



## **Elder Qualifications Relational Qualities**

by Chuck Gianotti

In previous issues we looked at the elders' qualifications involving personal character and self-discipline. Now, we will consider qualifications that affect an elder's ability to work with people. After all, shepherding involves people and certain traits are necessary for working well with people. Not only do these "relational" characteristics help an elder to effectively shepherd the flock of God, but the elder who models these traits sets a standard that the people will, hopefully, emulate in their relationships.

One of the most effective ways an elder guides the people of God is through his example (for the concept of modeling behavior for believers see 1 Cor 11:1, 1 Peter 5:3, 1 Cor 4:16, Phil 3:17, 1 Th 1:6, 2 Th 3:7,9). Just like a father teaches a child to tie his shoes by saying, "I will show you how to do it, watch me," so also the elder essentially "shows people how to do it." And in the area of interpersonal relationships, this is greatly needed.

According to Titus 1:6, an elder must be *not accused of dissipation* (lit. *reckless living*) or

*insubordination* (or *rebellion*). One translation uses the term "*wild living*." Notice the emphasis on reputation ("*accusing*"), which can be very hard to overcome. How can an elder encourage self-control in other's lives, when he himself gives the impression of an uncontrolled and wasteful lifestyle? This is echoed in the required qualification of having a *good reputation with outsiders* (1 Tim 2:7). A godly man's character must be evident not only in the church, but also in the world. He must be respected by unbelievers and free from hypocrisy.

Implied in this also is that an elder is not to be a "law unto himself." It is a rebellious individual who continually disagrees with the sound wisdom and counsel of others. Elders must be "team players." This is especially true when it comes to preferences and style issues, which are the source of many conflicts in some churches. For example, one group of elders decided to change the time of meeting for their Sunday evening service for the sake of families with young children. One of them resisted the counsel of the majority because the change would

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## **Biblical Foundations Complementary Gifts**

by Jack Spender

In the first article of this series, we studied the giftedness of elders who, as individual believers, participate in the normal course of church life. Every proper exercise of gift in the assembly whether by elders or others is given for profit (1 Cor. 12:7), and for the edification of all (1 Cor. 14:26). But elders must also use their gifts collectively, i.e. working together as a team. This good work will be promoted by an understanding of two important and related principles:

- 1) Spiritual gifts are meant to complement, never to compete.
- 2) The authority of elders to lead comes from God, never from gifts.

### **Division of Labor**

In a healthy assembly, temporal and financial duties which could become a burden upon the elders are delegated to other godly men so that the elders may devote themselves to the vital functions of prayer and the ministry of the word. This is the great lesson of Acts 6, and it is not surprising that as a result, "the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly...." (Acts 6:7). The expression "ministry of the word" would likely include not only time in studying the scriptures, but also the many spiritual and practical leadership functions for the Lord's people of which elders' work is comprised. This would include planning and providing spiritual food for the flock, visiting and caring for the believers, and matters of vision and planning for the needs of a growing assembly.

In any case, it is clear that the believers

complemented each other by sharing the workload. But what about the work within the elder board itself? How is it divided?

### **Plurality of Gifts Among the Elders**

It is God's express design that no one has all the needed gifts (1 Cor. 12:29-30), but that each brother contributes the part for which God has divinely qualified him. In an ideal situation, at least one elder will have a teaching gift, and in addition to laboring in the word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17) may coordinate arrangements for preaching and small group ministry. (For a discussion of the elder's qualification of "apt to teach," see the last issues of ESN - Vol. 2, No. 1)

Another elder having pastoral gift will help the group become effective in their visitation, counseling and related shepherding duties. Yet another will have some administrative gift (as "governments" 1 Cor. 12:28 or "ruling" Rom. 12:8), guiding the meetings and communications of the elders as they lead and plan. Of course real life situations are seldom ideal and by God's wonderful provision, gifts lacking within the group can be supplemented from within the assembly.

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# Leadership Principles

## The Confidentiality Tension

by Daniel H. Smith

*Should an elder go home from an open discussion of a church member's private life and tell his wife, seeking to hear her advice? Daniel H. Smith of Emmaus Bible College answers this question with sound, biblical insight.*

This question raises the historical tension between confidentiality and communication in a marriage relationship. We will look at the issues separately, then seek a biblical resolution.

Confidentiality is a vital ethical issue in any setting where helping people is concerned. Integrity demands confidentiality, and the scriptures require it as well: "Debate your case with your neighbor himself, and do not disclose the secret to another; lest he who bears it expose your shame, and your reputation be ruined." Proverbs 25:9-10.

The Old Testament speaks strong words against "talebearers" (Lev. 19:16; Prov. 10:18; 11:13, 18:8, 20:19, 26:20,22), and appeals to the believer to "guard his mouth and tongue" (Prov. 21:23).

The New Testament warns against sins of the tongue, particularly gossip (James 3:1-12; 1 Peter 3:10-12). It is vital that the wife of an elder or deacon avoid "malicious gossip" (1 Tim 3:11; Titus 2:3). Even in a discussion among elders, biblical integrity requires that only that which leads to edification, for the good of individuals, be spoken (Romans 15:1,2; Eph 4:29). The "let it all hang out" mind-set of our society, and our cultural delight in public scandalizing of individuals, miss the point of David's cry: "Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon ..." (2 Sam 1:20)

Counseling professionals make a point, however, that confidentiality is not the same as secrecy. Secrecy is the absolute promise never to reveal information, regardless of the circumstance. Confidentiality is the promise to hold information in trust and to share it with others only if it is in the best interest of the individual or sometimes the interest of society.<sup>1</sup>

The scriptures also give us extensive teaching about the marriage relationship. Some of the terms used in speaking of a biblical marriage relationship—head, helper, joined, love, respect, understanding, giving honor, cherish, affection, heirs together, one, companion, covenant, etc.—

imply healthy communication between a husband and wife. Some of the biographical scenes in biblical accounts of marriages indicate that verbal communication is natural and desirable, but often flawed with emotion and stress (Gen 15:5,6; 21:9-12).

In recently written books and in marriage seminars, many find it easy to use a few biblical statements as springboards to elaborate "pop psychology" on verbal communication and feeling experiences. This often includes the idea that one must tell a spouse nearly everything that one hears or knows. The expression "one flesh" is given as a basis of this idea. We need to remember that the "one" of Genesis 2:24 is

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compound oneness, not absolute oneness. One does not lose one's "personhood" or individuality in marriage. The scriptures seem to indicate that the "one flesh" statement largely relates to sexual intimacy (1 Cor 6:13-20, etc.).

The blessings of trust (Prov. 31:11) and respect (Eph 5:33) are vital in a marriage relationship. It is unfair for a husband to convey sensitive matters to his wife and to put the burden of confidentiality needlessly on her. It is a serious thing for a wife to break her husband's trust by harmfully telling someone else details she learned from him. If an elder's wife cannot be part of the solution, why make her a part of the problem?

On the other hand, if the group of elders see one or more of their wives to be helpful in ministering to the person in need, perhaps as a group they should ask the ladies to meet with them and to share appropriately the situation and request their help in ministering to others. Surely with a godly couple a wife can respect her husband's commitment to confidentiality and can restrain impulses of curiosity. Elders' wives, after all, are not elderesses.

Let me suggest an ideal scene, even though in this world there are not perfect people or perfect congregations of believers. An elder in a local church would be grateful for fellow-elders who do not demand that he tell every detail of a

situation he knows about, yet with whom he can freely discuss sensitive matters, knowing that information will be held in confidence. We will also give this blest elder one or more mature, godly individuals, mature in people skills, with whom he can find wise consultation within professional confidentiality. He will also be blest with a godly wife of mature Christian character, whose wisdom and sensitivity he values and draws upon. Yet she trusts and respects him enough that she does not pressure his judgments of confidentiality. He makes sure she knows whom he talks with and when and where, but not necessarily all the personal details. This blest elder also walks closely with God, in the Word and in prayer, and knows that he can "lay it all on the table" with God in prayer because his gracious God invites him to cast all his cares on Him because He cares for him.

I conclude with an observation on confidentiality in the work of elders. There are times when a group of elders will deal with a difficult and sensitive matter, and will find it necessary to take some kind of action with individuals or situations. There are also times when the decision they reach will be heavily based on facts or factors that are not known by the congregation—and which *should* not be know by the congregation. Proper submission to the authority of elders (1 Pet 5:5) includes the necessary trust and spirit of harmony and unity in the assembly that avoids the sin of back-biting the leadership. Confidentiality in policy and practice in the eldership will be necessary in order to build such trust.

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<sup>1</sup> Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling* (Nashville: Word Books, 1988), 307. 

### INTERNET RESOURCE

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Is your husband a one woman man? My answer is: "Why of course, yes!" As of June 12<sup>th</sup> Chuck and I have been married for 25 years. I have been the one and only woman in his life since we began dating in the mid seventies. The reason I'm asking this question is because Paul addresses this in his letter to Timothy as one of the qualifications of an elder. In past issues we have looked at part of 1 Timothy 3:1-7. We discovered that God describes this work of being an elder as "a noble task." An elder is to be "above reproach" and "the husband of one wife." One of my God given roles is to be a helper or assistant to my husband. The question is, "How can I help my husband be a one woman man?"

Lets begin with Paul's teaching to women in Titus 2:4-5. "Then they [older women] can train the younger women to love their husbands..." The phrase "to love their husbands" is only one word in the Greek. It is the compound word *philandros* derived from two Greek words, *phileo* and *andros*. This refers to love with a warm affection, while the second means "man" or "husband". Elders' wives are to be "affectionate husband-lovers."

As women we tend to excel in *agape* love, that is sacrificing for our husbands. We manage our homes and family schedules, prepare meals, wash and iron clothes, run errands, have people over for a meal, organize fellowship dinners as well as many other things we do to help our

husbands. This sacrificial type of love is quite different than the love Paul commands here. This *philandros* word emphasizes enjoyment and pleasure in a relationship.

Let me ask, do you like being with your husband? Are you best friends? Do you feel an affection and tenderness for him that you had when you first started dating? If you have been down the road a few years you may find yourself strong in the sacrificial love and not so strong in the warm affectionate love. We will struggle with this due to sin entering that perfect garden and the curse coming on each of us.

*How can I help my husband be a one-woman man?*

God is gracious and through His word gives us direction and hope. Here are a few helpful thoughts I discovered on a tape series entitled "Wisdom for Women" from Titus 2 by Carolyn Mahaney. When growing in love for our husbands there are two things we need to establish. First, I married a sinner and my poor husband did too! Second, I am God's perfect choice for my husband, and my husband is God's perfect choice for me! (Jeremiah 10:23, Proverbs 16:9). Whenever we are tempted to doubt our choice of a husband we must go back to these truths. And we must

continually ask God to do a work in our hearts so that tender, passionate love will not diminish in our marriages.

Our children come home from school with homework—maybe it is time we wives do some "heart-work" for the sake of our marriage. Here are a few things to foster that will help us overcome the hindrances to a healthy marriage.

1. Kindness instead of bitter-ness—Eph 4:31-32
2. Thoughtfulness instead of selfishness—1 Cor 13:4, Phil 2:3-4
3. Trust instead of fear—1 Peter 3:5-6
4. Encouragement instead of criticism—Eph 4:29
5. Affirmation instead of judgmental attitudes—Col 3:12-17

Let me encourage you to cultivate tender thoughts about your husband. You may need to deal with bitterness, selfishness or criticism that has crept into your marriage. Shirley Rice writes "...He has been around a long time, and you're used to him. He is the father of your children. But are you in love with him? How long has it been since your heart really squeezed when you looked at him?"

In this role of being a wife of an elder, we will help our husbands have eyes and hearts only for us as we are characterized by a *philandros* love. We will be helping our husbands to be a one-woman man. I think I'll go hug my husband!



**Relational Qualities** (cont. from page 1)

encroach upon his supper time. He hindered the process considerably, insisting that the change not take place. While this may seem like a silly example, many churches struggle over the color of the paint, the number of musicians, the arrangement of chairs, times and locations of meetings, the size of the new building, etc.

An elder is not to be *self-willed* (Titus 1:7). In relationships, he is not motivated by getting his own way at all costs. Nothing destroys the people's confidence in a leader more than his being pushy with his ideas or solutions. He must not be stubborn, insensitive, prone to force his opinions; rather, he is more interested in service than self-appeasement. An elder who insists on getting his way, destroys relationships and the spirit of unity in a church. One must be careful of wining

an argument at all costs—for the cost may indeed be too great. The godly elder models Philippians 2:3 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."

*Nothing destroys the people's confidence in a leader than his being pushy with his ideas or solutions.*

An elder should not be *violent* (or *pugnacious*) (Titus 1:7). This means he doesn't manipulate or force his way on others, or retaliate when things don't go his way. In other words, he doesn't "strong arm" his way around.

Often elders must make judgments

about people or programs. Every elder's prayer should be that the Lord would help him to be *temperate* (1 Tim 3:2). This means he is balanced in judgment and emotion when dealing with people, not given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking or feelings.

And finally, an elder is characterized by being *just* (Titus 1:6, "upright" NIV). This means he is fair and impartial—his judgments are based on sound scriptural principles.

Christians are looking for someone to "show them how to do it," and they take their cues from their spiritual leaders.



## Complementary Gifts *(continued from p. 1)*

### Complementary Nature of Gifts

When explaining the working of the gifts in I Corinthians 12, Paul draws heavily on the analogy of the parts of the human body and the relationships they sustain to one another. So among the elders, there is more to the question than each elder being gifted and functioning in his separate sphere—much more. As in the human body so in the body of Christ, the members are not in competition but actually complement one another.

The teacher for example gains insight for his studies by hearing of needs from the brother whose pastoral gift brings him into close contact with the flock. And the pastor can supply a wealth of insight to the brother whose gift adds skill in planning functions and communications that must be

clear and relevant to the needs of the people.

Again, the teacher will discern those struggling with certain doctrines and so may point out the need for an encouraging visit or even a weekend retreat to spend time in subjects that help the family or the assembly. When viewed in this way, the elders meeting is a delightful time spent in fellowship with the Lord and with one another, hearing from the Head, and working together towards the building up of the members of the body.

Next issue, we'll consider the second of the two principles mentioned above, namely, the relationship between the gifts and authority of elders. 

## From The Q-Files

### Teamwork Is Essential

The score was 5-5. The New York Yankees had a runner on first and second when the relief pitcher for Milwaukee took the mound. The new hurler knew what he had to do. So when the hitter bunted, the pitcher pounced on the ball, whirled around, and fired a perfect throw to third base in plenty of time to force an out.

But there was one problem--no Milwaukee player was covering the bag. The third baseman said later he didn't think the pitcher had even the slightest chance at the ball. But the man on the mound made a perfect play--or did he? His precision throw allowed two Yankees to score as the ball rolled into left field.

A similar situation often exists within

the church. A child of God will field tough problems, fire quick answers, and do an all-around good job. But if he fails to be sensitive to the spiritual needs of his team, his textbook theory is of little value. Look at our Lord's example. He knew what had to be done.

But He also made allowances for His followers when they were out of position. He was patient with skeptical Thomas. He was forbearing with impulsive Peter. He didn't reject James and John when their mother tried to push them to the top in the kingdom of God. Jesus never condoned the failings of His disciples, but He was understanding of their limitations and always corrected them in love. 

## Resources

### When Good Men Are Tempted

by Bill Perkins, (Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1997), 320 pp.

"In the midst of a culture that shouts 'Sex!' from every corner, isn't it time someone talked eye-to-eye with Christian men about how to master lust and achieve the holiness they long for?" We men need all the help we can get in this area, because our enemy seems to have all the help he can get from the world system. Here is another good book you can recommend (and read for yourself) to help in the area of lust (see ESN Vol. 1, No. 3 for a review of another excellent book "False Intimacy"). This is a hard hitting book that talks straight to men and will be a valuable resource to help men in this sensitive area.

### Billy Graham Christian Worker's Handbook

Charles G. Ward, ed. (World Wide Pub: Minneapolis, Minn, 1996), 197 pp.

Did you ever find yourself at a loss when someone comes to you for spiritual counsel about something like AIDS, depression, gambling, suicide, jealousy, etc. This handy book is an excellent reference for dealing with these and other common issues with which people deal.

Over 80 topics are covered, each with a short essay and applicable scripture references. This resource will help you get a start on dealing with various questions that commonly face elders and other Christian workers.

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"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers ..." 1 Peter 5:2a

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