



Serve, Support, Strengthen

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1. Eldership in the Church

The Bible outlines specific qualifications for eldership in a church, primarily found in two key passages: 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These passages emphasize the character, conduct, and capability required of an elder.

Here is a summary of the biblical qualifications for eldership including pastors / priests:

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV) & Titus 1:5-9 (ESV)

- Above reproach: The elder must have a good reputation and be blameless in his conduct.
- Husband of one wife: He must be faithful and devoted to his wife.
- Sober-minded: Elders cannot be drunks, or big drinkers, also need to be careful of how they look on social media.
- Self-controlled, not arrogant or quick tempered: He must have mastery over his impulses and desires, patient.
- Respectable and above reproach: He should be honourable, high integrity and morals.
- Hospitable: He must be welcoming and generous to others.
- Able to teach: He should be capable of instructing others in sound doctrine.
- Not violent but gentle, non-judgemental: He must not be quick to anger or prone to physical aggression.
- Not quarrelsome/argumentative: He should be peaceable and not contentious.
- Not a lover of money: He must not be greedy or covetous.
- Manages his own household well: He should lead his family with integrity and care.
- Not a recent convert: He should have spiritual maturity and experience in the faith.
- Well thought of by outsiders: He must have a good reputation even among non-believers.
- Holy: He must live a life devoted to God
- Self-Controlled: He must be disciplined and temperate.



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1.1 Key Points

Elders should be **mature in their faith**, demonstrating a deep understanding of **Scripture** and sound doctrine.

They must exhibit a high standard of **moral and ethical behaviour**, serving as examples to the congregation.

Elders should be capable of **leading and managing both their households and church affairs** effectively.

They must be able to teach and defend the faith, guiding others in their spiritual growth. These qualifications ensure that elders are spiritually mature, morally upright, and capable of leading and teaching within the church community.

1.2 What is the role of an elder?

In the New Testament, the role of an elder (also known as overseer or bishop) is primarily one of spiritual leadership and oversight within the local church.

Teaching and Preaching:

- Elders are responsible for teaching sound doctrine and preaching the Word of God.
- 1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV): "Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach."
- Titus 1:9 (ESV): "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

Spiritual Oversight:

- Elders provide spiritual oversight and governance of the church.
- 1 Peter 5:1-2 (ESV): "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly."

Pastoral Care:



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- Elders care for the spiritual well-being of the congregation, offering guidance, support, and discipline as needed.
- James 5:14 (ESV): "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

Setting an Example:

- 1 Peter 5:3 (ESV): "Not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

1.3 What is a Godly character?

The Bible is rich with passages that speak about godly character, emphasizing traits that reflect a life lived in alignment with God's will. Here are some key passages:

Old Testament

- Read these verses and summarise the main points:
- Micah 6:8 (ESV) _____
- Psalm 15 (ESV) _____
- Proverbs 31:10-31 (ESV) _____
- This passage describes the character of a virtuous woman, emphasizing her strength, dignity, wisdom, and kindness.

New Testament

- Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV) _____
- Philippians 2:3-8 (ESV) _____
- Colossians 3:12-17 (ESV) _____
- 2 Peter 1:5-8 (ESV) _____



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Is eldership a spiritual gift or does it requires spiritual gifts?

Eldership in the church is both a role and a calling that requires specific spiritual gifts and qualities. Gifts of the Spirit are given to all believers, some of these gifts are specific to leadership and training positions. The New Testament does not explicitly list "eldership" as a spiritual gift, but it does outline the character and abilities required for those serving as elders. The gifts are used for edification and building up of the church. Gifts need to accompany training. Reading scriptures, doing research and training on effective leadership, and soft skills needed such as conflict management, counselling and more.

Spiritual Gifts relevant to eldership

Read the verses and list the gifts in these verses.

Gift Teaching: The ability to instruct others in sound doctrine and apply biblical principles to life.

1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV): "Therefore an overseer must be... able to teach."

Gift Leadership: The capacity to govern and guide the church community.

a) Romans 12:8 (ESV): "The one who leads, with zeal."

b) 1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV): "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching."

Gift Wisdom: The ability to apply knowledge and insight to make godly decisions.

a) James 1:5 (ESV): "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

b) 1 Corinthians 12:8 (ESV): "For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom."

Gift Discernment The gift to distinguish between truth and error, and to make sound judgments.

a) 1 Corinthians 12:10

b) 1 John 4:1 (ESV): "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."

c) 1 Corinthians 12:10 (ESV): "... to another the ability to distinguish between spirits."



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Gift Shepherding: The capacity to care for, nurture, and guide the spiritual growth of the congregation.

- a) Ephesians 4:11 (ESV): "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers."
- b) 1 Peter 5:2-3 (ESV): "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight... being examples to the flock."

Gift Exhortation: The ability to encourage, comfort, and admonish believers.

- a) Romans 12:8 (ESV): "The one who exhorts, in his exhortation."
- b) 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV): "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

Gift Faith: A strong and confident trust in God that inspires others.

- a) 1 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV): "To another faith by the same Spirit."

Character qualities

Beyond specific spiritual gifts, the Bible emphasizes certain character qualities that are essential for eldership. These include being above reproach, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money (1 Timothy 3:2-3; Titus 1:7-8).

Summary

Eldership is not explicitly listed as a spiritual gift, but it requires the exercise of various spiritual gifts such as teaching, leadership, wisdom, discernment, shepherding, exhortation, and faith. Additionally, elders must exhibit strong Christian character and maturity. The combination of these gifts and qualities equips elders to effectively lead, teach, and care for the church community.



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Role of the Pastor Compared to an Elder

The term "pastor" (derived from the Latin word for shepherd) is used less frequently in the New Testament but is closely related to the role of an elder. The roles of pastor and elder are seen as overlapping, with some distinctions in function and emphasis:

Shepherding: While all elders are called to shepherd the flock, the term "pastor" specifically highlights the shepherding role of caring for and nurturing the spiritual growth of the congregation.

Ephesians 4:11 (ESV): "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers."

Preaching and Teaching: Pastors often take a primary role in the regular preaching and teaching ministry of the church, though this can also be a shared responsibility among elders.

1 Timothy 5:17 (ESV): "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching."

Administrative Leadership: Pastors frequently have a significant role in the administrative and organizational aspects of church life, coordinating ministry activities and programs.

Counselling and Discipleship: Pastors often provide personal counselling and discipleship to individuals and families within the church, helping them to grow in their faith and navigate life's challenges.

Key differences

Terminology: "Elder" is a term that emphasizes the role of governance and oversight, while "pastor" emphasizes shepherding and caring for the congregation.

Function: In many churches, all pastors are elders, but not all elders may function as the primary teaching and preaching pastor. The senior or lead pastor often takes a central role in teaching and vision casting.

Team leadership: Some churches have a plurality of elders, sharing the leadership responsibilities, while others may have a single lead pastor who works with a team of elders.



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2. Repercussions of 'Eldership gone wrong'

When an elder does not fulfill their role properly, the spiritual implications can be significant, affecting both the individual and the church community. Here are some key spiritual implications:

2.1. Spiritual Health of the Congregation

- **Weakening of Doctrine:** An elder who fails to teach sound doctrine can lead to theological confusion and the spread of false teachings, weakening the spiritual foundation of the church. 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (ESV)
- **Lack of Spiritual Growth:** Without proper guidance, the congregation may struggle to grow in their faith, resulting in spiritual stagnation. Hebrews 5:12-14 (ESV)

2.2. Moral and Ethical Issues

- **Loss of credibility and trust:** If an elder fails to live a life of integrity, it can damage their credibility and the trust of the congregation, leading to disillusionment and potential loss of faith among members. 1 Timothy 3:7 (ESV)
- **Stumbling Block:** Elders are expected to set an example for the congregation. If they fail to do so, they can become a stumbling block, causing others to falter in their faith. 1 Peter 5:3 (ESV)

2.3. Church Unity and Peace

- **Division and conflict:** Ineffective or inappropriate leadership can lead to divisions, conflicts, and power struggles within the church, undermining unity and peace. 1 Corinthians 1:10 (ESV)
- **Neglect of pastoral care:** Failure to provide adequate pastoral care can result in members feeling neglected, uncared for, and unsupported in their spiritual and personal lives.
- James 5:14 (ESV): "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

2.4. Personal Accountability and Judgment

- **Divine Accountability:** Elders are accountable to God for their leadership and stewardship. Failure to fulfill their role can result in divine judgment and discipline.
- Hebrews 13:17 (ESV): "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account."
- **Spiritual Decline:** An elder who neglects their responsibilities may experience personal spiritual decline, drifting away from their own faith and calling.



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1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV): "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."

Summary

The failure of an elder to fulfill their role has profound spiritual implications, affecting not only the health and growth of the congregation but also the unity and witness of the church. It can lead to theological errors, moral failings, division, neglect of pastoral care, and ultimately, accountability before God. Therefore, it is crucial for elders to adhere to their biblical responsibilities and lead with integrity, wisdom, and devotion.

3. How are elders chosen in a Church

The process of choosing elders for the church is outlined in the New Testament and involves several key steps, principles, and considerations to ensure that those selected are qualified and called by God.

Here's a detailed look at how elders are chosen:

3.1. Biblical qualifications

The primary qualifications for elders are found in the following passages:

1 Timothy 3:1-7: Emphasizes being above reproach, faithful in marriage, self-controlled, hospitable, able to teach, not a recent convert, and well thought of by outsiders.

Titus 1:5-9: Highlights being blameless, faithful in marriage, having believing children, being a steward of God, and holding firm to the trustworthy word.

These passages provide a framework for evaluating potential elders based on their character, conduct, and doctrinal soundness.

3.2. Spiritual discernment and Prayer

Choosing elders involves seeking God's guidance through prayer and spiritual discernment:

Acts 14:23 (ESV): "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

This emphasizes the importance of seeking God's will and wisdom in the selection process.



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3.3. Congregational involvement

While the New Testament does not provide a detailed procedure, it suggests that the congregation plays a role in recognizing and affirming the qualifications of potential elders:

Acts 6:3 (ESV): "Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty."

Though this passage refers to the selection of deacons, the principle of congregational involvement is applicable.

3.4. Existing leadership involvement

Current church leaders (elders and pastors) are involved in identifying, examining, and appointing new elders: 1 Timothy 4:14 (ESV): "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you."

Titus 1:5 (ESV): "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you."

This indicates that existing leaders play a crucial role in the process.

3.5. Examination and testing

Potential elders should be tested and proven before being appointed to ensure they meet the biblical qualifications: 1 Timothy 3:10 (ESV): "And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless."

While this passage specifically refers to deacons, the principle of testing applies to elders as well.

3.6. Confirmation and ordination

Once identified, examined, and affirmed, the final step is the formal appointment and ordination of elders, often involving the laying on of hands:

Acts 14:23 (ESV): "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

1 Timothy 5:22 (ESV): "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure."

Steps summary

Assess Biblical qualifications

Pray and seek God's guidance

Involve the Congregation: Ensure the congregation is involved in recognizing and affirming candidates.



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Engage Current Leaders: Have current elders and pastors participate in the identification and examination process.

Test and Prove: Conduct a period of testing to confirm the candidates' qualifications and calling.

Appoint and Ordain: Formally appoint and ordain the elders with the laying on of hands and prayer.

By following these steps, the church ensures that those chosen as elders are biblically qualified, spiritually mature, and divinely called to lead and shepherd the congregation.

Can a woman be an elder in the church?

The question of whether a woman can serve as an elder in the church is a topic of considerable debate among Christians, with differing interpretations and practices across denominations. Here are the main viewpoints based on biblical interpretations:

Complementarian View

This view holds that the roles of elder (or pastor) are reserved for men based on specific passages in the New Testament.

Key arguments include:

- 1 Timothy 2:12-14 (ESV) "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor."
- This passage is often interpreted to mean that women should not hold authoritative teaching roles over men in the church.
- 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV) The qualifications for elders specify that an elder should be "the husband of one wife," suggesting male leadership.
- Titus 1:5-9 (ESV) Similarly, the qualifications for elders refer to men ("husband of one wife").

Egalitarian View

This view holds that women can serve as elders based on broader biblical principles of equality and specific examples of women in leadership roles in the early church. Key arguments include:

Galatians 3:28 (ESV) "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."



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This passage is seen as emphasizing equality in Christ, transcending traditional gender roles, but seems to be speaking about who is more important in the Church, not a specific role/position.

Romans 16:1-7 (ESV) Paul commends several women for their ministry work, including Phoebe, a deacon, and Junia, who is "prominent among the apostles."

Acts 2:17-18 (ESV) This passage highlights the role of both men and women in prophetic ministry.