

Because leadership is always so determinative on the well being and spiritual growth of the body of Christ, one of the first things the Apostle Paul saw to was the appointment of elders in every church as under-shepherds of God's people ([Act 14:23](#); [Tit. 1](#)).

Two key New Testament passages ([1 Tim. 3:1-13](#) and [Tit. 1:5-9](#)) provide us with the essential qualifications that such men must demonstrate in order to be qualified to serve the local church.

One of the designed results of these marks of maturity is that such men become examples of the Christian life and of the power of God that is available in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The responsibility of the church is to select those men who are models, examples for the flock to follow as we see in [Hebrews 13:7](#) and [1 Peter 5:3](#).

Look at the disciples. With these common, average, uneducated men, the Lord launched a campaign that has reached the world and turned it upside down. Why? Because of their methodology? No. Because of their dynamic personalities or programs? No. Because these common men intimately knew the Lord and began to experience His life and character in theirs by the Spirit of God. He took common men and made them into great men who became spiritual leaders because they were experiencing Him. Our need? The selection of godly men!

The Duties of an Elder

In addition to the qualifications of an elder, the Bible also provides the duties of elders-pastors:

- Prayer and Scripture study ([Acts 6:4](#))
- Ruling/leading the church ([1 Timothy 5:17](#))
- Managing the church ([1 Timothy 3:4-5](#))
- Caring for people in the church ([1 Peter 5:2-5](#))
- Giving account to God for the church ([Hebrews 13:17](#))
- Living exemplary lives ([Hebrews 13:7](#))
- Rightly using the authority God has given them ([Acts 20:28](#))
- Teaching the Bible correctly ([Eph. 4:11](#); [1 Timothy 3:2](#))
- Preaching ([1 Timothy 5:17](#))
- Praying for the sick ([James 5:13-15](#))
- Teaching sound doctrine, refuting false teachings ([Titus 1:9](#))
- Working hard ([1 Thessalonians 5:12](#))
- Rightly using money and power ([1 Peter 5:1-3](#))
- Protecting the church from false teachers ([Acts 20:17-31](#))
- Disciplining unrepentant Christians ([Matthew 18:15-17](#))

An elder is a leader who trains other leaders to lead various aspects of the church. Therefore, no man should be an elder unless he can effectively train people to not only be mature Christians, but also train some of those mature Christians to be church leaders who train other leaders. The Selection Process of an Elder

1 Timothy deals with those seeking to serve as an elder, while Titus deals with appointing spiritual leaders. A man can express interest in serving or he can be recommended by another member of the church for consideration and encouraged to begin the process to be appointed by the current eldership and confirmed by the church membership to a particular ministry. The step by step process is:

1. Once a person has expressed his desire to serve as an elder, or a current elder suggests he be considered, the current eldership will give him prayerful and careful consideration. The eldership may or may not choose to move forward with consideration at that time. If any elder has a legitimate objection that is clearly a scriptural disqualification, the person will not be considered.
2. The Elder prospect will complete a Desirability and Qualification questionnaire. The current eldership will review his responses, which will include his personal testimony.
3. If his responses are scriptural and he is in harmony with the convictions and direction of God's word, then he will be asked to meet with the eldership.
4. Following the interview, the current eldership will evaluate his qualifications, his desire and his capability to serve as an effective elder. If the eldership unanimously agrees he is qualified, he will enter into a time of further consideration. During this time he will be asked to complete a doctrinal questionnaire.
5. If the responses on both questionnaires are in line with Scripture and to the satisfaction of the eldership, he and/or his wife will be interviewed by the eldership.
6. Following the consideration period, he will be presented to the congregation for their consideration. The congregation will be given two weeks to submit scriptural objections in writing as to why they do not believe this person should serve in this capacity. If no one objects, he will begin serving as an elder on the date established by the eldership. If there is an objection, the matter must be resolved to the satisfaction of the current eldership before he is to begin serving. If the matter is not resolved, he will be informed of the problem and given a reason as to why he is no longer being asked to serve in this capacity.

Biblical Qualifications

[1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9](#)

Above Reproach - Heading the list of qualifications is the fundamental requirement that an overseer be above reproach ([1 Timothy 3:2](#)) or unassailable, uncensored, irreproachable, or without reproach. One who is above reproach has a good moral and spiritual reputation.

Husband of one wife - The phrase “husband of one wife” means literally a one wife husband, or a one-woman man, with the word “one” in the emphatic position. In other words, the elder must be characterized as a one-woman man who is not flirtatious, promiscuous or involved in a questionable relationship with any other woman. (An elder is a man who is obviously committed to loving his wife as Christ loves the church.) Paul is not referring exclusively to the marital status of the elder, but to a character trait -just as he does with most of the other qualifications for elders.

Temperate - Literally, the Greek word means wineless or sobriety in the use of wine. Sober or temperate would be accurate translations of the Greek and imply self-control, clear-mindedness and freedom from all excesses.

Prudent or Self-Controlled - A balanced, sensible man. The Greek word translated prudent is a difficult word, because no English word fully conveys its meaning. Literally, it means soundness of mind or sober-minded. Prudent means to be balanced, discreet and controlled because of sound judgment, sensible thinking and reasonableness.

Respectable - An orderly, disciplined and honorable man. In the Greek, the word is used to describe orderliness in outward demeanor and dress ([1 Timothy 2:9](#)), but undoubtedly includes orderliness in the whole person and lifestyle.

Hospitable - Paul exhorts the Christians at Rome to pursue hospitality ([Romans 12:13](#)). Peter writes “Be hospitable to one another without complaint” ([1 Peter 4:9](#)). The author of Hebrews writes: “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers” ([Hebrews 13:2](#)).

Able to teach - Therefore all elders must be able to teach, which entails three basic elements; knowledge of Scripture, readiness to teach and capability to communicate. Elders must be able to open their Bibles and instruct others. This requirement is not the same as having the “gift” of teaching ([Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4; 11](#)), nor does it have anything to do with preaching. (Some, but not all, elders will have the “gift” of teaching as is emphasized in [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#).) This qualification specifically relates to the elders’ ability to understand the Word and clearly and effectively communicate it to others.

Not addicted to wine - An elder must be above reproach regarding the use of wine. Paul uses a strong word that literally means not addicted, preoccupied or overindulgent with wine. This is not a prohibition against drinking wine, but the use of it in a manner that could be destructive to his testimony.

Not Pugnacious - A pugnacious person is a quick tempered, quarrelsome individual. The Greek word is derived from the verb meaning "to strike." Wives and children can be especially vulnerable to the blows of a pugnacious man and anyone who seriously frustrates such a man can be a potential target for his abuse.

Gentle - The man who possesses the positive quality of gentleness stands in vivid contrast to the pugnacious man. A gentle man exhibits a willingness to yield and patiently makes allowances for the weakness and ignorance of the fallen human condition ([James 3:17](#)).

Uncontentious - A peaceable man. Titus 3:2 , 2 timothy 2:24-25

Free from the love of money - Scripture warns all Christians against the love of money: "Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have...." [Hebrews 13:5](#)

A man who manages his household well - Any man unable to graciously govern his children through reasonable and consistent discipline is not likely to manage those within the church with wisdom ([Ephesians 6:4](#); [Colossians 3:21](#)).

Not a recent convert - A new convert is a beginner in the faith. No matter how spiritual, zealous, knowledgeable, or talented a new convert may be, he is not spiritually mature. Maturity requires time and experience for which there is no substitute, so a new convert is simply not ready to be an elder.

A man with a good reputation outside the Christian community - All Christians are to bear a good testimony before the world ([1 Thessalonians 4:11-12](#); [Titus 2:5-8](#); [1 Peter 2:12, 15](#); [3:16](#)), especially Christian leaders.

Having children who believe - Not only is an elder to be a one-woman man, he must be the spiritual leader of his children. The Greek word, pistos, means faithful, loyal, trustworthy, or dutiful ([1 Corinthians 4:17](#)), similar to [1 Timothy 3:4-5](#), where an elder's children are expected to be submissive and under his control.

Not self-willed - A self-willed man seeks his own way regardless of the feelings of others (self-willed literally means self-pleasing). He is stubborn, arrogant and inconsiderate of other's opinions, feelings and desires. He is not a team player, which among an eldership can cause contention and division.

Not quick tempered - The Bible warns in [Proverbs 29:22](#), "An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression."

Not pursuing dishonest gain - The religious leaders of Christ's day provide the perfect example of those who pursued dishonest gain. They turned God's house into a merchandising market for their own profit ([Mark 11:15-17](#)). An elder is one who is honest in all his dealings within the church and the community.

Loving what is good - This requirement is derived from the word *jilagaqos*, which is defined as "one who willingly and with self-denial does good, or is kind." It means "ready to do what is beneficial to others."

Just - An upright, righteous man who conducts himself in accordance with the principles of divine truth. Such a man must make wise, fair and righteous judgments ([Proverbs 29:7](#)).

Devout - A devout man lives the life the Lord requires and is an example of Godly character and conduct. He is pious, loyal and holy, and refuses to lead people astray.

Self-controlled or disciplined - An elder must be characterized by self-discipline, self-restraint and self-control in every aspect of life, particularly physical desires ([Acts 24:25](#); [1 Corinthians 7:9](#); [9:25](#)

A man committed to the faithful word - An elder must be solidly committed to the truth of God's Word, as indicated by the strength of the word *antecw*, used in the phrase "holding fast the faithful word." An elder must cling firmly to, be devoted to and adhere wholeheartedly to the truth of God's Word ([Matthew 6:24](#)).