

# Coach's Corner

Vol. 1, Issue 7, November 2008



## “Able To Teach”

Of the qualifications we find for elder/overseers in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, all are character-based with the exception of two. There are two which also encompass needed skills. We look at the first of these in this **Coach's Corner**.

In 1 Timothy 3:2 Paul simply says that an overseer must be “able to teach”. He elaborates upon this qualification in Titus 1:9 where he writes: “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” Looking at both of these passages we come to understand that an elder must relate to the Bible in the following manner before entering that ministry.

- First, he must know the scriptures reasonably well and he must believe in them. This is clear from the statement, “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught.” Prospective elders must be men who read, study, meditate upon, memorize, and practice the Word. (See also 1 Tim. 4:16) This knowledge and practice obviously are necessary in order for the elder to teach the scriptures and to prepare people for godly living and to face false doctrine.
- Second, he must be a man who is engaged in teaching the Bible in some way(s). This can involve everything from one-on-one counseling to teaching a small group to teaching large groups to preaching. A prospective elder does not have to be a man who can teach or preach before large groups, but he must be one who can know and explain the scriptures in some setting. The elders will give direction to the church and shepherd it as they give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (cf. Acts 6:4). Since this is the core of their ministry, they must be Bible practitioners and teachers.
- Third, he must have a good enough handle on the Bible that he is reasonably able to discern true from false doctrine. He must “give instruction in sound doctrine.” Part of this instruction will include equipping Christians to live out the Christian life in truth in very concrete practical ways and also it will include equipping Christians to train others in biblical living. Consider these two passages.

*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with*

*which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph. 4:11-16)*

*And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)*

- Fourth, elders must be able to correct and to rebuke those who are teaching false doctrine. This demands not only a strong doctrinal foundation to recognize truth, but also a willingness not to overlook false teaching. An elder must be able to “rebuke those who contradict [sound doctrine].” Though this must be done with firmness, it also must be done with grace, in a non-combative manner (cf. 1 Tim. 3:3). Specifically, Paul tells Timothy how to do this when he writes the following in 2 Tim. 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.*

A couple of conclusions come to mind regarding how our church must go about raising up and preparing elders. To begin with, we must be a doctrinally sound and substantive church. This is the only way we will develop the kind of atmosphere out of which such men will be grown. Second, we must make sure that any men coming onto the elder board are sound in the scriptures, are in them regularly, are seeking to live them out, and are teaching them in some setting(s).

As we plan for the future, let's be much in prayer and much in discussion on how we can continue to foster these kinds of elders in this congregation.

Joyfully pastoring and overseeing the flock with you,

Tom