

FAITHFUL CHILDREN OF ELDERS

There is a growing need for good, qualified elders for local congregations of the Lord's body. Though there are many qualifications of elders, ONE of the first notable qualifications that brethren think of is the "faithfulness" of the *children* of men under consideration for the eldership. This article is not intended to consider the number of children that a potential elder must have, but the "faithfulness" OF any children elders may have. We remember years ago some argued that the children who "believe" might WELL believe in the existence of God, even at the age of 3, and thus the father of that 3 year old would meet this qualification. Others have suggested that the "faithfulness" of the children might be suggestive of a 3 year old being "faithful" to his father, rather than his being a "believer" in the Lord.

Some making this latter argument prefer to stay with the word "faithful" of the KJV, rather than the word "believe", as used in the ASV. Surely this is because the word "faithful" could allow for his being faithful to his father, rather than being a believer of the word. Such interpretations might well put a 22 year old man into the eldership if he is generally qualified otherwise, but the use of the word "elder" (older) DOES suggest a certain amount of age that goes with the development of character and leadership that truly qualifies one to lead and rule the people of God as God wills. Such a 22 year old man would not have had the experience to rule the church of the Lord, but having reared children who become true obedient believers DOES allow sufficient time for him to develop experience in serving as an elder. We believe both efforts to stretch both words to include 3 year old children are a stretch, as we shall show.

First, let's look at the word "faithful" from Tit. 1:6. Such is translated "believe" in the ASV and NASB. The basic Greek word for the study of believe and faithful is *pistis*, NOUN, which is used in the spiritual sense, of one connected by the Christian faith. It "is used in the NT always of 'faith in God or Christ, or things spiritual (VINE, p. 222). A form of this is *pistos*, which is a verbal adjective OF *pistis*, which Vine says always pertains to "things spiritual". The opposite of being "faithful" or a "believer" would be "unfaithful" (faithless), or "unbeliever", which is *apistos*. It is used three times in parallel accounts of the healing of a boy, and once in Acts for "incredible". ONE of the references in the "gospels" is Luke 9:41, which is translated "faithless", and its OPPOSITE in the same book is translated "faithful" (Luke 12:42). The OTHER times *apistos* is used is in John 20:27, where Jesus said to Thomas, "be not faithless, but believing". Here, both *apistos* and *pistos* are used as opposites. So, the word is properly rendered "believing". In the NKJV, the term is rendered, "Do not be unbelieving, but believing". Interestingly, the word "believers" is used only twice in the NT--Acts 5:14 and 1 Tim. 4:12. In the first passage, it states that the word "believers were the more added to the Lord"--were they 3 year olds? In the next passage, Paul admonished Timothy to "be thou an example of the believers"--was he telling him to be an example OF 3 year