

Appendix A

Biblical Qualification of an Elder

Contextual considerations

I Timothy 3:1-7 applies to either men or women (I Timothy 2:8; 3:2, 4-7).

The qualifications are essential not optional. The list of qualifications provides a standard for leaders that must be met (I Timothy 3:2, 4, 7). It is not a list of suggestions from which standards can be selected.

Biblical character qualifications (Note: Biblical qualifications are italicized.)

A. Personal Life (Do the candidate's internals square with his/her externals?)

- ***Above reproach*** (I Timothy 3:2) – Not perfection, but not flaw in his/her conduct that would be grounds for any kind of accusation. Blameless. A good reputation among believers.
- ***Faithful to his/her spouse*** (I Timothy 3:2) – Prohibits polygamy and sexual promiscuity. Affections centered exclusively for one's spouse. Unquestioned morality with regard to relationships with other men/women (I Timothy 3:4-5; I Corinthians 9:24-27).
- ***Temperate*** (I Timothy 3:2) Paul had in mind the self-control necessary for effective ministry (I Timothy 3:11, Titus 2:2). Also clarity of mind and soberness or the opposite of any kind of fuzziness. Sober judgement is highly valued in individual and public life – free from emotional extremism, balanced not rash.
- ***Self-controlled*** (I Timothy 3:2) – Of sound mind; demonstrates wisdom and discretion. Wisdom suggest more than biblical knowledge. It is the application of knowledge to the practicalities of life. Exercising balanced judgement and avoiding legalism and moral laxity. Having a firm grip on the real world and the ability to draw on the Word and experience to make decisions.
- ***Respectable*** (I Timothy 3:2) – Well-mannered; behaving in an honorable way. A person who has gained the respect of those around him/her and will continue to earn their respect as he/she leads.
- ***Hospitable*** (I Timothy 3:2) – A person friendly to strangers and others, with an open heart and an open home. The church is a family and therefore needs to keep its doors and hearts open to the joys, sorrows, needs and celebrations of others. Not to meet the needs of everyone but to lead the congregation in this responsibility.
- ***Able to teach*** (I Timothy 3:2) – Ability to handle the Scripture – to understand and communicate the truth to others and to be able to refute those who mishandle it (Titus 1:9). Not necessarily publicly and to large groups; some may do this informally and in more private settings. The Scriptures are central to ministry (I Timothy 1:3-11, 4-6; 6:3-5).
- ***Not given to drunkenness*** (I Timothy 3:3) – The phrase suggest not under the control of alcohol. Over-drinking can cloud the mind and blunt the senses – conditions that hinder good

leadership and the ability to shepherd. Drunkenness (or other modern substance abuse) also suggests some underlying need that is being avoided or that one is numbing oneself to reality. Drunkenness violates God's will (Romans 13:12; I Corinthians 5:11; 8:9, 10:31-33, Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18, I Peter 4:1-5). God wants clear thinking, alert, discerning individuals who are capable of making sound decisions.

- ***Not quarrelsome*** (I Timothy 3:3) – Not one who consistently responds to criticism with defensiveness or anger – verbally or physically. Able to take the heat without spreading the flames. One must remember Ephesians 6:12, “for our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the world forces of this darkness...”
- ***Gentle*** (I Timothy 3:3) – The term means yielding or forbearing. To pardon human failings, to look to the law-giver, not to the law; to the intention, not to the action; settled in love rather than settled in law (II Timothy 2:24).
- ***Peaceable*** (I Timothy 3:3) – Not quarrelsome. Able to get along with and accept the views of others. One who will produce harmony rather than discord. One who will create and preserve relationships necessary for building a unified church. One who is slow on the trigger and listens to others, cooperates, builds people up instead of tearing them down.
- ***Free from the love of money*** (I Timothy 3:3) – Money is not evil, nor is it wrong to have a lot of it. Yet it is a violation of God's will when one loves it. A mature Christian is free, not from money but from the love of money. One who maintains a healthy detachment and can therefore be a model of generosity and maintain simplicity of lifestyle. Recognizes that all one has belongs to God and therefore must be looked after faithfully.

B. Domestic Life (Would his/her family select him/her?)

- ***One who manages his household well*** (I Timothy 3:4-5) – One who manages his/her own household well, keeping their children under control with all dignity. The focus is the home, not the business, because the church is a family, not a business. It doesn't matter if a person succeeds at everything in life; if he/she is not leading their family well, they are disqualified from leading the church. A word of caution: no one is going to be perfect. We must look for the general tenor in the home that includes respect, love, order, attentiveness, involvement, support, communication, spiritual development, open discussions regarding Christ and study of the Word. Would not necessarily rule out unmarried men or women, although some would say the safest interpretation would be that the individual be married and have children old enough to show respect.

C. Spiritual Life (Do the believers affirm his/her maturity?)

- ***Not a new convert*** (I Timothy 3:6) – The role of Elder calls for roots, perception, experience and wisdom. Someone seasoned by life's triumphs, failures, joys and disappointments. Enthusiasm, Bible knowledge, godly traits are necessary but not sufficient in that it is so easy to fall victim to pride or discouragement. Only the growing pain of maturity produces a stable and humble heart.

D. Public Life (Would the broader community affirm this person's character?)

- ***A good reputation with those outside the church*** (I Timothy 3:7) – Reputation matters. Is the person friendly? How do they handle conflict? How do they treat the dry cleaner, waitress, business associate, customer, sales help or grocery checker?

Note: The additional qualifications of (I Timothy 2:12; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4) are not included in the above list.

