

# Profile of an Elder

*by Bryan Gibson*

It is God's will that elders be appointed in every local church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). Various passages describe their qualifications and work. The purpose of this sermon is to pull a lot of that information together to create the following profile.

We're talking about an **elder**, so obviously he cannot be a "novice" (NKJ) or a "new convert" (NAS) (1 Timothy 3:6). He has continued in the faith long enough to become "grounded and steadfast" (Colossians 1:23). One of the dangers in appointing someone who is not well grounded is that he could "become puffed up with pride" and "fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6).

He is a **steward** of God's flock (Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:3), so he must be trustworthy—one who has shown both the willingness and the ability to handle responsibility (1 Corinthians 4:2; 9:17; Colossians 1:25; Luke 16:10-12), one who understands that he will have to give an account of his stewardship (Luke 16:1-2).

He is further described as a **bishop** or **overseer** (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2)—one who watches or looks out for the souls of his brethren (Hebrews 13:17); one who looks out for the good of all, and not just himself (Titus 1:7; Philippians 2:3-4). He has a sincere love for his brethren (Philippians 2:20), as evidenced by the hospitality he extends to them (1 Timothy 3:2). He lives by the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

He is also a **pastor** or **shepherd** (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2), and so he must have the knowledge and the ability to feed the flock (1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Peter 5:2; Jeremiah 3:15). He holds fast to what he has learned, refusing to teach or practice anything that is not according to sound doctrine. He is willing and able to refute those who contradict sound doctrine (Titus 1:9-11). He is ever watchful for wolves that might destroy the flock (Acts 20:29-31).

He is a **ruler** (1 Timothy 5:17), one who will make decisions to which others must submit (Hebrews 13:17), and so he must be decisive, not wishy-washy. At the same, he realizes that he is not a lord over the flock (1 Peter 5:2-3), but a servant. His decisions, then, will be made with the best interests of the flock in mind, not his own.

His ability to **lead and care for others** is exhibited in his **home**, where he and his wife have trained their children to be submissive, respectful, and above all, obedient to the Lord (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6).

He is a **humble** man, one who readily acknowledges his dependence on God and His word (Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Peter 5:5).

He is **temperate, sober, self-controlled** (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8), and so he is not given to wine (Titus 1:7; 1 Timothy 3:3), or to any other vice. His self-control can also be seen in

how he deals with others. He doesn't have to have things his way; he is "willing to yield" (James 3:17). He is strong and even sharp when he needs to be (Titus 1:14), but his general demeanor is one of gentleness (1 Timothy 3:3). He is not quick-tempered, or quarrelsome, and he is certainly not violent (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). He can be questioned without becoming contentious, and he can disagree without losing his cool (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

He is **just and holy** (Titus 1:8), so clearly His manner of life is different from the world around him (Romans 12:2). He has learned what the grace of God teaches: "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly..." (Titus 2:11-12). When he does sin, he penitently seeks forgiveness, because his goal is to be blameless—in the sight of others, but especially in the sight of God (Titus 2:11-12; Titus 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 John 1:9).

He has his **priorities** in order. He does not love money or the things of this world (Titus 1:7; 1 Timothy 3:3). He loves what is good (Titus 1:8)—what will endure. He is more concerned with "laying hold" of eternal life than anything else (1 Timothy 6:10-12).

His **faithfulness to the Lord** is seen on a **daily** basis, making him a good example to Christians and non-Christians alike (1 Peter 5:3; 1 Timothy 3:7).