

IT'S STILL AN APPLE



SCRUTINY AND DESIRE

- One of the qualifications to serve as an elder is the desire explained in 1 Tim. 3:1. The fact that a person would willingly endure scrutiny in order to serve in a sometimes-thankless capacity says a lot.
- The desire should be seen as the first basis for a relationship between sheep and shepherd – that he *wants* to serve the congregation is not only a reflection of him, but of the group. A good question to keep in front of a church is: Are we the kind of the church that nurtures willing, zealous, excited future leaders, or do we have to twist arms to get somebody to serve?
- Remember the qualities of the Good Shepherd, discussed in a previous lesson (John 10:1-5, 11-14).
- Psalm 23 – The psalmist wants to be led by God, just as God cheerfully, lovingly desires to lead.

INPUT

- The process of appointing elders is one that we rarely get to experience. A Christian might go through this just a handful of times in his or her life – and the process might be different every time! We're fortunate to have had such a transparent, drawn out approach to selecting potential elders.
- In a way, this approach is the most consistent with the principles laid out in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Most of the qualifications are subjective and can only be known through experience and relationship. A church should be able to examine potential elders with plenty of "breathing room."
- Input was also kept anonymous, at least as it was presented to our current elders (and to me, in a limited role). Here are a few of my "takeaways":

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- There was a full range of comments, which should be no surprise in a group our size. The majority of comments were very positive. Even the negative feedback, though, provides insight and gives everybody (the potential elders, in particular) plenty to think about (Proverbs 12:1, 11:14, 12:15).
 - It also shouldn't surprise us that feedback was, at times, hard to reconcile. Some responded with nothing but favor for all four men, while others had every possible combination of "good", "bad", and in-between.
 - Of course, those are relative terms. It should be pointed out that none of the candidates were regarded with anything but admiration, respect, and good will. There was nothing personal or vindictive. These are all men who are far above reproach, which explains why they've made it to this point in the process.
 - All of the concerns surrounded "secondary issues", rather than failures or serious shortcomings with the men themselves.

FAITHFUL CHILDREN

- The most frequent critical feedback was about the qualification of an elder's children being faithful. Still, this only represented a small fraction of the overall feedback. It was enough, however, to deserve some special attention.
- According to Titus 1:6 an elder must have children who are regarded as faithful, not rebellious or accused of dissipation. 1 Timothy 3:4 says that an elder must manage his own household well, keeping his children under control.
- A few questions were raised concerning what the term "faithful children" means, and in what way does this apply as an elder's children get older and move out. Does "faithful" mean "a Christian", as some assert? How many of his kids must be "faithful"? What about adult offspring?

"FAITHFUL" OR
"BELIEVE"?



PISTOS

- The Greek word "pistos" means "trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring trust or faith" according to the Bauer, Arndst, and Gingrich Lexicon. It is a character trait that is most frequently used to describe a person's trustworthiness or reliability.
- Out of 68 times the word is used in the New Testament, it is translated in the NASB as "faithful" 26 times, "responsible" 18 times, "sure" 10 times, "trusting" 7 times, and "believer" or "female believer" only 7 times.
- Context determines how we should understand the word. While NASB does translate it "believe" in Titus 1:6, it should be noted that other translations use "faithful", a much more generic word that better fits the context. But why does "faithful" fit the context?

CONTRASTING TRAITS

- Notice the way Paul contrasts "pistos" with "not rebellious or accused of dissipation." In this kind of sentence, opposites are being contrasted with each other ("this, not this"). So, whatever "pistos" is must be the opposite of "rebellious".
- That house is large, not small. My cat is mean, not friendly. That basketball player is tall, not short.
- Sentences like these would make little sense if opposites were not contrasted (i.e., that house is large, not stucco).
- However we're going to interpret "pistos" must make sense in light of the contrast being made to "rebellious/dissipation". While a Christian is certainly not rebellious/wasteful/self-indulgent, the opposite of a believer is a non-believer (John 20:27), a contrast not being made in Titus 1:6.

HOME MANAGEMENT

- Additionally, if an elder's children must all be "Christians in good standing" for him to serve, why are the lists in Titus and 1 Timothy different? Why are the Cretans and Ephesians being told different standards?
- The emphasis in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 is on how well an elder manages his own household, keeping his children under control. If we interpret Titus 1:6 to mean that an elder's children must be trustworthy, reliable, faithful, etc., then there is no longer a conflict here.
- As long as a man has children who are respectful, trustworthy, and under control – especially while living in his house – he meets the qualifications of both Titus and 1 Timothy.

JUST TO CLARIFY...

- The reaction that some might have to all of this is to ask, "So, do an elder's children *not* need to be Christians?" If a potential elder has raised his kids in a godly manner, then it will be apparent, even in cases where a child chooses not to be a Christian. An elder's children must demonstrate that they are a product of that kind of home environment, otherwise, how can a man manage the household of God (the very point of 1 Tim. 3:5)?
- We should expect to see the evidence of a man's parenting in the lives of his children. They must be "pistos" – trustworthy, reliable, well-behaved. His children should not be a cause for reproach or embarrassment. But the question of whether or not they are Christians is not the point of Titus 1:6 or 1 Timothy 3:4-5. That is simply going beyond the text and inserting a qualification that isn't there.

KEY QUESTIONS

- Can we see that a man's children are "faithful" when they are a little on the "young side"? Certainly! Are they obedient? Are they respectful and well-behaved? How do they handle responsibilities appropriate to their age?
- Can we see that a man's adult children are faithful, even if one of them is not a Christian? Again, yes! Is he or she still a trustworthy person in spite of the spiritual decisions that were made after moving away from his/her father's household? Law-abiding? Reliable? While we hope our adult children stay the course spiritually, they still show by their character what kind of upbringing they've had.
- How has personal experience with a child who is not a Christian impacted the potential elder? Is there any positive? Negative?

TRUST THE PROCESS

- Do you trust our current elders? Do you believe they have the best interests of the flock at the forefront of their minds? Then trust them to ask the tough questions and follow the Word to the very best of their ability and understanding.
- Remember, trust isn't following people only when you agree with them or feel fully in control. Trust is giving them the benefit of the doubt and stepping into a situation with confidence in others.
- We are very blessed at Monte Vista. This entire process has been very encouraging, yet demanding. It has brought about incredible introspection and forced us into conversations that are shaping the future of our congregation for years to come. Participation, transparency, and scriptural are all words that come to mind upon reflection of the last few months!