

**TITUS:
THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GRACE OF GOD
AND THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH**

**The Qualifications of an Elder (Part 3):
Private Ministry Characteristics
(Titus 1:6-9)**

Dr. Nicolas Ellen

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, one's private ministry, and one's public ministry. In relation to ***private ministry***, 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 wrongdoing. He carries himself in a God-honoring manner in relation to his family. If he is criticized it is because he is carrying himself according to God's design with his family and others are dealing with their personal perceptions or preferences above biblical precepts in regard to the person. He is not perfect but he is consistent. This person seeks to operate in such

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

Private Ministry Characteristics to Be Found in Elders/Overseers

An Elder must have ***children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion*** – children who are not adults (0-17 in the United States/different in various countries), being kept under control in a manner that is respectful and honorable.

- A. Fathers are to keep their children under control in manner that is respectful and honorable, which can lead to their children obeying their father's directives and not being publicly known for being wild.
- B. Fathers guide this process of keeping their children under control by exercising their authority as God's agent. They direct their children to the glory of God and the benefit of the child. They do not direct their children according to their personal agendas or their selfish ambitions (Ephesians 6:4).
- C. Fathers guide this process of keeping their children under control by seeking not to provoke their children to anger in two ways (Ephesians 6:4):
 - 1. By not having a home too loose in guidelines and guardrails, resulting in a child-centered home
 - 2. By not having a home too restrictive with guidelines and guardrails, resulting in a mean-spirited home
- D. Fathers guide this process of keeping their children under control by disciplining and instructing their children according to God's agenda (Ephesians 6:4).
 - 1. They instruct them in what to do and why they do what they do.
 - 2. They discipline and correct them when they do wrong and show them why and how they must do things God's way.
- E. Where there is a progression of sin being demonstrated in children, it is being kept under control and not allowed to go as far as it could go, because the father is consistent in addressing the sin and leading his children into obedience (Ephesians 6:4).

- F. Fathers attend to both the behavior and the heart of their children to facilitate change from the inside out. They help children understand the connection between their heart and their behavior, and their need for Christ to save them from themselves (Ephesians 6:4).
- G. Where this is not happening, a man may have to develop in the skill of keeping his children under control before taking the position of Elder.
- H. If he is in the office and discovers that his children are not under control on a habitual basis, then he must step down for a while to recapture or to develop in the skill of keeping his children under control and then return to his office when appropriate to do so.
- I. He must put his private ministry with his family first and his public ministry second.
- J. Children who are 18 and above are no longer under the supervision of the father as a child and must be treated as any adult would be treated in the congregation (e.g. instruction, exhortation, admonition, or church discipline).

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 private ministry 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:

AREAS OF MY LIFE I NEED TO EVALUATE ACCORDING TO TITUS 1:6-9	SELDOM	OCCASIONALLY	FREQUENTLY	ALL THE TIME
I am very critical of other people's children and the way they raise them especially if those people are in leadership				
I tend to hold the children of leaders to a higher standard than I do other children, instead of helping those children of leaders as I would help other children				
I am seeking to learn God's agenda for parenting and to raise my children according to those standards				
I am too loose in my parenting, thereby creating a child-centered home				
I am too restrictive in my parenting, thereby creating a mean-spirited home				
I am keeping my children under control, as well as treating my adult children as adults				