

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

**The Qualifications of an Elder (Part 4):
Public Ministry 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, one's private ministry, and one's public ministry. In relation to **public ministry**, he operates in such a manner that he is not left open to criticism, to attack, or to be called into account for wrongdoing, because he carries himself consistently according God's design in the office of overseer. Where there is criticism or attack it is because he is carrying himself consistently according to God's design in the office of overseer and others are dealing with their personal perceptions or preferences above biblical precepts in regards to his way of doing ministry. He is not perfect, but he is consistent. His manner of operation as overseer does not ruin the reputation of the church

because he is seeking to deal with his character flaws and grow in Christ-like character in relation to his public ministry.

Public Ministry Characteristics to Be Found in Elders/Overseers

1. The Elder/Overseer must not be **pugnacious** – he must not be cruel, contentious, violent, a bully, or a brutal person.
2. The Elder/Overseer must be **just** – he must be one who operates by that which is right, fair, morally upright, equitable, and ethically sound as prescribed by God.
3. The Elder/Overseer must be **hospitable** – he must be kind, cordial, and generous to guests and/or strangers by providing some form of provision, food, drink, or lodging accordingly.
4. The Elder/Overseer must be **devout** – he must be godly, careful of all duties toward God¹, dedicated in lifestyle and service to God and His will, and set apart from evil to live a life committed to godly living and service unto the Lord.
5. The Elder/Overseer must be **holding fast to God's word** – he must be devoted to God's word so that he may encourage people to act upon it accordingly and to rebuke people who are speaking or acting in contradiction to it.

“The most common mistake made by churches that are eager to implement eldership is to appoint biblically unqualified men. Because there is always a need for more shepherds, it is tempting to allow unqualified, unprepared men to assume leadership in the church. This is, however, a time-proven formula for failure. Thus the God-given standards for elders are essential for protecting the local church's spiritual welfare and evangelistic witness. Today churches most need men of Christlike character to be in spiritual leadership. The best laws and constitutions are impotent without men who are 'just', 'devout', 'sensible', 'self-controlled', 'forbearing', 'uncontentious'. And faithful to sound doctrine. These are precisely the qualities that God requires of those who lead His people. A biblical eldership, then, is a biblically qualified team of shepherd leaders. A plurality of unqualified elders is not benefit to the local church. Jon Zens, editor of the Journal Searching Together writes 'Better have no elders than the wrong ones.' The local church must in all earnestness insist on biblically qualified elders, even if such men take years to develop.”²

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

² Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 68, 72, 83.

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 public 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 careful not to demand my way, push people around, or intimidate people to accomplish my intended goals				
I operate by what is right, fair, and just with others on a regular basis even if it costs me				
I tend to be considerate of strangers by caring for them in an appropriate way when feasible to do so				
I am dedicated to the work of service God has called me to in the local church and abroad				
I am devoted to the study and application of God's word				
I am devoted to guiding people into truth and guarding people from evil using God's Word within the local church and abroad				