

Terms for the Office of Elder

1. *presbuteros*, from which we get Elder or Presbyter. (Acts 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:1)
2. *episkopos*, from which we get overseer or bishop. (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2)
3. *poimen* means, "to shepherd," from which we get pastor or shepherd (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:13; 1 Peter 5:2)

Biblical Character Qualifications of an Elder

His relationship to: God and the Word/Truth of God

(1) Not a new convert (1Tim. 3:6). Not a neophyte, novice, one newly converted. Does he truly know the Lord and has he shown definite progress in spiritual maturity?

(2) Devout (Tit. 1:8). Does he demonstrate a definite commitment to know, love, and walk with God?

(3) Able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Is he able to communicate the Word of God to others? Is he able to handle those who disagree with him in a patient and gentle manner? Have others recognized in him the ability to teach and communicate the Word at least in small group settings?

(4) Holding fast to the faithful word . . . able to exhort . . . and refute . . . (Tit. 1:9). Is he a student of the Bible? Is he stable in the faith, sound in doctrine and practice? Is he able to use the Word of God to exhort people with sound doctrine and to refute those who are antagonistic to the faith or the truth of Scripture?

Elders... "needs two voices, one for gathering the sheep and the other for driving away wolves and thieves" John Calvin

His relationship to: Himself

(1) If a man aspires to the office of overseer (1 Tim. 3:1). Based on biblical criteria and motives, does he have a strong desire to serve the Lord and the body of Christ as an overseer of the flock, or does he feel constrained by necessity (cf. 1 Pet. 5:2, "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God")?

(2) Temperate (1 Tim. 3:2). In the everyday situations of life does he tend to react according to biblical principles so that he remains under God's control? Is he Spirit-controlled and disciplined rather than self-indulgent?

(3) Prudent (1 Tim. 3:2). Is he prudent or biblically minded to the extent that he walks wisely according to the wisdom of Scripture?

(4) Not quick tempered (Tit. 1:7). Does he have a short fuse? Is he emotionally stable and in control of his feelings?

His relationship to: Family

(1) Husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6). Literally, a one-woman man. He is a man totally devoted and faithful to his own wife so that he is not distracted by other women?

(2) One who manages his own household well (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Tit. 1:6). Does his wife love, respect, and follow his leadership, and are his children faithful, under control, respectful of authority, and responding positively to God?

•There is more than one meaning to the adjective *pista* (faithful/ reliable/believing) and it must be the context which enlightens us as to which meaning is required. The context is very clear here. "faithful" is further explained by the added words, "not accused of dissipation or insubordination."

•There is theological issue that affects interpretation. Since when can any person be held accountable for the conversion of another? We are responsible to share the Gospel, but we cannot compel anyone to believe. To require that an elder must have all believing children is to assume that he is somehow responsible to ensure they are saved. But we know that salvation is God's work. However, his life must not cause them to become rebellious or disbelieving.

•What does Paul say about an elder's children in 1 Tim 3:4-5? Paul says nothing here about "believing children" but talks of children who are well-disciplined and under control. He then goes on to point out that if an elder can't lead his family in this way, he surely can't lead a larger group - the church. An elder is not required to make each of his children a believer, but he is required to have his children under control.

His relationship to: Others

(1) Hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8). Literally, "a lover of strangers." As he is able, does he share his home with others in order to minister to their needs?

(2) Not self-willed (Tit. 1:7). A self-willed man is a self-centered man who demands his own way because he cares only for himself. As a servant, an elder must seek to please God and care for others. Is he able to set aside his own preferences in order to promote unity and care for the needs of others? Is he a team player?

(3) Loving what is good (Tit. 1:8). Literally, “a lover of goodness.” He is a man who is devoted to that which is good or beneficial either in things, deeds, or people. Does he take advantage of opportunities to do good to all people (both Christians and non-Christians) in order to build them up rather than tear them down?

(4) Not quick-tempered, not pugnacious i.e., anger out of control aggressive, inclined to fight (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). Does he show a tendency to be either physically or verbally abusive? Has he shown a disposition to use a position of leadership to bully or push people around?

(5) Uncontentious (1 Tim. 3:3). He is not a quarrelsome person who struggles against others for self-seeking reasons such as jealousy or selfish ambition. He may strongly disagree, but he will state his case without being contentious. Does he have unresolved issues with people that he refuses to seek to address?

(6) Gentle (1 Tim. 3:3). This word in the original Greek text refers to strength under control, like a powerful, but gentle horse. Does he handle others in a gentle, patient, and gracious way? Is he heavy-handed, insisting on the letter of the law?

(7) Just (Tit. 1:8). In his relationships with others, is he able to make just decisions, those that are wise, fair, impartial, objective, and honest according to the principles of Scripture?

(8) Respectable, orderly, balanced (1 Tim. 3:2). Is he respected by others because his life adorns the Word of God? The basic idea of this word is orderly. It describes a man whose behavior is good and blended harmoniously in a balanced manner.

His relationship to: Things

(1) Free from the love of money (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). Does he have his priorities straight? Is he seeking his significance, security, and primary satisfaction from material wealth? Is he involved in dishonest business practices? Is the amount of salary he receives the most important thing about his occupation? Is he seeking the office of elder for personal gain?

(2) Not addicted to wine (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). Is he free from any form of substance abuse (alcohol, drugs, etc.) or any kind of addiction which might take control of his life, cause belligerent and irresponsible behavior, and cause weaker Christians to stumble (Rom. 14:13-21)?

His relationship to: the World

(1) Having a good reputation with those on the outside (1 Tim. 3:7). Does he have a good reputation among unbelievers because he has a life-style of unquestioned integrity.

(2) Above reproach (Tit 1:6; 1 Tim 3:2). This is the initial word in both lists and appears to be a general word to describe a man of character in all areas of his life and in all relationships.

What Does an Elder Do?

- 1. Model Christ-like Behavior** (1 Peter 5:3; 1 Tim 4:12b) No man is perfect, but our elders should strive to live their lives as an example and serve as a role model for the Christian life.
- 2. Communicate Biblical Truth and Check/Protect Doctrine** (1 Tim 5:17; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:9) Some elders will teach in formal group settings. Others will mentor and share biblical truth in one-on-one settings. They remain on guard against those who would distort biblical truth.
- 3. Work to Restore the Rebellious** (1 Cor 4:14; 1 Thess 5:12-13; Titus 1:9; 2 Tim 2:23-26) Deal with those who stray from God and His truth. Should be done with a gentle spirit and for the purpose of restoration.
- 4. Oversee Church Matters** (1 Tim 3:5; Acts 6; 11:30) Though the elders may choose to designate others to help care for physical matters (finances, buildings, insurance, etc.), they bear ultimate responsibility for these areas.
- 5. Pray for the Church** (James 5:13-14) Elders are available to pray for the sick. They also lead ministry, send leaders and make decisions through deliberate prayer.
- 6. Shepherd the Sheep.** (1 Peter 5:2) Shepherding and caring for the people in our church family.

**In addition to these biblical roles, Waterbrook elders should also be committed to our philosophy of ministry; and in seeing Waterbrook grow and reach new people in new ways.*