

Able to Teach: Evaluating Potential Elders

This checklist was developed from a message Pastor Tom Pennington preached on February 17, 2023 at the Excellence in Leadership Conference by XL Ministries. It is available on the xlministries.org website.

It is important to understand that an elder's ability to teach must be considered in the broader context of the various qualifications for eldership.

"Able to Teach" does not mean the following:

1. He has a natural ability to speak (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).
2. He is older than most people in the church (1 Tim. 4:11-12; 5:1-2).
3. He has confidence in himself and his teaching gift (2 Tim 1:5-8; 1 Tim 4:17).
4. He can teach as well as the primary teaching pastor or elder of the church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim 5:17).
5. He can teach as well as other elders in the church, including those supported by the church (1 Tim. 5:17).
6. He can teach as well as elders in other churches. Even in the Scriptures we see both large and small churches: Jerusalem, Antioch, Philippi... A man may be able to teach in the context of one church and not in another.
7. He has fully matured in the exercise of his teaching gift (1 Tim. 4:15).

"Able to Teach" means:

- He must meet the necessary character qualifications of an elder (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
- He must already have proved himself to be a faithful man and servant in the church (2 Tim. 2:2).
- He must be affirmed by the elders and the church as gifted and called to be an elder in that church (Titus 1:5; 1 Tim. 3:10a; Acts 6:3, 6; 1 Tim. 5:22).
- He must have an essential grasp of the content and theology of Scripture and the capacity to defend it biblically (2 Tim. 1:13-14; Titus 1:9).
- He must understand the primary scriptural and theological errors (historical, contemporary, local) and be able to refute them (Titus 1:9-10; 3:10-11; Acts 20:29-30; 2 Pet 3:16-17).
- He must be a diligent, careful student of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15)

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“Able to Teach” means:

- He must be able to use the primary principles of interpretation to discover the author’s original meaning in each teaching passage (2 Pet. 3:15-16).
 - Interpret based on authorial intent.
 - Interpret Scripture with Scripture.
 - Interpret literally.
- He must be able to read, explain, and apply the original authorial intent of a passage to his hearers (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:9a; 1 Tim. 4:13).
 - He is able to lead in the **public reading** of Scripture.
 - **“Teaching”** is the explanation of the meaning of the Scripture that was read.
 - **“Exhortation”** is the application of the truth of the passage that he read and explained.
- Homiletics is the *presentation* of the truth. What is the standard for having the necessary presentation skills to meet the qualification “able to teach”?
 - **Accuracy** – he must be able to accurately explain the author’s meaning.
 - **Clarity** – he must be able to explain it so that his hearers understand what the passage is teaching.
 - **Passion** – He must be able to teach as someone who has been personally affected by the passage.
- He must be committed to continually striving to improve in his ability to read, explain, and apply the Scripture (1 Tim. 4:15).

A reminder to church leadership concerning training: Often times men cannot meet the qualification of “able to teach” because the church has not been faithful in training men in theology. While being “able to teach” is a gift from God, it can only be used well when a person learns theology, proper hermeneutics, and homiletics.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **for the equipping of the saints** for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ... Ephesians 4:11–12