

A Summation of the New Testament Qualifications for Leadership

In New Testament churches God raised up and qualified, by the work of the Holy Spirit, men who were appointed to have spiritual care of and exercise oversight over the churches. These men are called elders, bishops, pastors. The three terms are interchangeable and are used of the one office. The New Testament never specifies the number of elders. Their character, integrity, and maturity is always the major emphasis. Their number, therefore, would appear to be of a flexible nature.

1. FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PASTOR / ELDER (8 fold)

- The pastor has overall responsibility for oversight and direction of the church (1 Thess. 5:2; Heb. 13:17).
- The pastor is responsible to seek in all matters the mind of Christ (who is the Head of the Church) through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18; 1 Pet. 5:2).
- The pastor must be apt to teach and able to exhort the church in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict the truth (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9).
- The pastor shall provide instruction for the maintenance of healthy relationships within the church (Gal. 6:1; 1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Thess. 3:14-15).
- The pastor shall exercise at least general oversight of the financial matters of the church (Acts 11:30).
- The pastor should lead (with appropriate congregational input) in the appointing of deacons as necessary to accomplish the mission of the church (Acts 6:1-6).
- The pastor is to lead by example (Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:2-3).
- The pastor is to lead in the exercise of church discipline (Gal. 6:1), but not to the exclusion of the entire body when warranted (Matt. 18; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2).

2. QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP AS A PASTOR / ELDER (20 fold)

- above reproach...that is, blameless, having unimpeachable integrity, no grounds for accusation of improper Christian behavior (1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)

- husband of one wife...he has only one woman in his life and is to be faithful to her; he is a one woman kind of man (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)
- temperate...not in bondage to himself or desires of the flesh, self-controlled, calm, sober, collected in spirit (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- prudent...sensible, wise, balanced in judgment, not given to quick superficial decisions based on immature thinking (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- respectable... demonstrating good behavior and an orderly life (1 Tim. 3:2)
- hospitable...generous, a “stranger lover,” willing to share his blessings with others (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- able to teach...can communicate the truth of God to others and exhort them in sound doctrine (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9)
- not addicted to wine...not a drunkard; not controlled by, but free from alcohol (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- not pugnacious...not physically violent, not a person who creates trouble and looks for fights (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- uncontentious...not given to quarreling or selfish argumentation (1 Tim. 3:3)
- gentle...fair, equitable, not insisting on his own rights (1 Tim. 3:3)
- not fond of sordid gain...free from the love of money (1Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity...has the respect of his family and is recognized as the head/leader of his household (1 Tim. 3:4; Titus 1:6)
- not a new convert...a mature believer, having been a Christian long enough to demonstrate the reality of his conversion and the depth of his spirituality (1 Tim. 3:6)
- good reputation among people outside the church...unbelievers must respect his character and integrity (1 Tim. 3:7)
- not self-willed...not stubborn, or insisting on his own way, not forcing his own ideas and opinions on others (Titus 1:7)

- not quick tempered...not one who “flies off the handle” or gets angry quickly (Titus 1:7)
- loves what is good...desires to do God’s will in everything (Titus 1:8)
- just...fair, impartial, able to make objective judgments based upon principle (Titus 1:8)
- holding fast the faithful word...committed to God’s Word as true and authoritative, obedient to God’s Word in all matters, not hypocritical, but living in accordance with that which it teaches (Titus 1:9)

God is not demanding perfection in the above areas, for He knows the weaknesses of man. But what He does require is a heart commitment to His standards and a willingness to conform to them. To be a pastor, a man must demonstrate a high degree of maturity in all of the areas listed above.

Accusations or criticisms of an elder are to be received according to 1 Tim. 5:19-21. If the pastor is guilty of an offense, he shall be counseled by other godly, spiritually mature men with a view toward restoration (Gal. 6:1-2). If the erring elder continues to sin, he shall be removed from office and disciplined according to Matt. 18: 15-17. If a spiritual leader is not guilty of that which is illegal, immoral, unethical, or clearly unbiblical, it is the responsibility of the church to follow his leadership as this is the will of God (cf 1 Thess. 5:12-15; Heb. 13:7, 17).