

Introduction:

1. I Timothy 3:1 says that if a man desires the office of an elder, he desires a good work.
2. However, there is more than one reason why someone would desire to be an elder.
 - a. (true story) One man moved into a local congregation.
 - i. He was very well-off financially, and owned his own business.
 - ii. After a few weeks, he asked the preacher how much it would cost to get him installed as an elder.
 - iii. After the preacher rebuked him, the man came back again with the same offer and received the same rebuke.
 - iv. Then that man left and went somewhere else, trying the same trick.
 - v. It is obvious that his motivation for becoming an elder was not based upon any spiritual concern, but instead one of a desire for power and influence.
 - b. Some people desire the office because of ego (just like in politics).
 - c. Some people desire the office because of a sense of duty to the local congregation.
3. Today we are going to look at some of the motivations people might have in seeking the office of an elder.

I. The Motivation of Power (I Peter 5:3).

A. Some people want to become an elder because it is a position of authority.

1. Have you ever met someone who seems to be obsessed with being in control?
2. Have you ever met someone who always wants to boss other people around?
3. There are people who desire the office of an elder for just this reason.
4. Elders do have authority in the local congregation (as we discussed).
5. This is a role which some people covet.

B. Peter clearly condemns such an attitude.

1. He says that elders are NOT ones who seek to be “lord” over God’s heritage (His children).
2. Some people were wanting to be elders so that they could “run the church.”
 - a. Perhaps this is because they have a massive ego.
 - b. Perhaps this is because they hold to false doctrine and they want to force it on the rest of the congregation.
3. Instead of being slave-drivers, the elders are to be examples to the flock.

II. The Motivation of Providing for themselves (Ezekiel 34:1-6).

A. Some people seek to become elders because it benefits them personally.

1. Have you ever met someone who is always trying to figure out how to make things work for his own advantage?
 - a. Some people always have an angle on how to take advantage of others.
 - b. Some people won’t help someone else out unless it helps them in the process.
 - 1) Just look at the people and companies who give money to charity, then advertise that they do it.

- 2) The NFL spends more money advertising the fact that they support the United Way than they actually give to that organization.
 - c. Surely you've met someone who, when they do something nice, your first question is, "ok, what do you want?"
 - d. Or you know, "he's up to something" because he is doing something nice.
 - 1) My father was raised Catholic and went to a Catholic school, which was very strict.
 - 2) He then went to a public high school.
 - 3) Each morning, he would go to the teacher's lounge and say good morning to all the teachers before going to his first class.
 - 4) One of his teachers called his mother and asked what he was up to, because that was something that no honest student would ever do...
 2. The shepherds of Israel used their position for their own gain.
 - a. These shepherds (Ezekiel 34:1-6) were also called the "elders of Judah" (Ezekiel 8:1, 14:1, 20:1).
 - b. They fed themselves instead of feeding the flock (Ezekiel 34:2).
 - c. They took advantage of the people, but never took care of them (Ezekiel 34:3).
 - d. They did not help the weak Israelite, nor the sick Jew; they did not bring back the ones who had gone astray, nor did they try to retrieve those who had been run off (Ezekiel 34:4).
 - e. Instead, they were trying to rule over the Israelites with an iron fist.
 - f. They caused people to leave (34:5).
 - g. Because they gave no guidance, the people were lost and easy prey (34:5).
 - h. God promised punishment for those elders who did not do their job (34:7-ff).
 3. Some men (like the one we mentioned at the beginning of the lesson) want to become elders because it will mean more business.
 - a. Since we are to "prefer one another" (Romans 12:10), some men want to become elders so that their business will be preferred and he will make more money.
 - b. Imagine the amount of guilt an elder could lay upon you for not doing business with him.
 4. Some men seek to be elders because (in some congregations) the elders are all paid.
 - a. Some people have said "I can't seem to find a job, so I think I'll go to preaching school," thinking it is an easy job.
 - b. Some people have said, "I want to be an elder because it is a life-long job with a guaranteed income!"
- B. This motivation for leadership over God's flock is condemned by God Himself!
1. God told the selfish shepherds of Israel that He would take it upon Himself to see that they were destroyed (Ezekiel 34:7-ff).

2. In the same way, those who are selfish shepherds of spiritual Israel (the church) will be destroyed eternally.
3. The motivation of money is not a proper motivation for being an elder (I Peter 5:2).
4. Those who have money as their main motivation will not make it to heaven (Matthew 6:33, I Timothy 6:10).

III. The Motivation of Pressure (I Peter 5:2).

A. Some men only become an elder because they feel like they are being forced to do it.

1. Have you ever met someone who is doing a job, but only because they've been told to do it?
 - a. When I worked at Tyson, there was a man who was "the sweeper."
 - b. His job was to go through the two warehouse freezers, sweeping up the dust, debris, and frozen chicken pieces that had spilled from the boxes and throw them into the dumpster.
 - c. This man was really good at his job, but he constantly complained because he was "made to do it" by the supervisor.
2. How do teenagers behave when they are forced to do something by their parents?
3. Some congregations are so intent on having elders that they will try to force people into the role, even if that person does not have the desire to be an elder.
 - a. After enough prodding, many people give in and do the job.
 - b. However, they do not usually give it the attention they should, because it is something they were forced into.
4. Do you ever like being forced into something?

B. Peter said that elders should not ones who were elders "by constraint" (I Peter 5:2).

1. This means that we should not force people to be elders.
2. If someone does not desire the office of an elder, even if they are qualified in every other way, we should not seek to force the role upon them.
3. Would you really want someone leading you who felt like they were forced into the position?

C. This does not mean that people who were coerced into being elders cannot do a good job and eventually decide they actually want to fulfill this role in the local congregation, but this is NOT the proper motivation for the eldership.

IV. The Motivation of love for the souls of the congregation (Hebrews 13:17).

A. Those who seek the office of an elder must first recognize the need for leadership in the local congregation.

1. First, elders are Scriptural (I Timothy 3:1-ff).
2. Second, elders provide guidance to the congregation (I Peter 5:1-4).
3. Third, elders provide spiritual food for the congregation (Acts 20:28).
4. Fourth, elders watch for the souls of the congregation (Hebrews 13:17).

B. When they see the need for leadership in the local congregation, they must then look to themselves.

1. Are they the kind of person who would be effective in watching for the souls of the congregation?

2. Are they ones know the Scriptures and are able to help others follow it?
 3. Do they have a love for the souls of the congregation?
 4. Are they seeking to be an elder willingly, and for the benefit of the congregation (not for their own benefit)?
 5. If the answer to these questions is an honest “yes,” then that person has the proper motivation for becoming an elder.
- C. Elders must truly love the souls of the congregation, otherwise they will not fulfill the God-ordained role properly.

Conclusion:

1. These ideas are not exclusive to seeking to be an elder.
2. These ideas also apply to becoming a Christian and staying faithful.
 - a) Should someone be baptized because it will benefit them personally (physically)?
 - i) I know of a man who was baptized so that his girlfriend’s father would consent to their marriage (he rarely showed up for services after the wedding).
 - b) Should someone be baptized because they are forced to do it?
 - i) Some parents force this on their children.
 - ii) The children grow up, and many become unsure as to whether or not they were baptized for the right reasons.
 - c) Should someone be baptized because of power reasons?
 - i) Constantine quite possibly did this, “becoming a Christian” just to solidify his power as emperor of Rome.
 - d) A person should be baptized because he has a love for the truth of the gospel and for his own soul.
3. Do you care about your soul?
 - a) If you do, then you need to make sure you are right with God so that your soul can live eternally in heaven with God!