

**ELDERSHIP CRITERIA**  
(verse nos. omitted)

**1 Timothy 3**

1. Not violent, but gentle
2. Not greedy for money
3. Above reproach, respectable
4. One wife
5. Temperate, self-controlled
6. Hospitable
7. Not an alcoholic
8. Believing children
9. Sets heart on being overseer
10. Overseers
11. Not a recent convert
12. Reputation with outsiders
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.

**Titus 1**

- Not overbearing / quick-tempered / violent
- Not eager for dishonourable gain
- Blameless
- One wife
- Self-controlled
- Hospitable
- Not an alcoholic
- Family requirements
- Loves what is good
- Holy, disciplined
- Holds to message, refutes false doctrine

**1 Peter 5**

- Not lording it over others
- Not lover of money
- Willing to lead
- Shepherds
- Exemplary lives

**Commentary:**

- (1) He must not be a pushy, controlling person. He is a servant leader.
- (2) He is above board financially.
- (3) He is above reproach and blameless. Blameless does not mean “perfect” (Noah was “blameless” yet got drunk as soon as the Deluge was over). The apostle John later in life went by the title of ‘elder’, yet in his younger days was known as one of the “sons of thunder” (Mk 3:17). A changing of character over time. Nor does it mean “I blame him for something.” It means there are no glaring, disqualifying faults.
- (4) The “one-woman man” means he is faithful to his wife. The same Greek phraseology is found in 1 Tim 5—the widow eligible to receive assistance from the church must be a “one-man woman.” Some interpret this to rule out a divorced or remarried man (more than one wife serially). Others believe it precludes polygamy (more than one wife consecutively). There is a strong case for the interpretation of the phrase to mean marital fidelity.
- (5) Temperate means he is not given to extremes (relatively speaking).
- (6) Hospitality means he opens his home to outsiders—the church, strangers, neighbours... He knows how to create family.
- (7) While he may drink alcohol, he must not have a problem with drinking.
- (8) He must have believing children. Believing (see 1 Cor 9, “a believing wife”) means the children are Christians. It is expected that the elder’s children are in the faith. The Bible never explicitly says all children must be disciples, though it may assume this.
- (9) He is willing to lead; he is not coerced into serving as elder. He has set his heart on his office.
- (10) He is an overseer. While he may delegate, “the buck stops here” as far as church leadership responsibility goes. His wisdom and life experience, his family-building skills and age combine to make a wise advisor and true shepherd of the sheep.
- (11) He has not been baptised recently. He has been tested in the faith; he is no neophyte.
- (12) He has a good reputation with outsiders. Consider especially the following arenas: the neighbourhood and the workplace.
- (13) He loves what is good.
- (14) He is holy and disciplined; he follows the basic spiritual disciplines. His walk with God ennobles and inspires others.
- (15) He knows his Bible. He has conviction, not just knowledge, and can refute error in order to protect the flock. *Encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it* (Tit 1:9). The elder will in protecting the church have the responsibility of publicly refuting false teaching and false teachers that are harming the church (Tit 1:9-11).
- (16) His life is exemplary; he has the ability to show others how to live the Christian life.

**Other points:**

(1 Tim 5:17-21 NIV) The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. {18} For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." {19} Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. {20} Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

{21} I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favouritism.

- We see elders 'directing the affairs of the church'.
- Some elders (but not necessarily all) will also preach and teach. Preaching/Teaching ability is therefore not a Biblical requirement, although it is a Biblical possibility (1 Tim 5:17).
- Elders may possibly be paid. (Inference from 1 Tim 5:18)
- An elder is potentially a target for malicious accusation and some level of protection is appropriate – 2 or 3 witnesses. Standard OT legal practice (Deut 17:6, Deut 19:15). Also Mt 18:16-20.
- Provision is made for accountability of the elders to the church (1 Tim 5:20).
- Selection of elders (and other matters) to be done impartially and without favouritism (1 Tim 5:21).

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

- Overseeing/Shepherding the flock is the prime responsibility of an elder (1 Pet 5:2). Sense of protection (Acts 20:28) and vigilance (Acts 20:31) more than a full counselling schedule! Sheep wander, get caught in thickets etc. The shepherd notices this and brings them back.
- Ensuring that needs are met within the church. Concerns would typically be brought to the elders. The elders would see to it that the needs are met. Not necessarily meeting the needs themselves.
- Part of this would be to model and monitor the leadership of other leaders within the church. If a leader became harsh or over-bearing, the elder would deal with it.