

The hope of Christians is to see God's church grow as believers are brought to faith even with all that is going on in the world. The church perseveres and continues being built as Christ said.

**Elders in the church:** 1) Provide Spiritual Safety: in doctrine and morality. They teach, live and are an example to the flock. They confront habitual sin and the unruly. 2) Provide Spiritual Food: As Jesus told Peter to feed His sheep (Jn. 21:15-19). 3) Provide Spiritual Direction: provide Gospel ministry and opportunities by equipping the body.

### **What is the office of Elder from 1 Tim. 3:1?**

1. **Who are they?** Qualified men, not self-qualifying, but men who have been qualified by other men, the term "must be," from 1 Tim. 3:2. This entails an examination of his life, abilities, training, and testing. It is not a position of honor for the aged. It is not perfection.
  - a. They are not males because men are more capable or have greater intellect than women. Not a form of discrimination by men against women.
  - b. Other examples of male leadership in Scripture: Apostles and prophets were all men. The words elder, overseer, and pastor are masculine nouns in the text of Scripture. Priests are all men. Males are the primary focus of passing spiritual things and leading.
  - c. What about Miriam in Ex. 15:20? She led the women of Israel, not the whole congregation as Moses did. Debra was a political leader and judge not a priest, she is seen along with Barak her husband. Huldah in 2 Kings 22 was a prophetess but not leading the nation of Israel. Noadiah in Neh. 6:14 was a false prophet against Israel. Philip's daughters in Acts 21:9, prophesied concerning Christ, they were messengers not leaders. Anna was a prophetess who proclaimed Christ to all who she met with, but not a leader, Luke 2:36-38.
  - d. Paul told Timothy not to allow women to teach over men because of the created order that God ordained, 1 Tim. 2:8-15, 1 Cor. 14:34, women are to keep silent in the churches.
  - e. **He** is the husband of one wife, not a requirement for marriage, but of being committed to one woman.
  - f. The use of "he" is extensive in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim. 3:1-7.
2. **What are they called?** Elders, shepherds, overseers, and pastors. The word "bishop" used to be more prevalent, but "overseer" means the same. See also 1 Pet. 2:25, 5:2 "overseers."
  - a. Why use three different words? They show different aspects of their duties. Elders reflect their character and maturity. Overseer describes their work and labor. Shepherd shows the role to provide spiritual and moral protection.
3. **How are they organized?** As a group, a plurality. Use of the term for those who are "elders" are in the plural in Scripture. John and Peter refer to themselves as "Elder" in their office. The church in Antioch listed 4 others along with Paul, Acts 13:1. In Revelation 2-3 a distinction is made that the letter to the church was to the "messenger" or angel of the church who provided preaching and teaching. This is also seen as those whose primary duty is preaching and teaching, 1 Tim. 5:17, 1 Thess. 5:12-13, Heb. 13:7.
  - a. **Temptations of those who are elders:** 1) Be seen as a corporate or political body representing sides or voting for a set of ideals. 2) Seeing discussions as a means to form a biblical position. It is not the talking but the authority of Scripture. 3) To mire the church in inaction. 4) Busy with more talking than doing. Their work is disciple-making.

b. **Advantages of a Plurality of Elders:** 1) Division of duties. 2) Balancing strengths and weaknesses: allocating responsibilities. 3) Restraint of pride. 4) Joy of shared triumph and sorrows. 5) Collective wisdom and confidence of a sound direction to proceed together.

4. **How are they selected?**

1. The Holy Spirit ultimately chooses elders, 1 Cor. 12:1-11, Rom. 12:3-8, Eph. 4:11.
2. Their Qualifications: They are not a standard of perfection, or else all would be disqualified at some point. Not a one-time test, they are a continual requirement. From the two main texts of **1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9** and secondary texts of 1 Pet. 5:2-3, 1 Thess. 5:12-13, and Acts 20:17-38.

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1. Desire for office: "willingly," 1 Tim. 3:1, 1 Pet. 5:2,
  2. Above reproach, blameless, 1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6,
  3. Husband of one wife, 1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:6,
  4. Temperate, sober minded, slow, not rushed, 1 Tim. 3:2,
  5. Sensible: self-controlled, 1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:7,
  6. Respectable, 1 Tim. 3:2,
  7. Hospitable: "friend of strangers," 1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:8,
  8. Able to teach others: 1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:9, exhort, reprove, defend sound doctrine.
  9. Not a drunkard, 1 Tim. 3:3, Tit. 1:7,
  10. Not violent or pugnacious, 1 Tim. 3:3,
  11. Gentle, of good behavior, considerate, 1 Tim. 3:2,
  12. Peaceable, not quarrelsome, 1 Tim. 3:3,
  13. Not a lover of money, 1 Tim. 3:3, 1 Pet. 5:2,
  14. Leads his household well, 1 Tim. 3:4,
  15. Having children who are faithful. Not speaking of salvation, but disciplined and orderly and respectful of father and mother, in submission, 1 Tim. 3:4, Tit. 1:6,
  16. Not a recent convert, a novice, 1 Tim. 3:6,
  17. Having a good reputation from those outside, 1 Tim. 3:7,
  18. Not self-willed, Tit. 1:7,
  19. Not quick tempered, Tit. 1:7,
  20. Loves goodness, Tit. 1:8,
  21. Just. Having integrity, Tit. 1:8,
  22. Holy: a desire to please God, Tit. 1:8,
  23. Self-controlled or disciplined, Tit. 1:8,
  24. Defending the faith, Tit. 1:9,
  25. With eagerness and zeal, 1 Pet. 5:2,
  26. Not domineering, 1 Pet. 5:3,
  27. Examples to the flock, 1 Pet. 5:3,
  28. Diligent in their labor and work, 1 Thess. 5:12-13,
  29. Not a people pleaser, they admonish or warn, the body, 1 Thess. 5:12,
  30. Spiritual Alertness: Acts. 20:31.

5) **What is the heart of an elder, what are their convictions?**

1) Exemplary Life: not perfect but an example of one walking in the ways of Christ, not a double life, not being a hypocrite.

2) Joyful humility: not an arrogant man, joy in surrendering, strives for humility in Christ's example, Phil. 2:3.

3) Loving care: not loveless or toxic. He knows the body, their needs, and encourages them. It is a stewardship, motivated by love, 1 Tim. 1:3-5.

4) Courageous authority: their authority is within the local church and they protect the church they serve.

5) Sacrificial determination: a heavenly mindedness, willing to give their lives and effort for the sake of Gospel and Christ's church, to be spent for Christ.

## **Further Discussion and Application**

As you examine the qualifications of elders, what have you noticed about those elders who serve over you? How might you get to know them better and understand their motivation and their heart to serve the Lord and you? Certainly, elders are to meet the all the qualifications in Scripture. Do all the members also have the same qualifications? Which ones apply to all members? What will be the blessings of godliness and holiness you'll see as these are applied in your life?

The motivation of elders is a stewardship to faithfully preach and teach the word of God and of love. They must take great care of the souls they will give an account for. How do they do this? How can you partake and share in the work of caring for the body? How can you imitate their labor and work to bring honor to the Lord? How will being hospitable to strangers glorify the Lord? How will being kind, gentle, and gracious towards others demonstrate confidence in your salvation? How will being self-controlled, temperate, and sensible provide contentment?

Sharing our faith and motivation to honor Christ with those on the outside gives us great confidence in our salvation. What can we share with others in our lives about what motivates us and encourages us to keep going? How can our speech always be encouraging to unbelievers, as well as be able to speak of the need for every man to have a Savior because of sin? How can we balance encouragement and share with those who need Christ?