

# Qualifications of Elders

***1 Timothy 3:1-7:** This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.<sup>2</sup> A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;<sup>3</sup> not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;<sup>4</sup> one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence<sup>5</sup> (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);<sup>6</sup> not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.<sup>7</sup> Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.<sup>1</sup>*

***Titus 1:5-9:**<sup>5</sup> For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—<sup>6</sup> if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.<sup>7</sup> For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,<sup>8</sup> but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled,<sup>9</sup> holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.<sup>2</sup>*

The following is a list of the biblical qualifications that an Elder must possess. No Elder will be a perfect man, but if he is clearly and persistently lacking in any of these qualities, he cannot serve in the church as an Elder. An Elder must have or be:

1. **Desire** 1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2  
Elders must not be pressured into service if it is not their personal desire to serve in this capacity. An Elder's desire to serve must be God-given and his motives pure.
2. **Blameless** (above reproach) 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7.  
This qualification is the summation of all of the rest. It means that there is nothing in his life that would justify a legitimate accusation of misconduct or call his character into question.
3. **The husband of one wife** (lit. "a one-woman man") 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6.  
Whether a man is single or married, he must be living a sexually pure life. For a married Elder, it also means that he must be faithfully devoted to loving his wife (Ephesians 5:25; 1 Peter 3:7).
4. **Temperate** (moderate, not given to excess) 1 Timothy 3:2.  
In all areas of life, an Elder must be calm, well-balanced, careful, and sane—one who at all times is capable of clear thinking and sound judgment.
5. **Sober-minded** (a sensible, serious person) 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8.  
This does not mean that an Elder may not laugh or joke or play. It means he leads a disciplined life, not allowing frivolous activities to distract him from more serious and important concerns.
6. **Of good behavior** (respectable, orderly) 1 Timothy 3:2.  
The opposite of the Greek in this case is chaos (utter confusion). An Elder's outward behavior must demonstrate decency, orderliness, and self-control.

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<sup>1</sup>The New King James Version. 1996, c1982 (1 Ti 3:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup>The New King James Version. 1996, c1982 (Tit 1:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

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7. **Hospitable** (lit. "one who loves strangers") 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8.  
An Elder must be one who shows genuine kindness and hospitality, not only to the members of his church, but also to people he does not know well.
8. **A lover of what is good** (lit. "one who is inclined to do good") Titus 1:8.  
Closely related to hospitality, an Elder must be one who not only loves the concept of goodness, but also is prone to doing good to others.
9. **Able to teach** (lit. "skilled in teaching") 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9.  
There is no biblical requirement that an Elder have a formal education, but he must have the gift of teaching and be a defender of the truth (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2, 24; 2:15; Titus 2:7-8).
10. **Not given to wine** (lit. "not a drinker" or "not addicted to wine") 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7.  
Though not an absolute prohibition, this is a serious warning that an Elder cannot be preoccupied with alcohol or known as a drinker. Due to its potential as a stumbling block, however, it may be advisable for Elders to abstain from alcohol altogether in order to avoid offense or damaging influence (cf. Romans 14; 1 Corinthians 8).
11. **Not violent** (lit. not "a giver of blows," or "a striker") 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7.  
An Elder must be a man who solves problems and settles disputes peacefully, using persuasive words and calm demeanor, not his fists or other weapons.
12. **Gentle** (patient, gracious, forgiving) 1 Timothy 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:24.  
An Elder must not be a man who holds a grudge or is slow to forgive. He must be one who will patiently bear with those who are needy, difficult, reluctant to change, or slow to learn.
13. **Not quick-tempered** (he must be slow to anger) Titus 1:7; James 1:19-20  
Anger in itself is not always a sin. There is a righteous sort of anger. An Elder, though, must be a man who recognizes and controls his own propensity to become angry.
14. **Not quarrelsome** (not argumentative) 1 Timothy 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 3:13-18  
An Elder must be a man who will defend the truth strongly, but in a peaceable manner. He must not be one who allows himself to become embroiled in hostile disputes or petty arguments.
15. **Just** (righteous or upright) Titus 1:8.  
An Elder is a man who is known for doing what is right. He lives a life of practical righteousness, trying to reflect God's view in every decision he makes.
16. **Holy** (lit. "devout" or "set apart to God") Titus 1:8.  
An Elder must be firmly committed to God and His Word. He must be faithful to the ministry and to biblical doctrine, not one who gives in to social, political, or religious pressure to compromise.
17. **Self-controlled** (or self-disciplined) Titus 1:8.  
An Elder must be a man who is disciplined in terms of his response to physical desires for food, pleasure, comfort, money, sleep, sex, or anything else which could cause him to stumble.
18. **Not covetous** (not a lover of money) 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2.  
An Elder cannot be motivated in the ministry by financial gain or greedy in his lifestyle. He is a man who will trust the Lord, be content with what is provided, and be thankful.

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19. **One who rules his own house well** (a good manager and leader) 1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6.  
An Elder must have proven himself a good manager of his children (if he has children), his personal finances, and his household in general.
20. **Having his children in submission with all reverence** (having obedient, respectful, faithful children) 1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6.  
The children of an Elder must not have a reputation for uncontrolled behavior or insubordination. Additionally, an Elder must not be a harsh or brutal man, but must maintain order in his family through loving leadership, consistent biblical training, and proper discipline.
21. **Not a novice** (not a new or immature believer) 1 Timothy 3:6.  
An Elder must be a mature believer, especially in relation to others in his particular church. If even a capable man is elevated to the position too rapidly, he will battle with pride.
22. **He must have a good testimony among those who are outside** (well respected even by unbelievers in the community) 1 Timothy 3:7.  
An Elder must have a consistently good testimony in all places and with all people (aside from those who would persecute him or accuse him falsely), even outside the church. He must be just, honest, peaceable, and loving in every context.
23. **Not self-willed** (not anxious to control others or to have his own way) Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:3.  
An Elder must not be a man who is anxious to dominate or control others. He must be a team-player, realizing that while he is an Elder, he is also one of the sheep.
24. **An example to the flock:** 1 Peter 5:3; Titus 2:7.  
An Elder will not be perfect, but he must be a man who will lead the church, by instruction and example, according to God's Word.

### Biblical Responsibilities of Church Elders

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| A. Oversee, Lead          | 1 Peter 5:2 – <i>Be Elders of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing</i>   |
| B. Equip                  | Ephesians 4:12 – <i>for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry</i>  |
| C. Teach                  | 1 Timothy 5:17 – <i>whose work is preaching and teaching</i><br>1 Timothy 3:2 – <i>able to teach</i>  |
| D. Protect, Care, Help    | Titus 1:9-11<br>Acts 20:28-31<br>1 Peter 5:1-2<br>1 Thessalonians 5:12-14   |
| E. Pray                   | James 5:14 – <i>call the elders of the church to pray over him</i>  |
| F. Be Examples            | 1 Peter 5:3 – <i>being examples to the flock</i>  |
| G. Ordain Others          | 1 Timothy 4:14 – <i>with the laying on of the hands of the eldership</i>  |
| H. Accountable before God | Hebrews 13:17 – <i>Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, <u>as those who must give account</u>. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.</i> |