

Elders And Deacons: Final Thoughts

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. We are finally bringing to a conclusion our look at the work of elders and deacons:
 - 1. We have spent time discussing the work of both elders and deacons
 - 2. We have talked about their qualifications and our attitudes toward their qualifications
- B. Now finalize this series of lesson by considering their wives and the congregation's responsibility toward them

I. WIVES OF ELDER'S AND DEACONS: (I TIM. 3:11)

A. She must be a reverent woman...

- 1. From the Greek word "Senos" → Venerable, honorable, grave, honest
 - a. This type of woman has a good reputation... her manner of life demands respect
 - b. Her reverence is seen in how she dresses, her speech, and her manner of life
- 2. Ruth is a good example of a woman who was reverent and honorable: **(Ruth 2:10-11; 3:11)**
 - a. Ruth left the land she lived in and everyone she knew to take care of her mother-in-law who, as well as Ruth, was a widow → Ruth was faithful to her!
 - b. Her reputation evidently preceded her because Boaz had heard about all she'd done for her mother-in-law and about how virtuous she was!
- 3. How this might impact the work of an elder or deacon:
 - a. Her behavior would not bring shame and disgrace upon her husband who is serving... creating a hindrance of example virtually impossible to overcome
 - b. People know her and they know she is someone who is respectable, who lives a godly life, and is a good example of a Christian

B. She must not be a slanderer...

- 1. From the Greek word "Diabolos" → A false accuser, slanderer
 - a. In a court of law, it was used officially to mean, "To falsely accuse another"
 - b. It describes the one who is given to fault finding, especially false or misconstrued ones, with others and spreading their criticisms maliciously
 - c. It's interesting that the same word is most often translated "devil!" Jesus describes him as being murderer from the beginning & the father of lies!!! **(John 8:44)**
- 2. Sanballat serves as examples of what it means to be a slanderer: **(Neh. 6:5-8)**
 - a. Being an open letter is not incidental: Open so that others can read what it says!
 - b. Sanballat is spreading around lies about Nehemiah because he doesn't like what Nehemiah stands for (jealous as well) – Could destroy his reputation & work!
 - c. Notice where this malicious slander originated: Sanballat's own heart! **(Mt. 12:34ff)**
- 3. Consider some passages that would further describe this type of woman:
 - a. Used to describe what older women are not to be: "Not false accusers" **(Titus 2:3)**
 - b. A slanderer is the wood that keeps a fire of destruction burning **(Prov. 26:20-22)**
 - c. Her heart has become perverse and corrupt – she sows discord **(Prov. 6:12-14)**
- 4. A wife of either an elder or a deacon who is a slanderer will have a devastating impact on her husband's work and destroy a congregation!
 - a. Her husband will confide in her about matters he is having to handle and because of this she will have access to information she otherwise wouldn't!
 - b. A wife who slanders will ruin her husband's influence in the eyes of others, they will not confide in him, and she will be a destructive force in a congregation!
 - b. While Paul was describing widows, there is certainly a danger for the wives of elders and deacons in this **(I Tim. 5:13)**

C. She must be a temperate woman

- 1. From the Greek word "Nephaleos" → Sober, circumspect, vigilant
 - a. Her actions and attitudes shows a sound mind, self control, and sobriety
 - b. She makes decisions that demonstrate alertness and that she is looking ahead

- c. She would be the type of woman that would handle crises well
2. She is the type that Paul describes as “professing godliness” (**I Tim. 2:9-10**)
3. How this might impact the work of an elder or deacon:
 - a. While she is not the elder and the decision maker, there will certainly be times where her husband seeks her input and advice – She needs to be temperate
 - b. She’s not one who would drive him to make decisions that rash and thoughtless
 - c. She is an irreplaceable asset to a deacon because...

D. She must be faithful in all things...

1. This phrase literally means that she is “trustworthy” in “every way”
 - a. This means she is the type of woman you could label as being consistent!
 - b. Same word describes what our relationship with God ought to be! (**Rev. 2:10**)
2. When we think of a woman who is faithful in all things, our minds probably go back to the virtuous wife that Solomon describes (**Prov. 31:11ff**)
3. When you consider her entire life you see a woman that is marked by faithfulness
 - a. In her relationship with her husband, she is faithful – Not just sexually but in the way she carries about her responsibilities as a wife
 - b. She’s faithful in how she cares for her children and her spiritual instruction
 - c. Her walk with God is characterized by faithfulness – This will be manifest in her care for the local congregation and in her personal life
4. Whether one serves as an elder or a deacon, they need a wife like this!
 - a. She will faithfully assist him as he carries out his duties like a true help-meet
 - b. Her consistency provides him with stability in his home and support as he works

II. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Our responsibilities toward deacons

1. The Bible says very little about the work of deacons, much less our duties toward them:
 - ~ Does this mean we have no responsibilities toward them? Of course not!
2. Since they are in a position of serving the church and assisting the elders there are some common sense responsibilities we should have toward them:
 - a. Every member should encourage them in their work (**Passage**)
 - b. It’s vital that we cooperate with them! They will need help in carrying out work to be done! Don’t hinder their work by refusing to help! (**Romans 16:2**)
3. Deacons will likely have regular jobs and will have family obligations, so as they carry out their work for the church they will certainly need help and encouragement!

B. As members of the congregation they lead, we have certain obligations toward the elders:

1. We have the responsibility to KNOW those that are ruling over us (**I Thess. 5:12**)
 - a. Two-sided: Elders should know their flock, the flock should know their shepherds!
 - b. The last thing some want is to know the elders and be known by them – They may not want the elders to know what they do or be involved in their lives
 - c. Some don’t appreciate & won’t respond to the elders’ love & interest in their lives, refusing to allow the elders to know them! Makes the elders’ work impossible!
 - d. Trouble awaits the church where the sheep & shepherd don’t know each other!
2. If they rule well, we should honor & hold them in high esteem (**I Thes. 5:13; Eph 5:17-18**)
 - a. We should do this because their concern and labor of love is for our souls!
 - b. We should respect the fact that they have willingly taken on such a great work! It says a great deal about their love for the congregation and for people’s souls!
 - c. This also is authorization for a congregation is financially support an elder if he is giving himself to the work of the word of God and doctrine
3. Elders’ work is hindered when the church refuses to be at peace! (**I Thess. 5:13**)
 - a. Some misconstrue peace: Peace is not ignoring sin! Peace is not ignoring error! That’s compromise! Sometimes division is necessary! (**I Cor. 11:18-19**)
 - b. It’s our responsibility though to work to be at peace among ourselves! To put away childish bickering and backbiting and to show love for one another!

- c. The work of elders is difficult as it is without our biting and devouring one another!
- 4. We have the responsibility to obey and submit to them (**Hebrews 13:17; I Pet. 5:1-5**)
 - a. Notice we are told to obey and submit! It is possible to obey without submission
 - b. **Illustration:** Child who is told, "Clean your room!" - He cleans it but it only comes after being gotten on to, he grumbles the whole way, & half-heartedly cleans
 - c. It will likely be the case that the elders have times that are far from joyous and closer to grief – However, I must determine that I am never the cause of it!
- 5. We should take care in how we receive accusations against them (**I Tim. 5:19-20**)
 - a. We aren't to accept just any accusation without making sure there is substance behind it! We should ask for witnesses before accepting something as true!
 - b. Like Nehemiah who says, "After serious thought, I rebuked..." (**Neh. 5:7**)
 - c. Yet, if the elders are in the wrong... we must not shrink back from rebuking them!
- 6. We also have the responsibility of calling them when we need help (**James 5:13-15**)
 - a. Sometimes the elders are the last people to know about a problem in someone's life or a need they have – Can be the elder's fault, the congregation, or both
 - b. When you are struggling spiritually or physically you need to call for the elders!
 - c. You need to get to know them well enough you can trust them & feel comfortable going to them for help: They can't help & pray for what they don't know about!

C. Our responsibility to obey and submit to the rule of the elders has its limitations!

- 1. We need to understand that the elders are not the ultimate source for authority!
 - a. It is Jesus Christ that is the head! He has all authority! (**Eph. 1:21-23; Mt. 28:18**)
 - b. Their authority does not extend beyond carrying out the will of Jesus Christ
 - c. There's no position or place of authority like the pope revealed in God's word, we'd all agree! Yet some act like elders have this authority and are infallible!
- 2. If the elders ask us to do something that is sinful, we must submit to Christ instead!
 - a. The apostles set the example: When those who rule over us ask us to go against the directions of the Lord, we must obey God rather than man! (**Acts 5:27-29**)
 - b. Just look around at the problems during the 50's and 60's:
 - 1) Elders can make decisions and take a congregation right into sin!
 - 2) Elders can become influenced by men in strange doctrines and practices!
 - c. Don't have to look far! Others have had to choose between following Christ & the leadership of men → It's hard to stand up against elders, but it must be done!
- 3. If the elders were to demand that we do something that would violate our conscience, we must not violate our conscience! (**Romans 14:23**)
 - a. If we cannot do something with a clear conscience, then it would be sinful to do it!
 - b. We must be careful! Don't use this as an excuse to keep from doing something you don't want to do when it really doesn't violate your conscience!

CONCLUSION: When you look at elders and deacons... don't just look at the men, but their wives as well! A man might otherwise be qualified, but because of his wife... he could become disqualified! Also, let's remember that when we appoint elders and deacons here... we have responsibilities toward them!