

Church Elders

An elder, in Old Testament times, was an older man who held a position of leadership over a family or tribe. Moses, for example, was assisted by elders (Ex. 3:16, 18; 24:1). These men, by virtue of their age and experience, were respected leaders.

In early New Testament times, during the beginnings of the church, a person's age was also a consideration. Although Bible scholars are not in agreement about the minimum age when a person could be called an elder, some have suggested the age of 30. Jesus was 30 years old when he began His public ministry (Luke 3:23). And New Testament scholar Merrill C. Tenney has noted that members of the Jewish ruling council, the Sanhedrin, had to be at least 30 years old. In addition, several of the character qualities listed in 1 Timothy and Titus can only be evident in a man with years of proven character and maturity.

Age alone, however, does not guarantee maturity or spirituality. A relatively young man could qualify. When Paul told Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth" (1 Tim. 4:12), Timothy was probably in his mid-thirties and he held a position of authority over churches in the area of Ephesus. Timothy was to show by his godly life that he should be followed.

Some churches consider *elder* to be synonymous with *pastor*. Other churches choose a group of men to serve as elders, often with a head elder or pastor assuming the role of leading in the teaching and preaching of God's Word (1 Tim. 5:1).

The items below are taken from Scriptures which specifically outline the qualities essential to those who seek to serve as elders. The list does not require sinless perfection, but it does require a high level of Christian character and a mature faith in Christ. (Source: "Who Qualifies To Be A Church Leader?" by Martin De Haan II, Radio Bible Class Booklet, 1988)

General Responsibilities of Elders

- A. Lead the church with a servant attitude** (1 Tim 5:17; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1-3)
- B. "Equip the saints" by teaching the Scriptures** (Eph 4:11,12; 1 Tim 4:6,11,13,16; 2 Tim 4:2-4)
- C. Committed to the ministry of the Word and prayer** (Acts 6:3-4)
- D. Protect the flock from false or distorted doctrine** (Acts 20:17,28-30; 1 Tim 1:3,4; 6:20,21; 2 Tim 4:1-5; Titus 1:10-16)
- E. Shield the church from the work of unruly and divisive individuals** (2 Tim 2:14-18,23-26; Titus 3:9-11)

Character and Lifestyle Qualifications for Elders (1

Timothy 3:1-7 = ●; Titus 1:6-9 = ◆)

A. blameless ◆◆

Characteristic pattern of life is in line with biblical standards

B. husband of one wife ◆◆

*Faithfully devoted to one wife; not an adulterer or flirtatious person
(Note: interpretations differ on this area.)*

C. temperate ●

Balanced in living habits and judgment; stable, steadfast, clear in thinking; not legalistic or fanatical

D. soberminded ◆◆

Self-controlled and prudent in actions; avoids quick decisions based on inadequate information

E. good behavior ●

Reflects a life of consistency and well-arranged order, rather than crisis-management

F. hospitable ◆◆

Literally "loving strangers"; friendly and willing to help others in need

G. able to teach & teachable ●

Communicates God's truth without arrogance; open to learning new things; discusses issues in an objective and patient manner

H. not given to much wine ◆◆

Not overindulgent or controlled by alcohol (no drug addiction, as well)

I. not violent ◆◆

Literally "not a striker"; not given to displays of temper or intimidation in order to control others

J. not greedy for money ◆◆

Ethical in business practices; priorities not centered on the accumulation of worldly wealth

K. gentle ●

Gracious, kind, forbearing, considerate, magnanimous, genial

L. not quarrelsome ●

Not stubborn or argumentative; not given to controversy or rivalry; willing to participate in a dialogue, even if his point of view is not prevailing

M. not covetous ●

Doesn't center life on the acquisition and maintenance of material things

N. manage house well ●

Maintains a godly, well-managed home; children properly trained; good relationship with wife

O. children obedient •

Children show evidence that their father is a respected leader at home and that he knows how to instruct and train them; children not wild and insubordinate

P. not a novice •

Not a new convert - to prevent the outgrowth of pride

Q. good testimony •

Reputation among the non-Christian community is good

R. believing children ♦

Disciples own children well; does not imply perfection, but a professed faith in Christ

S. not self-willed ♦

Not overbearing or inconsiderate; not consistently insensitive to opposing facts, circumstances, and peoples' needs/feelings

T. not quick-tempered ♦

Not quickly angry or belligerent; not given to uncontrolled personal attacks

U. lover of good ♦

Shows by his actions that he desires to reflect God's goodness in all that he does and in all of his relationships

V. just ♦

Concerned with justice in all his dealings; fair and impartial; makes decisions based on principle, not personality

W. holy ♦

Demonstrates a heart centered on God and His kingdom; seeks after God and follows His Word

X. self-controlled ♦

Exhibits a disciplined life, one not controlled by passions and appetites (Gal. 5:16-26)

Y. hold fast to the Word ♦

Firmly grounded in sound doctrine in faith and practice

Z. able to exhort & convict ♦

Knows the Bible well enough to guide and correct others

Church Deacons

The term *deacon* comes from a Greek word meaning "one who serves." The seven men mentioned in Acts 6:1-6 functioned as deacons in a limited sense as they assisted in the distribution of food to needy widows. From what we see happening in Acts 6 and what is described elsewhere in the New Testament, as local churches were established and grew, the official role of deacon was to assist the elders so that they could give themselves to teaching and prayer. Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 closely tie the role of deacon to the work of the elders, and we may assume that deacons were administrators of the many details in the life of the church. That's why many churches today assign to the deacons the very important matters of the church's financial and physical needs.

The items below are taken from Scriptures which specifically outline the qualities essential to those who seek to serve as deacons. The list does not require sinless perfection, but it does require a high level of Christian character and a mature faith in Christ. (Source: "Who Qualifies To Be A Church Leader?" by Martin De Haan II, Radio Bible Class Booklet, 1988)

Character and Lifestyle Qualifications for Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-12)

A. reverent

Respectable and dignified, without frivolous attitude toward spiritual issues

B. not double-tongued

Not contradictory, inconsistent, or insincere in speech; keeps promises; not hypocritical or slanderous

C. not given to much wine

Not overindulgent or controlled by alcohol (no drug addiction, as well)

D. not greedy for money

Ethical in business practices; priorities not centered on the accumulation of worldly wealth

E. holding the faith with a clear conscience

Possesses not merely an intellectual faith; displays sincerity of faith and a firm conviction to the truth of God's Word

F. tested

Shows by proven faith and character that he is qualified to serve as an example to others

G. found blameless

Characteristic pattern of life is in line with biblical standards

H. husband of one wife

Faithfully devoted to one wife; not an adulterer or flirtatious person

(Note: interpretations differ on this area.)

I. manage children and household well

Children properly trained; maintains a good relationship with spouse