

## Qualifications, Qualities and Roles of a Preacher

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### INTRODUCTION

The church is the called out people of Christ; those called by the gospel from the darkness (sin) into His kingdom of light who acknowledge Jesus as the sovereign Lord and Savior –Mt 16:18; 1 Pet 2:5,9; Col 1:13-14.

The Church though universal in time and space (Heb.12:28) is physically seen on earth or manifested in local congregations (Acts 9:26, Rm.16:16). Like any group, it must be led by a few, not by all. Hence God has created various offices in the church to make for a smooth administration; namely *the Head, the Apostles, the Prophets, the Evangelists, the Teachers, the Bishops (governments), and the Deacons (helps)*. We have adequate information and instructions in the scriptures about church officers and every other topic relating to godliness, we are totally equipped on how to walk and to please God in everything -2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 Thess 4:1.

A brother may occupy several offices simultaneously if he so qualifies and is duly appointed. For example, Paul was a Prophet, Teacher, Preacher and Apostle (Acts 13:1, 1 Tim 2:7) while Peter was an Apostle, Elder, Preacher and Prophet (1 Pet 1:1; 5:1, Lk 1:2, Eph 3:5). While a Teacher at Ephesus, Timothy was encouraged to do or continue his work of an Evangelist by preaching the word -2 Tim 4:2-5. That we all teach or preach to others do not make everyone a Teacher or a Preacher, some are more gifted and trained. Being an officer in God's house is no joke so only the spiritual that have honest reputation, wisdom and dedication should volunteer and be considered –Acts 6:3. Only those found doing a work well should be formally appointed or given official recognition when they meet up with all the biblical criteria -1 Tim 3:5,10.

- **Preachers** essentially preach and spread the good news or gospel of Christ to the lost -Rm 10:14-15.
- **Teachers** instruct the saint on doctrine gradually; that is the totality of the truth including both fundamentals and mature or deep things of Christ –Heb 5:12 - 6:3.
- **Elders** rule [in matters of opinion] and direct church affairs based on their experience and knowledge of the word of God -1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17, Heb 13:17. This involves prayerful counseling, decision-making and supervision, to ensure that the saints are doers and not mere hearers of the word.
- **Deacons** serve in the church in whatever duties assigned to assist the Elders. They are spiritual men who help the church to fulfill secular functions such as delivering messages, maintaining property, serving tables, keeping records (secretary) or money (treasurer), etc. – 1 Tim 3:8-13. Their precursor is found in Acts 6:1-7.

The **qualifications** refer to the criteria or necessary conditions precedent and required for a potential candidate for a position. The **qualities** refers to the attributes or characteristics of someone or something, its observable and desirable features. The **role** or purpose for which something is designed or exists is called the **function**. It refers to placement relative to others and specifies the duties/responsibilities, scope of authority and activities.

### THE EVANGELIST OR PREACHER

The office is biblical, also called Minister or Preacher or Man of God -1 Tim 4:6; 6:11.

#### HIS ROLE

*“Understanding the preacher’s role/work is essential. He does not do anybody else’s work. He is not a church administrator per se, church representative or principal participant at*

*civic/social functions, official visitor of the sick and bereaved, or the church's "youth coordinator." His work is to herald the message of the King, to proclaim the Word, to bear the good tidings of salvation, and to be a servant of Christ, the gospel, and all whom he can teach. In doing this work, he will have his time occupied, thus having no time for the work assigned to others."* [Bobby L. Graham]

The role or **duties** expected of an evangelist are to:

- a) Preach the word at all times –Rm 10:15; 2 Tim 4:2
- b) Take heed to himself and the doctrine -1 Tim 4:16
- c) Be an example to believers in speech and conduct -1 Tim 4:14
- d) Exhort, correct and rebuke people with patience and sound teaching - 2 Tim 4:2
- e) Be watchful in everything, endure sufferings & discharge fully his commission –vs 5
- f) Set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in a congregation –Titus 1:5. Wanting things may include sound doctrine, faithful teachers, widows welfare, corrective discipline, prayer life, etc.
- g) Operate without partiality, e.g. discipline and benevolence for a member as needed - 1 Tim 5:21

## HIS QUALIFICATIONS

*"The Lord said not a word about being college-trained, handsome, socially gracious, polished in speech, or ideal in family. While all of these traits might be desirable and helpful, it is quite noticeable that it was man who initiated them, not the Lord. God has much to say about his faithfulness, lack of contentiousness, gentleness, teaching aptitude, forbearance, meekness, and soberness."* [Bobby L. Graham]

The role envisaged by God necessitates the criteria he sets. **A Preacher must be**

- a) A Christian brother -1 Tim 2:8-12, 1 Cor 14:34 (sisters have limited role in public speaking)
- b) Sent or acknowledged by others and not self-proclaimed –Rm 10:15a, 2 Cor 8:23; 1 Thess 3:2
- c) A harbinger of glad tidings of good things, the gospel of peace –Rm 10:15b
- d) A Bible student who rightly divides the word of truth -2 Tim 2:15. This implies literacy and ability to communicate with target audience is intrinsic, the Lord however has not specified a minimum or maximum level of education and neither should we!
- e) Apt to teach -2 Tim 2:24
- f) Gentle to all, patient, meek and not quarrelsome –2 Tim 2:25

In recent years, churches have resorted to advertising as follows:

**VACANCY FOR THE POSITION OF A PREACHER**  
The suitable brother **must be between 35 and 50years old, must be happily married and possess a Degree aside a Diploma from a recognized Bible College...**  
Remunerations: very attractive and negotiable.  
Only qualified candidates need apply.  
Signed "XYZ Church of Christ"

Such adverts are becoming the norm rather than the exception in the brotherhood in many lands, especially amongst the "bigger" congregations. , the regular and rigid imposition of those criteria could be unnecessary because:

1. Even a young unmarried preacher may by his good and godly conduct earn the respect of all except for those who are proud and keep looking down on others. Isn't it better to serve the creator from one's youth?

2. The best counsel is rooted in the word of God irrespective of the age of the giver. Marital experience is scripturally required of Elders not Preachers. When those who are in [or should aspire to] the leadership positions in a church neglect duties expected of them, they try to deflect everything to the local Preacher.
3. Should a brother not become an Evangelist until after marriage? Excessive fear of imagined promiscuousness is not only a lack of trust in the Lord and the would-be-preacher but is also a vote of no-confidence in our sisters [wives and daughters] and an indirect admission by the proponents of what they could possibly do if they were in the unmarried minister's position. Whether 'happily married' or not, anyone that lacks self-control may engage in sexual immorality, so we need not play God while claiming to be cautious.
4. Should our ministers be like the denominational 'Bishops' that preach with the wisdom of men? A clergy that claims that Bible knowledge and its interpretation resides only in them?
5. Are 'our management principles' better than God-given principles? Are our ways smarter, better and more effective than that which He has revealed in the New Testament on how to organize His Church?

Evidently, the reasoning underlying those advertised requirements is typical of man seeing NOT as the LORD sees. The job of a Preacher is very important—spiritually so we ought to emphasize its divine requirements.

### **On Youthful And / Or Unmarried Preachers**

Spiritual maturity is not solely dependent on physical age neither is marriage an absolute guarantee against sexual immorality, though both factors are helpful. It appears what some churches of Christ want when they advertise for a Preacher is actually a "Pastor" -1 Tim 3:2,6. Not that an elder cannot double as a preacher (1 Tim. 5: 17-18) but that is not necessarily required by the Lord. The scriptures show that Timothy was a youth (1 Tim. 4:12) and even unmarried Paul [the aged apostle - Philemon 1:9] probably started out as a young man -Acts 7:58, Acts 8-9, 2 Tim. 1:11. They were both Preachers and Ministers. We equally know that Phillip the Evangelist had three daughters -Acts 21:8-9. Thus both singles and family men, young or old may be Preachers in the Lord's church. **The fact that the unmarried is less distracted (1 Cor. 7:32-33) is twisted by the apostate in forbidding to marry (1 Tim. 4:1-3), let us not hold unto the other extreme of forbidding single preachers, for whom marriage should be a voluntary matter -1 Cor. 7:7-9; 9:5, Mt. 19:12.**

### **On Bible Colleges / Preacher Training Schools**

It is evident that the apostleship and prophethood offices are foundational, once for revelation, occupants functioned by inspiration (Eph. 2:19-20; 3:3-5, Jude 3) while other offices are reoccupied by men for the propagation of the gospel and to nurture the saints. The Lord wants **taught men** (2 Tim 2:2) who have the ability and aspiration to easily fill the post of Preachers & Teachers 2 Tim 1:13. The church is the only body recognized by Christ to furnish workers for His vineyard (Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12:14-27) not man-made, government regulated Bible Colleges where outsiders moderate and influence the curriculum. **Many do not realize that the Church is God's own Bible School (Eph. 1:22; 3:10-11, 16-21) where the truth that thoroughly equips is rightly divided and declared -1 Tim. 3:15, 2 Tim. 3:15-17, 1 Thess. 1:8.** Education from man-made schools is good but beware when such offers 'certified knowledge' in so-called theology, divinity, biblical studies, etc. Seminaries claim to add religious knowledge and values which Christians cannot easily obtain in the church but human philosophy and traditions usually corrupts true religion –Colossians 2:8.

### **HIS QUALITIES**

*“A preacher is first, last, and always a Christian, possessing the same responsibilities that all other Christians have. There is much potential for good in his work, but it all depends upon his attitude and performance in harmony with God’s will.” [Bobby L. Graham]*

A Preacher should be

- a) Self-restraint and godly -1 Tim 4:7-8
- b) Courageous not timid -1 Tim 4:12, 2 Tim 1:7
- c) A pursuer of righteousness, godliness, and love -1 Tim 6:11
- d) One who fights the good fight of faith or advances and defends of the truth -vs 12
- e) Compassionate and known for integrity -2 Cor 8:16-18
- f) Well-behaved, enterprising and not over-dependent on his audience for sustenance -2 Thess 3:7-9, Acts 18:1-3
- g) Approachable not lover of post/title -3 Jn 9
- h) Shun controversies-, 2 Tim 2:23
- i) Desirous of getting a congregation scripturally organized and maintain good relationships –Acts 14:23; 20:17,28-36

## CONCLUSIONS

A good Preacher win souls unto Christ, ensures such are grounded and/or are entrusted to capable hands. He is to be supported in prayers, materially and financially by both individuals and congregations – Lk 10:7, 1 Cor 9:12-14. Which Bible passage says the church must advertise for and hire a ‘Professional Preacher’ or that many Evangelists cannot evolve within a congregation? Vacancies exist for Preachers because there are lost sinners yet to be reached and congregations that need to be set in order. Prospective preachers should be trained in the church by other officers –Acts 13:1; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:10 & 2 Tim 2:2 and be practically mentored by an Evangelists –Acts 16:1-3. A Preacher may

- a) stay for as long as deemed necessary in the congregation he establishes e.g. Philip, Paul
- b) be raised in-house by a congregation e.g. Stephen (Acts 2:42a & 2 Tim 2:2)
- c) be temporarily assigned by his trainer or congregation to a church in order to accomplish some specific tasks, e.g. Timothy, Barnabas.
- d) voluntarily visit or be invited to work with a receptive congregation e.g. Apollos, Paul

Any institution that is not under the oversight of the Lord’s Church, which award certificates in Biblical Studies or produces Preachers should NOT be esteemed. **We should revert to the biblical method: any faithful and exemplary brother who rightly divides the scriptures, a passionate soul-winner who also edifies [and perhaps has under-studied a practicing minister] may do the work of an Evangelist and could be supported or sent as a Preacher.** People / a church acknowledges an evangelist and his work primarily by cooperation and secondarily by material and financial support -Luke 10: 2-7, 1 Cor. 9:7-14, 2 Cor. 11:8, Phil. 4:15-18.

A true minister is the servant of the Lord and seeks to please God, not men –Gal. 1:10. He prays and studies constantly to be a good soldier of Christ. He trusts in the Lord to supply his needs and may occasionally do some secular work to support himself –Acts 20:33-34. Some evangelists stay to ‘set things in order’ in a congregation while others move across territories to proclaim Christ. The latter may later be found with a family in his own ‘Caesarea’ as Philip was. Not every preacher will choose celibacy like Paul; some will be married as Peter and may even later become one of the Elders in a congregation –I Peter 5:1-3. The work of a Preacher as that of other church officers is commendable with rewards now and eternally - Dan 12:3, 1 Thess 5:12-13.