



WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR WHEN WE LOOK FOR ELDERS

There are a variety of texts relevant to the topic of elders, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4 are the most descriptive of the characteristics of those we would ask to lead. They give us a glimpse into the apostle's thought process when it comes to identifying quality elders.

1 Timothy 3:1-7	Titus 1:6-9	1 Peter 5:1-4	Scripture
Written to identify elders	Written to identify elders	Written to current elders	Purpose
Aspires to be an elder		Willing	This doesn't mean they must be aggressively ambitious. In fact, someone that is desperate to be an elder thinking of it as a position of power is a reason to avoid them. It means they must be up for the job rather than having their arm twisted to accept the position.
Above Reproach	Blameless		This doesn't mean they are perfect, but they aren't someone about whom there are clear moral shortcomings.
Faithful to his wife.	Faithful to his wife		A spouse that is true and good to their other half. The literal translation is "a one woman man" and generally thought to mean that they can't be polygamist (less common) or have a mistress (much more common).
Temperate			This means their personalities don't flash hot or cold. They're not quick to get angry or give someone the cold shoulder.
Respectable			The community, both in and out of the church, thinks this person conducts themselves honorably.
Not quarrelsome			They are willing to defend the truth but not interested in arguing for the sake of argument.
Must manage his own family well.			This is a big category and has to do everything household related, bills, care of their children, etc. However, it is undoubtedly connected (or evidenced by) the beliefs and behavior of their children.
	Children believe		The goal of this expectation is that an elder has some evidence that they have a positive, spiritual influence on their own kids. Paul simply doesn't specify what age he's talking about or what it would mean if an adult child left their faith.
Children obey in a manner worthy of full respect	Children behave		We all know that kids have their own minds, but their behavior often reflects their parents' character and teaching. Most people are smart enough to distinguish between when kids are just being impulsive and when negative behavior results from parental influence or neglect.
Not a recent convert			Paul was looking for the kind of spiritual maturity that most often comes with a longer relationship with Jesus.

Good reputation with outsiders			An essential component of seeing someone's character is what the non-Christians in their neighborhoods, homes, etc., think of them.
	Blameless (again)		(See above.)
	Not overbearing	Not lording it over	How an elder exercises their special role of influence speaks volumes of their character. Sadly many church scandals you hear about come down to an authoritarian minister or church leader.
	Not quick-tempered		If a person is quick to anger, the strain of eldership will not be a good fit.
Not given to drunkenness	Not given to drunkenness		Given our country's puritanical religious roots, we might find it mildly surprising that Paul doesn't say, "do not drink alcohol." A person who can't exercise self-control with drinking wouldn't be a good fit for eldership.
Not violent but gentle	Not violent		This might seem obvious to us; of course, a church leader shouldn't be a violent person. However, we sometimes have unhealthy notions that "real men" are expected to be physically harsh. The stressors involved in eldership would be a bad environment for someone who couldn't control themselves.
Not a lover of money	Not pursuing dishonest gain	Not pursuing dishonest gain	Someone who doesn't let their desire for wealth overtake their internal sense of honesty.
Hospitable	Hospitable		This was a huge virtue in the ancient world. And while it certainly could include things like hosting a nice party with friends, it typically means allowing traveling strangers to stay in one's home and treating them well. The very act of hospitality involved some risk.
	Loves what is good		Someone genuinely excited about righteousness and moral excellence, both in themselves and in the world.
Self-Controlled	Self-controlled		Many of the character qualities and virtues listed above really boil down to whether or not a person is self-controlled.
	Upright		This word can be translated "righteous" and even "just."
	Holy		Pure, undefiled. This doesn't mean, of course, that they are sinless, but it means that the gravitational pull in their thoughts, speech, and behavior tends toward that which is Christ-like.
	Disciplined		This is a unique Greek word that means "sound mind." In other words, a person who can sensibly and rationally think through complex matters.
Able to teach	Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage and refute.		Here's another example of a quality that runs on a spectrum. The essential idea is that an elder can communicate important doctrinal truths to members of the congregation.
		Eager to serve	This means an elder is actively looking for ways to sacrificially serve others versus trying to get out of helping others.
		Example to the flock	Finally, we're looking for leaders that the entire congregation can look up to and model their lives after.