

# Coach's Corner

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## “Managing His Own Household”

Over the past couple of months we have discovered that of the qualifications we find for elders/overseers in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, all are solely character-based with the exception of two. These two qualifications are not disconnected from our character, but they do involve skills. The first of these skills we looked at in last month's **Coach's Corner**: the ability to teach the scriptures. In this month's issue we consider the second skill-related qualification. An aspiring elder/overseer must “manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive” (1 Tim. 3:4).

The word for “manage” is a term used in Greek culture for being set over others in leadership with the responsibility of directing, protecting, guarding, and taking care of. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament it was used of the head of a household (2 Sam. 13:17; Amos 6:10) and in extra-biblical Jewish literature it could refer to governing a group of people (1 Maccabees 5:19). In addition to overseeing a family as in this passage, the New Testament also uses it for the oversight or leadership within the Church (Rom. 12:8; 1 Tim. 5:17). Paul seems to be teaching that the man who aspires to be an elder must be one who knows how to do the kinds of things a Christian father minimally should do in leading his family, such as: striving to provide for his family (1 Tim. 5:8); teaching and instructing them about Jesus Christ and what it means to know, as well as follow Him (Eph. 6:4); instilling discipline in them and correcting them when they go astray (Eph. 6:4), yet not in such a way that he unnecessarily discourages them (Col. 3:21), and this because he loves his children (Heb. 12:5-8). Bottom-line, the aspiring elder must understand that he has been given leadership in the home to set the spiritual tone (Eph. 5:25ff.). He is to carry out the minimal requirements of a godly father which would include discipling his children (cf. Dt. 6:6-8; Prov. 22:6; 24:3-4; Mt. 28:19-20; Eph. 6:4; Col. 1:28; 2 Tim. 2:2).

Paul goes on to say that what this will look like is that such a qualified elder will be one “having children in submission”. We know that this does not mean that the father is supposed to make his children submit in some unloving, abusive way. Such would not only contradict what Paul says elsewhere (Col. 3:21), it also would contradict what he says here in this verse. Biblical capable oversight ending in submission must be “with all dignity”. The phrase suggests that the oversight and resultant submission must all be done in a manner that is not overbearing or that fosters hatred and/or disrespectfulness.

Why does Paul set forth this qualification? To begin with, it suggests that overseeing a family is to be an incubator for leadership in a larger context. Notice what Paul writes in 1 Tim. 3:5: “For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?” If a man has not done a reasonable job leading, caring for, and discipling his family

(where naturally he should have more influence), then most likely he will not know how to do this within the congregation (where influence may be more difficult). A second reason is found in the Titus 1 list of qualifications. There it appears that Paul focuses more on the example management of one's family sets. Elders should set the tone for what Christian families look like. This not only helps shape the Church, but also ultimately has impact upon its witness in the world.

As we summarize Paul's teaching, let's talk about what this does mean and what it does not mean by way of implications.

First, it means that we must be intentional about equipping fathers to lead their families well. It is also necessary that we give at least minimal consideration to how a man has functioned in his family before he becomes an elder. We should see that he has at least made reasonable efforts to lead his family faithfully since he has been a Christian. Finally, elders should be leaders, those able to oversee, direct, and influence others for good.

Lastly, what it does not mean is that a man must be a perfect father or leader. No such person exists except for Jesus Christ! It also does not mean that the decisions a man's children make (or don't make) in the late teen or adult years should necessarily have bearing on whether or not he should be an elder. The focus in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 is on whether or not the children are seemingly following the Lord, as well as mom and dad in the childhood years. Keep in mind that for both Jews and Greco-Romans sons and daughters became adults at age 13 and 14-15 (respectively). Teens of leaders or prospective leaders may struggle, question their faith, and may even reject Christ eventually. What we want to look at is this: Did the aspiring elder give evidence of good godly parenting and oversight in his home? If the man came to Christ later in life, how did he do from the time of conversion? And, when in question, I believe we should give the benefit of the doubt (cf. 1 Cor. 13:7).

Men, this concludes our discussion of qualifications for elders. In the next two issues of **Coach's Corner** we will close out our discussion of New Testament eldership.

Thank you for all you are doing to lead our wonderful congregation!

Joyfully pastoring and overseeing the flock with you,

Tom