

# The Kind of Men That CFBC Looks for to Be Elders

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God takes leadership seriously. And because God has such a high standard for leadership in Christ's church, so also do we at CFBC hold to the biblical qualifications for leadership. Thus, the men that CFBC considers for elder-shepherd leadership must already be exemplifying the following characteristics. Note, a man does not *start* to demonstrate these qualities once he becomes an elders. Rather, that which qualifies him to even be considered as an elder is that he already demonstrates the following.

## 1. An above reproach life

The elder-candidate must live a life that is above-reproach. This does not mean that he has attained sinless perfection. But this does affirm that the man lives in such a way that there is nothing in his life that others could grab on to and accuse him of blatant sin. Does he sin? Yes. Is he perfect? By no means; he'd be the first to confess this. But, is he striving to live an above-reproach life, by putting off sin and putting on godliness? Absolutely, with fervent zeal! Thus, the man that holds the position of shepherd-leader in Christ's church must be an above-reproach man, a blameless man. He must be self-controlled, respectable, sober-minded, serious about the things of God, and not a man who trifles through life and wastes time. Even his conduct toward outsiders -- nonbelievers: at work, in the neighborhood, recreational activities, and even those in his own family -- must demonstrate a man who strives to live blamelessly. This must be evident in the man's life *before* he is seriously considered for the position of shepherd-leader.

## 2. An exemplary family man

The elder-candidate must also have an exemplary family life. Any man can pretend to be godly before others on Sunday. But his real character manifests itself throughout the week in the privacy of his home when the good times, the bad times, the joyous times, and the trying times confront him. How does he live at home? How does he conduct himself with his family? The man to serve Christ's church must be a family man. That which qualifies him to shepherd the public family of Christ is that he is shepherding his private family at home. His direct, intentional, and regular shepherding of his wife and children at home is that which prepares him and qualifies him to care for the church. If a man neglects his home-shepherding he is not fit to care for the church of God. Thus, he must already be demonstrating an exemplary family lifestyle. He is not perfect. And O how he wishes he could improve! But he endeavors to live an exemplary life at home as he cares for those entrusted to his care. He loves his wife and cares for her. She is his primary joy, delight, disciple, and treasure. He teaches her truth and he prays with and for her. He reads the Word with her and they labor in prayer together. He also must teach and instruct his children toward godliness. He must relentlessly pursue their spiritual good -- that is, the welfare of their souls. He must not neglect the discipline of children, the discipling of his own, the mentoring of the growing young adults, and the instruction in biblical truth and theology. Furthermore, the man that CFBC considers for eldership must demonstrate a godly home life by presiding over family worship. He must regularly gather the family together to lead them to the Throne of grace in prayer and instruct them in the Scriptures.

### **3. A relentless passion to shepherd**

The elder-candidate must exude and evidence a relentless passion to shepherd. Indeed, he must *already* demonstrate this. He doesn't *become* a shepherd when the elders lay hands on him and publicly affirm him in his new role as "elder". Rather, to be qualified as an elder, he must already be caring for God's people in visible, tangible, sacrificial ways. Yes, shepherding is time-consuming, it requires sacrifice, and it can even be taxing and inconvenient at times. But such are the joys of ministry in Christ's church and for God's glory! He must have a relentless passion to shepherd. It must drive him. Not a relentless passion for 'leadership' but a relentless passion to *shepherd*. Why? Because he cares -- truly, genuinely -- for the souls of the saints and for the purity of Christ's church. Even if no one ever asked him to be an elder formally as a leader in the church, to this man, it doesn't matter because he still cares for souls so much that he still will shepherd people, care for them, seek them, love them, and comfort them in Christ and His Word. He is a shepherding man. That means he gathers with God's sheep regularly. This means that he pursues men and wants to know them, learn them, counsel them, instruct them, hold them accountable, ask them the hard questions, and point them to Christ constantly.

### **4. A theologically precise man**

The elder-candidate must know God. To know God is the ongoing pursuit of theology. Theology is never an end in and of itself. Studying theology always is a means to the ultimate end of knowing God in Christ by the illumination and power of the Spirit. This man must know God, study the Scriptures, and have a well-informed theology. At CFBC, the elders all sign the *What We Teach* statement so that all of the church leadership is totally unified in all points of theology. From literal, young-earth, 6-day creationism, to the Doctrines of Grace, to the glory of God in Christ, to the monergistic working of God in salvation, to the absolute inerrancy and total inspiration of holy Scripture, to a premillennial understanding of Israel, end-times, and God's plan for the future, to a fervent commitment to expository preaching of the Word of God, to biblical counseling, to fervent holiness in the believer's life, all the elders must agree on these points of doctrine. The CFBC elders study the Word together and read books as a group to better hone our theology and examine the Word and make sure that our theology rightly is in accordance with the Word of God. Thus, a man who aspires to eldership at CFBC must be able to affirm the *What We Teach* doctrine statement of the local church.

### **5. An evident ability to teach the Word**

The elder-candidate must also be a man "able to teach." God requires only one talent, one duty, in the character profiles of a shepherd-elder (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1) and that is that the man be able to teach. He must be a man able to open the Word and to explain the Word. He does not need to be a Spurgeon in the pulpit, but he does need to be able to give the meaning of the Word through diligent prayer, study, and careful exegesis. He must be able to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. He must be diligent in discipling men as he guides them *into the Word* and instructs them in theological truth and also shows appropriate applications from the text to their lives. He has a passion to teach the Word. He loves the Word and, like Jeremiah, just can't keep it in -- he must let the Word of God loose and teach others! This begins with his own wife and children as he instructs them and teaches them the Word. It

also manifests itself as others benefit from his guidance, his wisdom, his teaching, and his instruction in the Scriptures. Note, this is a very important aspect to shepherd-eldership (teaching the Word) but as has been seen, this is not the *only* aspect that qualifies a man for eldership. Many men have theological knowledge and can preach the Word with fiery passion. But God requires much more of a shepherd-elder than simply a man who can stand in front of a crowd and teach. This does not minimize the importance of teaching but it heightens it along with other important characteristics that he must also demonstrate in his character and life.

## **6. An earnest zeal for evangelism**

The elder-candidate must have an understanding of eternity. He not only knows the theology of heaven and hell but he *feels* it. God has drawn, won, and wooed his heart through the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. And because the man of God knows that Jesus has saved him from eternal hellfire (which is what he knows he justly deserves), he has an unquenchable burden to proclaim the gospel to the lost and perishing. He not only knows the lost need a Savior, he can hear the crackling flames of hell rising that nearly singe nonbelievers. He is a soul-winner. He longs to win people to Jesus. He cares little about how people receive him or how people perceive him. He cares deeply for their souls and that is what drives him to evangelizing the lost. The man of God does not become an evangelist when the church appoints him as an elder. Rather, he must show that he *already* loves people enough to seek to win them to Christ, to call them to repent, to warn them of coming judgment, and to show them a sweet Savior. He has no greater joy than to speak of his Christ and tell of the great deeds of his God. He takes people to the cross and leaves all the results with the Spirit's sovereign work. Does he seek to persuade men to Christ and does he beg them to believe and be saved from coming wrath? Absolutely. Yet he knows that he is entirely powerless to awaken spiritually-dead sinners to new life in Christ. So, he preaches Christ, he proclaims Christ, he prioritizes soul-winning. He has a mindset of winning people to Christ wherever he is and in whatever situation God has him. He believes and embraces God's calling on his life that he gets to proclaim the excellencies of his Savior who called him out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

## **7. A sincere desire to lead**

Lastly, the elder-candidate must, quite simply, have the sincere desire to lead. A man of God should not shy away from a divinely-instilled passion to lead God's people. Sometimes, out of sincere humility, a man does not make known his desire to serve as Christ's undershepherd. But let every man of God who has a burden to lead Christ's people demonstrate his longings by his conduct and let him vocalize his desire to the leadership so they can disciple him, speak into his life, train him, show areas of needed growth, and cultivate areas of special giftedness. The desire to lead is not bad nor should one be embarrassed by it. To the contrary, church leadership should encourage and do all that they can to strengthen men who aspire to lead. Indeed, if anyone aspires to serve as an overseer, it is a good work for which he longs. The sincere desire to lead is shrouded with humility. Humility and leadership are not antithetical but they must go together. Biblical leadership models Christ and how he cared for, sacrificed for, served, and led His disciples. He led not with a domineering and brutishness but rather with a servant-minded attitude. The Son of God came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. True leadership incarnates this before the people of God. To lead God's flock means that a man charges after and seeks to excel at servant-leadership. May God raise up such men!