

The Qualifications and Responsibilities of an Elder

While there are three different words used in the New Testament to describe the role of Elder, each refers to the same office. The three terms are:

- **Elder (presbuteros)** – this term means “old” (1 Timothy 5:1), but also carries with it a sense of title in which one holds an office (1 Timothy 5:17). While no specific age is given, this term implies maturity, dignity and experience and honor.
- **Overseer (episkopos)** – word used to designate those in charge of management. This term emphasizes the function of an Elder in exercising authority (1 Peter 5:2).
- **Pastor (poimen)** – word means “shepherd” and applies to the heart of the one who tends, feeds, and guides God’s people (1 Peter 5:2).

Together, these three words describe an Elder’s role. They are to maturely govern the church (presbutoros), exercising authority and managing ministry (episkopos), as well as caring for and directing people spiritually (poimen), and the New Testament outlines the activities by which these roles are fulfilled:

- Leading (1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 1 Timothy 3:2-4).
- Equipping, training and ordaining (Acts 14:23, 1 Timothy 4:4, 5:22, Titus 1:5).
- Modeling Christ likeness (1 Peter 5:3).
- Watching over God’s people (Acts 20:28, 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Peter 5:1-2).
- Teaching and opposing false doctrine (Acts 20:31, 1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:9).
- Praying with and for the sick (Acts 6:4, James 5:14).
- Correcting, rebuking and encouraging (2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:9, 13, Hebrews 13:17).

Considering the weighty responsibility of Elder leadership, we must necessarily ask what qualifies someone to lead as an Elder. The Biblical Qualifications of an Elder are:

- Possessing the “desire” to lead (1 Timothy 3:1).
- Self-controlled and disciplined, demonstrating moral integrity, and possessing a good reputation even outside the church (1 Timothy 3:2,7; Titus 1:7-8).
- The husband of one wife and leading his home well, with children who believe and live disciplined lives (1 Timothy 3:2,4; Titus 1:6).
- Above reproach, temperate, and not given to anger (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:7-8).
- Prudent, wise and submitted to God and others (1 Timothy 3:3).
- Warm, hospitable, welcoming and relational (1 Timothy 3:2).
- Free from all types of addictions (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7).
- Able to teach and encouraging from Scripture (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9).
- Not motivated by selfish gain, or popularity (Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 5:2).
- Not intimidating, harsh, or impatient, but gentle, kind and fair (Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 5:3).
- Not contentious, picking fights or quarrelling with others (1 Timothy 3:3).
- Not a new convert, but mature and demonstrating the fruit of faith (1 Timothy 3:6).

The Constitution of GEBC (section pertaining to elder leadership)

Section 3. Qualification

- A. All Elders must be regular members of the church in good standing and must show evidence of established Christian character (Article V, Section 4). They shall be godly men of mature Christian experience and knowledge who exemplify the standards of this office as detailed in 1 Tim. 3:1-7.
- B. Before nomination each candidate for the office of Elder shall assent, as attested to by signature, to the following statements:
 - 1. I have publicly confessed Christ as my personal Savior and have experienced the new birth as set forth in John 3: 3-6.
 - 2. I reaffirm my agreement with this Constitution.
 - 3. My life is consistent with the expectations for office outlined in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3.
 - 4. I agree to serve in the capacity of Elder, if elected, for the term for which I am elected.

Section 4. Duties

- A. The Board of Elders shall monitor the overall spiritual life and ministry of the church. They shall also be responsible, in conjunction with the Senior Pastor and pastoral staff, for establishing personnel and other policies, for conducting evaluations of the Senior Pastor and for reviewing staff reviews conducted by the Senior Pastor or his designee. Members of the Board of Elders shall also be responsible for interviewing candidates for membership and recommending to the church those candidates found to meet the requirements established by this Constitution. The Board of Elders shall have responsibility for overseeing the spiritual life and pastoral care of the members of the church, including the handling disciplinary actions in accordance with Article VI.
- B. The Board of Elders shall have oversight over all church operations and transactions with power to act. It shall not encumber the church with any transfer, sale, purchase or loan of any real estate, except by authorization conveyed through a majority vote of the church membership present at a constitutionally called business meeting. The Board of Elders shall have authority to approve the appointment of all salaried personnel except as otherwise stated in this Constitution. The Board of Elders shall handle and consider suggestions, recommendations and grievances from or against any member or group affiliated with the church. The actions of the Board of Elders shall be subject to review by the membership at any constitutionally called business meeting.
- C. The Board of Elders shall also appoint a Nominating Committee, which shall recommend to the church for election one or more qualified persons: (i) to fill each position on the Board of Elders which is or will be vacant, and (ii) to serve on the Pulpit Committee as set forth in Article XI, in accordance with this Constitution. Nominees for the Nominating Committee and any such position shall be regular members of the church, in good standing at the time of their nomination & election.