

“Discernment for Elders” (1 Tim. 5:17-25)

1. Distinguishing Elders (17-18)
 - a. Double honor likely means both respect of position and remuneration (wages). Paul included an apologetic in the next verse.
 - b. Distinction is made re: their labor in word and doctrine distinguishing them as teaching Elders or even perhaps Overseers i.e. pastors. Those are the ones who need to be given more resources viz. time (which is money), hence the honorarium of wages.
 - c. Distinction of ‘ruling well’ juxtaposed to those in need of rebuke (20).
2. Defending Elders (19)
 - a. Just as there must be observance of meeting the stated criteria (3:1-13), there must be verified witnesses to disqualify such from the office.
 - b. Mere hearsay must prove to be fact before hasty action is taken.
3. Discriminating Elders (20-21)
 - a. Rebuke: There can be no rebuking w/o discriminating.
 - b. Renounce: Public teachers influence openly and thus must be rebuked openly. Why? So that the “rest also may fear.” Accountability is indispensable both to the orthodox leadership and righteous living.
 - c. Resolution: because such is vital to the Church’s health and Kingdom’s progress, Paul calls witness of heaven and earth to hold Timothy and us accountable to be courageous in rebuking Elders who may be manipulating, perverting, or exploiting the Gospel or God’s people! We should fear rebuking no man in authority who has been found guilty of such.
 - d. Righteousness: “no partiality” and being “no respecter of persons” is to judge according to righteous standards. When a judge is partial, he is paid off and or prejudiced in his ruling.
4. Determining Elders (22-25)
 - a. Diligence (22) Have you ever regretted referring someone to a friend? We must avoid hasty assessments and be careful to trace observable traits of prospective leaders. In a sense, to recommend or approve “lay hands on” someone is to assoc. w/ them or to “partner” or “share” or “fellowship” with them. Thus approving a disqualified one is to share in such disqualification.
 - b. Divergence? (23) Though it may seem disjointed to suddenly instruct Timothy to have some wine for medicinal purposes, the controversial instruction is a bit of a rooting out of the disqualified Elders to whom Timothy was charged to rebuke (see 1:3-9 re: misuse of the law by erroneous teaching). Those who demand all to practice complete abstinence misunderstand Scripture, the Law, and their own hypocrisy. Immediately after reminding Timothy to “keep [himself] pure.” He allows and, indeed, tells Timothy to use wine – albeit with the understanding of not letting wine use him. Now this is no green light to go out and buy a case of beer or a half gallon of whiskey. It is on par of using pharmaceutical prescriptions or over the counter medications for an illness. I can count on one hand the people I know who legitimately partake in recreational alcohol. What we call recreational alcohol usage today ends up in no less than a good buzz and often more than embarrassing actions.
 - c. Discernment (24-25)
 - i. Disapproval (24) It is readily apparent that some are disqualified for such service as their beliefs and actions clearly oppose the Scripture. However, some appear to be righteous but they are “waterless clouds” (Jude 12) who appear to have substance but whose end is the “gloom of utter darkness.” They are those who have “crept in unnoticed” (Jude 4) pretending to be shepherds but “pervert the grace of our God into

“Discernment for Elders” (1 Tim. 5:17-25)

sensuality.” Allowing such is detrimental to the Church, thus we must avoid the hasty approval of likable personalities, popularity, confident attitudes, and other popular worldly appeal – and make sure that if present, these characteristics do not precede integrity, godliness, and unapologetic courage to preach the truth of Scripture and “wage the good warfare” (1:18) for His Kingdom.

- ii. Approval (25) “Likewise” some who are qualified to serve in such a capacity are both readily observable as their demonstration, teachings, and reputation precedes them; and also consist of those whose eligibility will take time to confirm. It is better to not act hastily to “lay hands on” seemingly qualified men who are indicative of the novice and or prideful soul of chapter 3 vv. 6-7. There is no perfect matrix or ecclesiology for discerning the deputization of Elders, Deacons, and Overseers; but there is wisdom in how we the church affirm or deny the authority of the Elder with the judgment of Scripture’s authority. It always comes down to the Word of God.

PC:

It is humbling to be a pastor. We could easily come up with a plethora of reasons why I or another pastor is not “pastoral material.” It is kind of surprising how little of a list of qualifications there is regarding the position of Elder, Deacon, and Overseer. Unfortunately, it is not so surprising that often today’s qualifications for such ignore these simple yet vital qualities found in the Pastoral Epistles while exchanging them for charisma, physical appearance, social status, confidence, disposition of appeal, and other such fleshly affirmations. What is indispensable for the position of an Elder (be it pastor or Deacon etc.) is a belief that is informed and affirmed by the Scriptures and a godliness that matches (see 1 Tim. 4:16). This is not perfection in practice, but integrity. Sin will certainly plague each of us until glory (1 Jn. 1:8) though we can still “walk in the light” as we “practice the truth” (see vv. 6-7). Therefore, the Elder must also avoid self-righteousness which will condemn to hell. As usual, the Bible calls us to test and employ discernment; and there can certainly be no exception here.