

The Qualifications of an Elder (Part 1):
Personal Character Characteristics
(Titus 1:6-9)

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Definition of Elders/Overseers

Elders/Overseers are men who are given the responsibility for shepherding the Body of Christ. They have the functional, comprehensive oversight of God's people to manage according to God's will/agenda. They are responsible for:

1. Teaching the body Biblical truth
2. Leading the Church in a direction that fulfills the Kingdom agenda
3. Watching over (shepherding) those in the local church
4. Warning those in the local church against impending dangers
5. Maintaining order, unity, and holiness within the body
6. Overseeing all aspects of the church

(Ephesians 4:11-17, Acts 20:28, Hebrews 13:17, Romans 16:17-20, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Titus 1:5-9)

16 Characteristics of Elders/Overseers

Titus 1:6-9 mentions 16 characteristics that should be found in an Elder/Overseer of the local church of God. In order to better understand these characteristics, they will be divided into three categories:

1. Personal Character Characteristics
2. Private Ministry Characteristics
3. Public Ministry Characteristics

Being Above Reproach

From the beginning of the section in Titus 1:6-9, Paul mentions the overall attribute of being above reproach. "Above reproach" is tied to one's personal character, private ministry, and one's public ministry. In relation to **personal character**, being above reproach can be understood as a life that is not left open to criticism, to attack, or to be called into account for wrong doing. He carries himself consistently in Christian character, conducts, conversation, commitments, commodities, and communion. In most cases, when he is criticized it is because he is carrying himself according to God's design in these areas and others are dealing with their personal perceptions or preferences above biblical precepts in regards to the person. He is not perfect, but he is consistent. This person seeks to operate in such a way that his personal character does not ruin

the reputation of the church. This person does not have a reputation of wrongdoing because he is seeking to address his character flaws and grow in Christ-like character on a regular basis.

Personal Character Characteristics to Be Found in Elders/Overseers

1. The Elder/Overseer must not be **self-willed** – must not regulate his life around his self-interest to the point of disregarding or lacking respect for anyone else’s rights, feelings, concerns, or interests.
2. The Elder/Overseer must not be **quick-tempered** – must not be quick to have a disposition of antagonism toward others that manifests itself in sinful, wrathful emotions and sinful, wrathful actions toward others.
3. The Elder/Overseer must not be **addicted to wine** – must not be a slave to drinking alcohol; must not have a lustful attachment to alcohol; must not be one who is a drunkard.
4. The Elder/Overseer must not be fond of **sordid gain** – must not be greedy for money; must not be willing to compromise Christ-like character to gain money; must not pursue money in a dishonest manner.
5. The Elder/Overseer must be **loving what is good** – must be one who is consistent in promoting and practicing activities prompted by love.¹
6. The Elder/Overseer must be **sensible** – must have the ability to curb his desires and impulses through the wisdom of God so as to produce a measured and orderly life²; to be self-disciplined in his freedom; to be self-restrained in all passions and desires.³

Since these men are to be a model for the congregation, they reflect what we all should be demonstrating to the glory of God, for the blessing of others, and for our spiritual health. We all should be seeking to operate in such a way that our personal character does not ruin the reputation of the church. We all should be seeking to address our character flaws and grow in Christ-like character on a regular basis. Therefore, let us evaluate ourselves in light of the chart below:

¹ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 399.

² Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 373.

³ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

AREAS OF MY LIFE I NEED TO EVALUATE ACCORDING TO TITUS 1:6-9	SELDOM	OCCASIONALLY	FREQUENTLY	ALL THE TIME
I tend to focus more on what is important to me than what is important to others				
I am easily annoyed with the incompetence, inconsistencies, irresponsibility, or downright selfishness of others				
When I am stressed, fearful, bored, angry, or just looking for a little fun, I find getting tipsy a good avenue for me				
The church is one thing but when it comes to making money sometimes I believe you have to cut some corners				
I am prone to seek the good of others first before considering myself				
I do well at telling myself no when I should and sticking with it accordingly				