him \$300,000.00, maybe a different reaction might be warranted. It may be time for the congregation to "influence" the elders to change their minds. In matters of opinion, some opinions are valid and other are not valid even if held by the eldership. Each case decided on its own merits, based on the evidence, Bible teaching, much prayer and even fasting!

Should all financial decisions of the church be given the same scrutiny, no matter the amount of money involved? No. If it is thought that the elders need no more evidence/justification to spend \$100.00 than to spend \$2.5 million dollars, then we need to read again Luke 14:28-30 about counting the cost of any project.

Must even the elders follow the Christian guidelines of honesty, transparency, counting the cost, using the Lord's money for the Lord's work (determined by the scriptures), temperance, not a lover a money, etc. Who decides if and when an eldership violates any of these scriptural guidelines? Since the elders also are servants and brothers they, too, when they sin should accept correction when "you who are spiritual should restore such a one," Galatians 6:1. All Christians have the right and scriptural requirement to "influence" even the elders when they err in matters of judgment. How much influence and how bad an error in judgment justifies this influence depends on each individual case. In Acts 20:28-31 when elders fall from the truth, who is to point this out to them?? If other elders fail to do it are we, non-elders, exempt from any responsibility in this case?

Although it would be very difficult to find, if we could find a missionary (to China, for instance) who wanted to, and an eldership who would support him in his desire, how should we react to the missionary traveling first class air to the west coast, first class cruise ship to Hawaii, another first class cruise ship to Hong Kong then first class air to a city in China and return the same way? What if this was his "normal" and frequently used mode of travel? After all, a missionary deserves a special vacation and he would be fresher and *ready-to-go* upon arrival, no need to recover from jet lag, etc. Would this mode-of-travel opinion be valid or invalid? Would God be pleased or displeased with this opinion of how to use His money? How would God react to the congregation who by their silence implied approval of this decision?

Is it reasonable to conclude that even an opinion, to be valid, must be based on evidence? And, yes, better evidence than supports an alternative opinion? This implies that some opinions are **invalid**, even if it comes from mature Christians for there are no infallible men today. But since mature Christians and qualified elders love the truth *and* their church they should be **anxious**, not defensive, to have their opinions vetted. They should be **happy**, not offended, to hear the evidence that supports a differing opinion, because this is the only way to learn, grow, build confidence in their decision making abilities and to be most effective in the Lord's work while thwarting the possible charge of "Lording it over the flock."

Jesus said "to him who would borrow, turn him not away." But if we don't use some discretion on how much to keep for ourselves then we can't take care of our families and we are worse than an infidel, 1 Timothy 5:8. But how much do we keep. In answering this question the sum total makes a big difference. If we talk about \$10.00, then no matter, give it to him who would borrow. However if the borrower asks for \$100,000.00 then God may want us to say "no" to the borrower so that we can care for our families. If the elders wants to spend \$100.00 on a new rug, no big deal. Not worth verbalizing any possible disagreement. If they want to spend \$2,500,000.00 on a second building when the first one is only half used, then I want all the details and reasons why it is needed.

They should be eager and anxious to share that evidence as justification for their decision in an effort to be transparent and discredit any possible accusation of being too concerned about physical comforts or "Lording it over the flock," 1 Peter 5:1-4. The amount of money involved makes a big difference in how the matter is handled. Not all financial mistakes are sin. Likewise, not all financial mistakes are free from sin. Each case to be decided on it's own merits.

Is there a danger that sometimes we may want to take Hebrews 13:17 literally, without any exceptions, simply to save us the trouble and stress of deciding what the exceptions are and when and how to apply them? Also, If anything goes wrong with any actions after the elders decided, we automatically have someone else to blame for the error or mistake, that is, "it's not my responsibility, the elders did it!"

Please seriously consider the matter of building a second, bigger, more attractive and probably more comfortable church building now when the existing one is only half used and is acceptable as safe, comfortable, sufficiently attractive and respected by the local community, as evidenced by the recent growth in attendance.

**In all cases, the results of following God's plan are worth the discomfort caused by the process.**

## Eldership Tenure

### VII) When and how to remove an unqualified Elder?

It seems to be common today to think of the eldership as a strictly tenured position. This implies if a person is qualified to become an elder, he is always qualified for that position.

The implications of some conclusions are so obvious they seem to blend into the subject matter and become invisible.

In scripture, is becoming an elder like becoming a husband, the position is intended to be for life? Is there a parallel between becoming an elder and getting tenure at a university, or appointment to the supreme court?

Though our actions sometimes give credence to a “yes” answer to those questions, it is never verbalized. Hearing the words spoken awakens one to the obvious fallacy of the position. Every Christian will agree that any elder found guilty of murder, adultery, grand larceny, D.U.I., or many other spiritual shortcomings or *any* other felony convictions, should be asked to resign from the eldership. But why is this so? It is because all of these human frailties demonstrate that at least one, if not several, of the qualifications given for an elder is now lacking. We also must not forget an elder must maintain all the attributes required of every other Christian. He must remain dedicated to the pledge made by all Christians to be a faithful, spiritual, growing servant of God. He must obey all the rules, restrictions and guidelines of a Christian, else how can he be “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2,7) and “blameless” (Titus 1:6,7) For instance, his position in the eldership does not exempt him from the instructions of Ephesians 4:29 - 5:4:

*29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. 1 ¶ Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3 ¶ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.*

or Mark 11:25. *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”*

On the contrary, being an elder implies the guidelines, requirements, restrictions and instructions given to Christians in general, apply to him more strictly because he “must be” *above* reproach and *without* blame.

1 Tim. 3:2 “Now the overseer must be ...” the verb “must be” is present tense implying continuing action. Therefore these qualification must be maintained throughout the time the elder serves as a shepherd. If at any time an elder “loses” any one of the qualifications he is no longer to be considered an elder. The verse does NOT say “If a person at one time had the qualification ...” but instead “the overseer must BE ...” These qualifications, once held, do not guarantee a lifetime of serving the congregation as an elder. These are characteristics that must be maintained in order to remain in the eldership. This is obviously true in case of an immoral character or illegal activities. It should also be equally obvious for all other characteristics of an elder, remembering also that an elder must maintain all the attributes of a Christian, else how can he be “unimpeachable” (Berry’s interlinear), “unreprovable” (Marshall’s interlinear), “blameless” (Brown & Comfort’s interlinear, and NIV, ASV, RSV, KJV) according to Titus 1:7.

If and when any elder does not retain all of the qualifications listed in the scriptures he should resign. If he doesn’t, he must be asked to resign in order to maintain the integrity of the office and the reputation of the church. This is in complete harmony with all the experiences of life, i.e. any position in education, business, law enforcement or the military which requires any qualification to acquire the position, also requires that the same qualification be maintained in order to stay in the position.

The qualifications for elder are described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, and listed on the third page of this chapter for your convenience.

If an eldership has one of its members that has lost one or more of his qualifications, the others elders are the obvious ones to point this out to the unqualified party and ask him to resign. If the other elders know about the disqualification(s) and do nothing about it, maybe it is time for all of them to resign or to be asked to resign. Maintaining the integrity of the office is the highest responsibility of each elder and ***must also be of primary importance to each member of the local congregation.***

But what if the now unqualified elder refuses to resign?

Some think there is no procedure for removing an elder from the office, even if there is general agreement that he has lost one or more of the qualifications. Let us look at a few very well known passages:

Matthew 5:21 ¶ *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

If an elder brings his gift to the altar (comes to church to worship) and remembers that a brother has anything against him, he (the elder) must not worship before he strives to be reconciled to his brother. If an elder refuses to do this he is in direct violation of this passage and is liable to the charge of indifference or conceit and is in danger of losing the Christian characteristics of brotherly love and humility and could be perceived as not working for the unity of the church. If this attitude is maintained until it is generally recognized as his usual attitude, then he should lose his title of Shepherd. The following two scriptures obviously apply to all Christians, especially the elders:

**Matthew 18:15** ¶ *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

**Matthew 18:3** *And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. 6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 7 ¶ "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! 8 If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. 10 "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. 12 "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? 13 And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not*

*wander off. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.*

Additional qualifications that each elder must maintain throughout his service:

1 Timothy 3:2 *Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.*

Titus 1:6 ¶ *An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. 8 Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. 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. 10 For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. 11 They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.*

Titus 1:7 *As God's steward ... be not arrogant (self-willed, self-pleasing). Defined by the TDNT, v.1., p.508: "αυθαδης - In the two passages in which αυθαδης occurs in the NT the reference is to human impulse violating obedience to the divine command. In both cases it is religious leaders who are exposed to this danger or succumb to it."*

James 4:6 *But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

James 4:10 *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

1 Peter 5:5 ¶ *Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.*

Col. 3:12 ¶ *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

I Peter 5:2 *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; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*

When the elder(s) is/are no longer an example to the flock in *humility or hospitality, or one who loves what is good, or who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined, or in encouraging others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it*" then he/they should step down or be asked to resign.

1 Timothy 5:19 *Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. 20 Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*

In practice this passage seems to be understood as if it said "Do not entertain an accusation against an elder," period, end of sentence. And the second verse is generally ignored altogether. When an accusation against an elder(s) has been verified by two or three witnesses then the elder(s) must be rebuked publicly. Must we be reminded that this scripture is just as much the word of God as is Acts 2:38?

Elders are human, like the rest of us. But they have an even greater responsibility because they will give an answer to God for how they cared for our souls:

Hebrews 13:7, *Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith. ... 17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.*

All elders must one day face Jesus and explain how they "*watch in behalf of [our] souls.*" Their responsibility in this regard is very serious and the souls that fell back into the world during their tenure will count against them. And congregations who did not hold elders accountable to the scriptures will also have to answer for this scriptural neglect. Maybe the following suggestions might be of some help in implementing a procedure for purifying an eldership when the situation demands it.

Sometimes and in some places Christians should implement their own Declaration of Independence from the elder (or eldership) who no longer possess the qualifications required for the position. Maybe the following paraphrase will be of some assistance in meeting that goal.

**A suggested Declaration of Independence for Christians to consider:**

When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the spiritual submissiveness which has connected them with another, and to assume the separate and equal station, of fellow Christian, to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of the congregation requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to this separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Christians are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Spiritual Life, Liberty to worship, the pursuit of spiritual growth and the expectation of kind and caring treatment by their church government, as defined by their title, "Shepherd." — That to secure these rights, church governments are instituted among congregations, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed\* — That whenever any form of church Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the congregation to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new church government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to harmonize with God's word and to effect their spiritual safety and happiness. *Prudence, indeed, will dictate that church governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes;* and accordingly all experience hath shown that congregations are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object of attitudes and opinions contrary to the gentle, humble, kind, compassionate and caring character of a shepherd, it is the Christian's right, *it is their duty*, to throw off such government, and to provide new Guards for their future spiritual security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these local Christians; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former church government. The history of the present church government is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having the direct result of establishment of an absolute control of this church. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

**[The following are but examples which change depending on the experiences of the local church.]**

They have refused to practice the laws of brotherly love, caring, encouragement, and personal evangelism that are most wholesome and necessary for the church good and required of every Christian.

They have forbidden their fellow Christians from starting house Bible studies which are of immediate and pressing importance to our lost neighbors and to the spiritual growth

of our members, citing as a reason for this prohibition “we cannot control” such meetings.

Some efforts of the congregation have been suspended in their operation until the assent of the church government should be obtained; and when so suspended, the elders have utterly neglected to attend to these suspended operations.

They have refused to accommodate the desires of a large segment of the church, i.e. worship times, with vague or no explanation. But an explanation is the right of all Christians and formidable only to tyrants.

They have ignored the plain wishes of the congregation and refused to support programs which are in harmony with God’s word and obviously supported by the congregation.

They have said or implied that any collective discussion of differences outside their meeting room was “divisive” and therefore should be avoided.

They have called together dissidents in places uncomfortable, their meeting room, where four or five of them can intimidate any who disagree with them.

They have repeatedly forced out of our fellowship any who oppose with manly firmness their invasions on the rights of the people.

They have done but little or nothing in “leaving the 99 in search of the one lost sheep” in order to regain those who are no longer present, actually verbalizing that the principles taught in the parable of the Lost Sheep do not apply to the elders. Thus not implementing their required duties as Shepherds.

They have effectively marginalized church growth by maintaining a non-transparent decision making process, pretending that the regular Christians have no right to the details of why they make their decisions.

They have obstructed the administration of justice by refusing to practice the laws of Christian kindness, mutual edification, and the building up of others.

They have deprived us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury of our peers, decreeing “The elders have decided.” Thus ending all discussion.

They have suspended various committee decisions, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for the church in all cases whatsoever.

They have refused to practice the scriptural church discipline for fear of legal action.

We, therefore, representatives of the local church, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name of, and by authority of the good People of this church, solemnly publish and declare, that we Christians are, and of right ought to be free and independent of this church government, that we are absolved from all submissive allegiance to the present church government, and that all submissive connection between us and this church government, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent Christians, we have full Power to gather for worship, form Bible classes, meet the physical needs of our needy, and to do all other Acts and Things which independent Christians may of right do (not necessarily in a different physical location).\*\* — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to our God and His church our lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____

\* All but two of the fourteen (in Titus 1) or fifteen (in 1 Tim. 3) qualifications for those who serve in local church government are subjective, requiring a judgment from each member who is willing to submit to the oversight of the person in question, therefore local church governments only exist by the consent of the governed.

\*\* There is no need for these independent Christians to physically remove themselves from their friends, relatives and brothers in Christ to another physical location. They have merely established their independence from the oversight of the current leadership. If they are still welcome by the majority of the faithful Christians and can continue their spiritual growth, they should remain, worship and fellowship with the Christians they love.

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Please believe me when I say I sincerely do not want to teach anything that is not in harmony with The Word. Would you please help me by pointing out any pertinent scripture not included in this discussion, any scripture that I misused or any faulty logic. You may contact me at c2baird@charter.net or 615-261-9324

## Appendix A

All scriptures that use of *faithful*

Matthew 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and **faithful** servant! You have been **faithful** with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Matthew 25:23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and **faithful** servant! You have been **faithful** with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, **faithful** in prayer.

1 Corinthians 4:2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove **faithful**.

1 Corinthians 4:17 For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is **faithful** in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the **faithful** in Christ Jesus:

Ephesians 6:21 Tychicus, the dear brother and **faithful** servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.

Colossians 1:2 To the holy and **faithful** brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

Colossians 1:7 You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is a **faithful** minister of Christ on our behalf,

Colossians 4:7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a **faithful** minister and fellow-servant in the Lord.

Colossians 4:9 He is coming with Onesimus, our **faithful** and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

1 Timothy 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me **faithful**, appointing me to his service.

Hebrews 3:5 Moses was **faithful** as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future.

Hebrews 3:6 But Christ is **faithful** as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

Hebrews 11:11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he considered him **faithful** who had made the promise.

1 Peter 5:12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a **faithful** brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

3 John 1:3 It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your **faithful**ness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth.

Revelation 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for

ten days. Be **faithful**, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Revelation 14:12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain **faithful** to Jesus.

Revelation 17:14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings— and with him will be his called, chosen and **faithful** followers."

## Appendix B

All scriptures that use both *faithful* and *brother*

Ephesians 6:21 *But that ye also may know my affairs, how I do, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:*

Colossians 4:7 *All my affairs shall Tychicus make known unto you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord:*

Colossians 4:9 *together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things that are done here.*

1 Peter 5:12 *By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written unto you briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand ye fast therein.*

## Appendix C

Definition of "proverb." from English and Greek

**Webster's New World Dictionary:** 1 a short , traditional saying that expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience; adage; maxim 2 ...3 *Bible* an enigmatic saying in which a profound truth is cloaked.

**The American College Dictionary:** 1. a short popular saying, long current, embodying some familiar truth or useful thought in expressive language. 2. ... 3. ... 4. *Bible.* a profound saying or oracular utterance requiring interpretation.

**Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon,** παροιμία *a saying out of the usual course or deviating from the usual manner of speaking* 1. *a clever and sententious, a proverb,* 2. *any dark saying which shadows forth some didactic truth, esp. a symbolic or figurative saying. Speech or discourse in which a thing is illustrated by use of similes and comparisons; an allegory, i.e. extended and elaborate metaphor*

**BDAG,** παροιμία 1 a pithy saying, *proverb, saw, maxim* 2 a brief communication containing truths designed for initiates, *veiled saying, figure* of speech, in which esp. lofty ideas are concealed:

**TDNT,** V. 5, p. 854. παροιμία

A. the Word outside the New Testament.

1. ... Being timeless and popular, the proverb is distinct from the αποπητηγεμ, which arises out of a specific historical situation and which is handed down with the occasion that produced and interprets it, and does not seek to express truth of universal validity. ...

## Appendix D

1 Timothy 3:2 - "one woman man," from a Commentary by William Mounce.

### A REFUTATION

My first email to Bill Mounce regarding his translation of 1 Timothy 3:2, found in his Greek and English Interlinear, is as follows

On Monday, April 9, 2012 at 6:14 AM, Cliff Baird wrote:

Dear Bill:

I attend a small congregation in middle TN. We are having a discussion about 1 Timothy 3:2. Your interlinear translation of  $\mu\alpha\iota\sigma$   $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$   $\alpha\nu\delta\rho\alpha$  gives "a man of one woman." You can really help me if you could share the evidence which prompted that decision. Please help me in this. Thanks for your time. ....Cliff

Bill's response:

> Bill Mounce wrote:

>> It would be best if you could get a copy of my commentary. The discussion has a lot of facets to it. (I am on vacation, sorry).

>> Bill

My follow up email was:

On Tuesday, May 22, 2012 at 2:57 PM, Cliff Baird wrote:

> Bill,

> Sorry to bother you again, I really need your help and I don't know where else to turn. I know you must have this information written down somewhere. If you could just point me in the right direction so I could find it I would really appreciate it. You suggested your commentary, but when I accessed it online the explanation of 1 Tim. 3:2 was on an unavailable page. Your explanation of Titus 1:6 was only a statement with all the evidence supporting it on the missing page for 1 Tim. 3:6. Is buying your commentary the only solution?

> ....cliff

His response:

> Bill Mounce wrote:

I am sorry but I don't have any way of getting that information to you without breaking copyright with Nelson.

After the above email exchange I traveled to a Christian University library and looked up his commentary. The information on the translation of this phrase is on pages, 170-173 of his commentary on 1 Timothy.

After a short introduction to this phrase, *μιας γυναικος ανδρα*, he continues:

*"The eleven characteristics in vv 2b-3 are grammatically dependent upon δια, 'it is necessary,' of v 2. The first is that an overseer must be μιας γυναικος ανδρα, the "husband of one wife" or "a 'one-woman' man."*

After giving these two possible translations Bill Mounce goes on to say, in preparation for his interpretation which follows, that

*"Paul could have said clearly (1) "must be married," (2) "not polygamous," (3) "faithful to his wife," or (4) not married/divorced."*

Mr. Mounce says nothing more about the translation of the phrase. I found this astounding. He had said this phrase was one of the most difficult phrases in the Pastoral Epistles. And yet spends almost no time on how to correctly translate it. Stating the two valid choices, *husband of one wife* or *one-woman man* and observing that 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 "suggests that marital faithfulness is a serious problem" he then chooses the non-marital translation of *one woman man* and proceeded with the interpretation.

Mr. Mounce chose to "correct" the translations in: Berry's Interlinear (1897), "of one wife husband;" Marshall's Interlinear (1958), "of one wife husband;" Comfort and Brown Interlinear (1990), "of one wife a husband;" without any comments as to why. He also did not mention the consistent translations **King James Bible of 1769, KJV (1873), NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV** (plus 20 other translations listed on the second page of this chapter), all of which translate this phrase using either *husband* or *wife*, implying this phrase meant a marital relationship. By choosing *one woman man* as the correct translation our author implied that everyone in the past was mistaken but this correct translation is now available, without any supporting evidence. This is phenomenal! Then he proceeds to the interpretation.

Yes, it is possible that all these Greek Scholars made the same mistake on this phrase, but to reach this conclusion would require a tremendous amount of evidence. Where is the list of Greek Scholars that outweigh those from history? Where is the evidence from Greek grammar which proves, or even suggests, that all the Greek scholars for over 600

years made the same mistake on the same phrase? Where are the scriptural facts from which we can logically conclude this horrendous error is now corrected? And finally, how do we explain God's ambivalence or indifference to this great transfer of *misinformation* for over 600 years, providing no way for the average man to know the truth about this phrase! One possible answer to all these questions might be to doubt the accuracy of this new translation.

Our author's attempt to justify his choice of translation is based on his interpretation, instead of the normal process of basing his interpretation on his translation. At the bottom of page 170 of his commentary he says "(1) The interpretation that the phrase means that an overseer must be married should be rejected ... . This sees *ανηρ* and *γυνη* as "husband" and "wife," not "man" and "woman."" At this point our author seems to have completely dissolved the line between translation and interpretation. With this elimination he can now proceed to discuss any interpretation as if it were a translation, to the great detriment of Biblical truth.

Because reasoning is required to evaluate the context as you translate any passage, does not necessitate that all translation is therefore interpretation. To eliminate the line between translation and interpretation is hardly the solution to the problem of how much reasoning can be used in the translation before it becomes an interpretation. The only solution seems to be having honest men who love the truth do the translation, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 (with special attention given to verse 11). As we pray and ask for God's discipline to give us humility, with reliance on God's guidance in answer to our sincere and fervent prayer for wisdom we will grow in our efforts to understand even the difficult writings of Paul mentioned by Peter in 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Our author then gives five reasons for using "woman" and "man" instead of "husband" and "wife." They are: "(a) the emphasis of the phrase is on the word *μια*, "one," and not on the marital state; (b) Paul and Timothy would not be eligible to be overseers; (c) it runs counter to Paul's teaching that being single is a better state for church workers (if they have the gift; 1 Cor 7:17, 25-38); (d) this line of reasoning, to be consistent, would have to argue that the overseer is required to have more than one child since *τεκνα*, "children" (v 4) is plural; and (e) most adult men were married so it would have been a moot point."

Looking at these five reasons for using the non-marital translation it seems that all of them are rather normal or even obvious. Which of the five reasons took special insight, unique education, recent manuscript discoveries or additional perseverance to identify? Is our author saying, by implication, that all other Greek scholars for over 600 years overlooked, or ignored these factors? Or maybe previous scholarship chose to translate using *husband* and *wife*, based on the context rather than on these seemingly irrelevant observations. We will now investigate each of these five reasons separately to see if they

should be, or even can be, used as a deciding factor in this very important translation, or whether they are, indeed, irrelevant.

**(a, first reason for one woman man)** The emphasis of the phrase is on the word *μια*, "one," and not on the marital state. *First*, assuming his assessment of emphasis to be true, does that imply the marital state is to have no consideration? Does the placement of *μια* forward in a three word phrase have sufficient importance to base the whole translation of the phrase on the position of *μια*? If not, what other evidence is available to support the very heavy burden of a non-marital translation? Shouldn't the context have something to do with the translation of any word or phrase? The context talks about the actual home or an implication of a home in the following expressions: 1) *given to hospitality*; although not required, hospitality is more normal for a couple of a household, 2) *one that rules well his own house*, 3) *having children in subjection*, 4) *rule his own house*, and from Titus 1:6 ff., 5) *having children that believe*, (6) *(having children) not accused of riot or unruly*, (7) *given to hospitality*. All these phrases say or imply a marital state for the elder. All of this evidence is ignored because of the accusation of the author "the emphasis is on the 'one,' not on the marital state." The author's seems to imply that if the emphasis is on the "one" all that follows has no significance in a correct translation and this conclusion is reached based only on assumed, or at least missing, evidence. This type of procedure is tentative at best and probably very dangerous spiritually, James 3:1. If any of the missing evidence should ever appear supporting the emphasis being on the "one" and not on the marital status we will examine it at that time.

**Second**, the stated emphasis should be challenged. The context would imply otherwise. Considering both passages, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, there are 7 phrases, listed in the previous paragraph, that say or imply a married state. In addition to these seven descriptions by the Holy Spirit there is also a very interesting sentence, i.e. verse 11. It is translated by our author as "*wives likewise must be dignified not slanders, clear-minded, faithful in all things.*" This verse is immediately after the first qualifications of deacons and is immediately followed by more qualifications of the deacons. This context makes it very likely that our author has correctly translated *γυναικας* as "wives" in this verse, implying the type of wife required of a deacon. Once again implying a marital status for the deacons, supporting the conclusion that the elders must also be married. All this strengthens our commitment to "the husband of one wife" as the correct translation for *μιας γυναικος ανδρα* in both 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6, implying less emphasis on the *μιας* (one).

**(b, second reason for one woman man)** "Paul and Timothy would not be eligible to be overseers." This comment is only relevant if we first assume the Holy Spirit would only write such elder qualifications as would *include* Paul and Timothy! Such an assumption is obviously of human origin and is completely without scriptural or logical support. If "husband of one wife" is invalid because it would eliminate Paul as an elder, then "one

woman man" is no better, because Paul was certainly not a "one woman man" either! "Oh, but he could be" some might say. Likewise Paul could get married and have believing children, thereby becoming qualified to be an elder. Although it is a true statement that Paul and Timothy would not qualify as elders, it is totally irrelevant to our question of how to translate *μίας γυναικος ανδρα*.

**(c, third reason for one woman man)** "it runs counter to Paul's teaching that being single is a better state for church workers (if they have the gift; 1 Cor 7:17, 25-38);" This comment is only relevant if it is true; ... it is not. The phrase "runs counter" seems to imply a contradiction, which it is not. 1 Corinthians 7 is talking about Christians, not elders. 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 only apply to elders, therefore no contradiction or "running counter." The characteristics required of the elder are simply additional to those for "regular" Christians.

The phrase "church workers" is nowhere found, or even hinted at, in the 1 Corinthians passage, which makes **(c)** even more irrelevant. Any possible idea from this one qualification that might seem to "run(s) counter" to 1 Corinthians 7 is nullified by scriptures that encourage marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:2 and others, mentioned by our author on page 172 of his commentary. Besides other scriptures that encourage remarriage, 1 Timothy 5:14, 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, and Romans 7:1-3. All of which nullifies his own argument on page 171.

**(d, fourth reason for one woman man)** "this line of reasoning, to be consistent, would have to argue that the overseer is required to have more than one child since *τεκνα*, 'children' (v 4) is plural;" This statement is so unusual that it engenders several comments:

**1)** For this statement to be relevant it must be true; ... it is not. It has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt (see section **II A** of this chapter) that *τεκνα* does not require an elder to have more than one child. The correct translation of 1 Timothy 3:2 has no influence on the interpretation of "children" in verse 4. On the other hand, the existence of children (one **or** more) in verse 4 has a significant influence on the translation of *μίας γυναικος ανδρα* in verse 2, i.e. an elder should be married and the translation should so indicate. **2)** For **(d)** to be true, the implication from it must also be true. The implication is "And since we know that *τεκνα* does not mean an elder must have more than one child, the elder cannot be required to be married." This implication is false because the consequence "marriage not required for elder" has no connection with and does not necessarily follow from the antecedent "*τεκνα* does not mean plural."

Therefore **(d)** is irrelevant because both the statement and its implication are false.

**(e, fifth reason for *one woman man*)** "most adult men were married so it would have been a moot point." This statement is irrelevant for two reasons: 1) it starts with an unprovable premise and 2) draws a conclusion which is false.

1) "Moot" means, in this context, "not worthy of discussion because it has been resolved or no longer needs to be resolved," Webster's New World Dictionary. That most adult men were married is just another accusation which cannot be proven. The New Testament was written for all people for all time. To make this statement as it applies to every congregation of God's people throughout time and space is phenomenal. Although it may be true for some congregations, maybe even most, it certainly is not true of every congregation. However the qualifications for elders must apply to every congregation! 2) Even if the assertion about most being married were true in a given congregation it would certainly not be a moot point in *any* congregation. That's like saying that Starbucks requiring all new employees to be coffee drinkers is a moot point because most adults drink coffee. Or because most Christians tell the truth would it be a moot point for Jesus to say that his followers must not lie? Or because most Biblical commentaries are written by Christians does that make it a moot point for Zondervan to require all Bible commentators to be Christians. Or because most people who apply for an American passports are American citizens, is it a moot point for our government to require only citizens to apply?

To state a regulation to ensure an outcome under certain situations may, indeed, be a moot point, but requiring elders to be married in every congregation is most certainly not one of them. Statement (e) is untrue in stating most adult (without defining *adult*) men were married in every congregation and it is also untrue in asserting the marriage requirement to be a moot point, therefore (e) is irrelevant.

## Summary

We have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that all five reasons given for rejecting the marriage requirement for elders are illogical and/or false and so are irrelevant. Therefore there is no valid reason to dismiss the traditional view that all Christians who desire to be an elder must be married. To overturn 600 years of consistency by Greek scholars on any given passage requires, and rightly so, a great deal of new or reevaluated evidence. So far, on this subject, we have had neither. Will Durant is once again proven right when he said "Experience suggests, however, that an old tradition must not be too quickly rejected; our ancestors were not all fools," History of Civilization, V. III, p. 556.

Since the New Testament was written for all people for all time, our phrase  $\mu\alpha\varsigma$   $\gamma\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$   $\alpha\nu\delta\rho\alpha$  is meant to be useful for all people for all time. Is there a possibility that the Holy Spirit knew the future and wanted to teach that elders:

- 1) had to be married,
- 2) married to only one wife, "committed, dedicated, loyal and faithful to one woman (his wife)"
- 3) not married to another man,
- 4) not married to several men,
- 5) not married to several women,
- 6) not married to a child?

How would he have chosen to say all of these things? What if, in His infinite wisdom, He could teach all these things with one short phrase? Since it was written for all peoples for all time, having the foresight to know all possibilities, might the Holy Spirit have chosen the one phrase "of one wife husband" to accomplish the teachings of each of these ideas? If this was possible would He choose *μιας γυναικος ανδρα* to teach all these ideas?

**The evidence implies that He not only could, He did!!**