

Elders Need to be Above Reproach in Teaching Sound Doctrine:

Intro:

1. Elders Should be Those Who Hold Firmly to the Doctrines Taught in the Scriptures

- i. holding firm - seizing against the flow, clinging to, devoting oneself to
 1. see Matt 6:24; 1 Thess 5:14
 - a. **Matthew 6:24** "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.
 - b. **1 Thessalonians 5:14** And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.
 2. The picture is one of clinging to a firm structure as the wind howls and blows against you
 3. An elder, or a candidate for overseer, should not be "tossing around" new ideas about the central doctrines of the Christian faith. He should have arrived at sound doctrine and be fully convinced of their veracity according to the true Word of God.
- ii. Elders should know, understand, and fully believe in the inspiration, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture
 1. Inspiration: "God-breathed" – the very words of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21)
 2. Inerrant: "without error" – perfect and accurate, down to the very words, in all that they actually teach (2 Tim 3:16; Matt 5:17-20; John 10:34-35; Gal 3:16; 1 Sam 15:29; Heb 6:18)
 3. Sufficient: The Scripture, being the word of God, contains ALL that one needs for faith and godliness (2 Tim 3:16-17; John 6:68; 17:17; Ps 119)
- iii. Elders must hold firmly to the teaching of Scripture in a world that pummels them with doubt, self-centeredness that overflows in a rejection of the Jesus revealed by God's Word.

2. Elders Should be Teaching the Trustworthy Word of God

- i. "the teaching"
 1. "the" –definite, a certain set of truths and propositions that constitute "the teaching"
 2. Titus 2:10 – our humble good works "...adorn the doctrine of our Savior-God..."
- ii. "according to the faithful word"
 1. defines the content of the teaching,
 - a. that which is according to the trustworthy word,
 - b. that which has been TAUGHT by Paul and the Apostles
 - i. **1 Timothy 4:13-17** Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.
 - ii. **Romans 16:17** I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.
 - iii. **1 Timothy 6:20** O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge,"
 2. according to Christ
 - a. all teaching needs to be according to Christ, emphasizing Christ, exalting Christ, and rooted in Christ, not merely good-sounding philosophical (or even "scriptural") arguments
 - i. **Colossians 2:8** See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits¹ of the world, and not according to Christ.

- ii. **Matt 23:23-24** the Pharisees had a semblance of the Scriptures, but missed the point
 - iii. **John 5:37-47** the Pharisees searched the Scriptures but missed Jesus and did “not have His word abiding” in them, nor “the love of God” in them, because they did not believe in Jesus
- b. Jesus Christ is the ultimate, supreme, all-encompassing purpose and point of all of history: past, present, and future!! It is the summit of all history that we glorify God through Him!
- i. **Colossians 1:16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things were created through him and for him.
 - ii. **Hebrews 2:10** For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.
 - iii. **1 Peter 4:11** whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies - in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
 - iv. **2 Peter 3:18** But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.
 - v. **Ephesians 3:20-21** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
 - vi. **Revelation 5:13** And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

3. The Authority to Oversee and Rule Well Comes from Clinging to the Word of God

- i. “so that” indicates purpose of holding firmly to the teaching
- ii. The elder may be able (power) to exhort (*parakalein*) in sound doctrine
 - 1. The elder is to know sound doctrine in order to exhort, comfort, encourage, and lead
 - a. It is the teaching of sound doctrine, the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that empowers elders to oversee and exercise authority on behalf of Christ
 - i. **2 Timothy 4:3** For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,
 - ii. **Titus 2:1** But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.
 - b. All exhortation, comfort, encouragement, and leadership must come from the Word of God
 - i. All instruction
 - ii. All counseling
 - iii. All comforting words
 - iv. All authority of leadership
 - c. A teacher is only worth his salt if he is pointing people to Jesus Christ: the way, the truth, and the life!
 - i. His commands
 - ii. His promises
 - iii. His glory!!
 - 2. "*parakalein*" is the title given to the Holy Spirit by Jesus in John 14:16, "one who is called alongside to exhort, comfort, guide, encourage, instruct (see John 14:15-17,26; "another" (like Christ), note context of John 14 pertains to keeping the word and commandments of Jesus, i.e. doctrine)
 - Have we forgotten the important promise of the Holy Spirit as our Exhorter, Comforter, Corrector, and Instructor?

- iii. The elder must know sound doctrine in order to “correct” those who oppose it.
 1. “Correct” is from the word *elegcho*, which means “to refute, bring to light, expose”
 2. Elders are to pass on the sound doctrine of Christ, refuting and exposing error in those that oppose such sound doctrine.
 - a. “Who speak against it” calls attention to the reality that there are always those to speak against and stand opposed to the sound teaching of Scripture. The church needs leaders who are able not only to teach, but to defend the truth of Scripture against the onslaughts against it. Too often, we have surrendered by default.
 - b. In fact, elders MUST be able to recognize and refute weak, unsound, and unfit doctrine that influences the Body away from the biblical gospel
 3. The necessity of an elder’s ability to exhort and instruct and encourage with sound doctrine is because of the following verses:
 - a. **Titus 1:10-11,13-14** For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach... Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth.
 - b. **2 Timothy 2:24-26** And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.
 - c. **2 Timothy 4:1-4** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² **preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; **reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.** ³ For the time is coming when **people will not endure sound teaching**, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.
 - d. **Jude 1:3-4** Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Most of the time shepherds find their task extremely rewarding and pleasant. But on occasion we tangle with a character disorder whose calloused conscience allows him to manipulate others to satisfy his own insatiable ego....One thing for sure, the job of shepherding, so peaceful in its mental imagery, requires dancing with wolves. ~Michael S. Lawson

- iv. Elders are to hold firmly to the teachings of Christ, through His Word and by His Spirit, so that they can come alongside and instruct, exhort, admonish, and encourage God’s people, *pointing them to Jesus Christ and His glory* with sound (healthy, accurate) doctrine
 1. Ephesians 4:11 – “He gave some...as pastor-teachers...”
 - a. Pastors and teachers are pictured as one office, so that the pastor (whom we have identified as an elder) has the responsibility of teaching.
 2. 1 Timothy 3:2 – “an overseer must be...able to teach...”
 - a. The overseer must be "able to teach." And we have seen that the overseer and elder are the same office.
 3. 1 Timothy 5:17 – “...those who work hard in preaching and teaching [doctrine]...”
 - a. Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.
 - i. Not that all don't have to be able to teach—they do; but some "labor," that is, they devote more time and energy to it, perhaps earning their living by it.
 - b. Not all elders need to be able to do public preaching. The requirement is not for a preaching gift, but for a solid grasp of doctrine and the ability to spot and correct errors, explaining biblical truth accurately and plainly.

4. Elders are to Teach With the Same Purpose that Jesus Taught

“If ministry cannot be clearly established as the continuation of Jesus’ own intention and practice, we lose its central theological premise.” –Thomas Oden

John 15:15-16 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

John 17:18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

- “even as...I also” (sent like Jesus)

John 20:21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

- “even as...I also” (sent like Jesus)

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

- The divine command to preach, baptize, and teach in Christ’s name relying on His presence is the ground floor of...the practice of ministry. Take away the Lord’s command, and the living presence to which it witnesses, and we have little upon which to build any significant idea of Christian ministry. –Oden

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- God’s message of reconciliation has been entrusted to the Church through the presence and power of the His Holy Spirit. It is up to the leaders to proclaim His message with certainty and conviction, like Jesus.

Conclusion:

The Word of God describes what qualifies a man to oversee the Bride of Christ until His return. It is commanded that a man be able to discern and teach according to sound doctrine, AND that he live according to that same sound doctrine. We need men who lead like Jesus led, who live like Jesus lived, who teach what Jesus taught in the manner in which He taught it. This is possible because the Spirit of God is alive and active in His Church.

All teaching in the Church needs to come from the same position as the teachings of Christ Himself. The manner in which Jesus spoke was the manner of proclamation, of announcement. He did not use a “progressive dialogue” or a wondering meandering way to Truth, but announced it as it was, as He is. You see, the Scripture tells us that our acceptance of Him was not based upon our intellectual comprehension of all His glory, but rather in our humble reception of what He said about Himself and about us. We must become children to enter the Kingdom of God, not philosophers. We must receive the Word of God as true, not judge the Word of God only if it fits our worldview. We must let His holy Word reshape our hearts and our actions through dependence, even when we don’t know why or how. And we need men who preach this truth, teach this truth, rebuke with this truth, who lead with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our teaching, and our learning, needs to come from His own intention and practice, the proclamation and humble reception of the truth to a world that wonders, shining the Light of Christ into the darkness of confusion and self-reliant me-firstism.

Erwin Lutzer writes:

Obviously, dark days lie ahead for the believing church since Christianity is no longer providing the consensus for our society. The freedoms Christianity brought to us are being destroyed before our eyes. We are living at a time when humanistic thinking is coming to its natural conclusions in morals, education, and law. If we are to withstand the onslaught, we must be convinced in our own minds that we have a message from God, a sure

word that “shines in a dark place.” As Francis Schaeffer told us, only a strong view of Scripture can withstand the powerful pressure of relativistic thinking.

When the Bible, which is rooted in the soil of history and logic, is either rejected or reinterpreted to fit a presupposed belief, everyone is on his own to guess at the answer for ultimate questions. Since there is no umpire to judge various belief systems, the game of life is played with every participant creating his own rules and walking in his own “God-seeking” path. As a result, the Christian church is fragmented and floundering, looking for an answer to today’s spiritual and moral malaise, but unwilling to submit to the sound doctrine of the faith and the glory of the crucified Son of God who, though never having a beginning, died in our place to save us from our sins and, though never sinning, has risen from the dead to keep us and intercede for us eternally. This is why we need elders who are weak in themselves, but strong in the Scriptures, handling the Word of God accurately and approved by God without shame (2 Tim 2:15). The Body of Christ needs men who are intent on glorifying the eternal God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, standing firm amidst the numerous volleys of false doctrine and the sweet-sounding pipers of spiritual dischord in the Body of Christ.

The church needs men who show us the Jesus revealed in Holy Scripture, who teach us this Jesus accurately, who guide us to this Jesus with certainty, and who boast of this Jesus ceaselessly, because it is only in Him that we truly know the one true God to whom be the glory, power, reputation, and honor forever. Amen.