



Who are Elders

“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well as worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.” (1 Tim 5:17)

Elders were commonly recognized as community leaders in the ancient world (Num 11:16; Judges 8:14; 1 Sam 8:4 etc). It was the judge or King who ruled, but the Elders who provided counsel (2 Sam 3:17; 5:3; 1 Kings 12:6).

In the New Testament, apostles, prophets and teachers have a special leadership role (Act 13:1; 1 Cor 12:28), but there are also Elders in every local church. The terms ‘Elder’, ‘shepherd/pastor’ and overseer’ are used interchangeably (Act 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1, 2). ‘Elder’ (*presbuteros*) derived from the Hebrew tradition while ‘overseer’ (*episkopos*) derived from the Greek tradition. Eldership in New Testament times was always in the plural (e.g. Act 20:17; Phil 1:1 etc).

Qualifications of an Elder

In Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus, he stresses the character quality of Elders (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). There is no doubt that the character is more important than anything else. Failing in an area of duty does not disqualify an Elder but moral or character failure undermines everything else. Elders are to be ‘blameless’ and ‘above reproach’.

“An elder must be blameless,...” (Titus 1:6) and:

- must live a life which is above reproach, that is, be blameless, and have a good reputation with non-believers (1Tim 3:2, 7; Tit 1:6);
- must be faithful in marriage (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6);
- must be temperate, exercise self-control, be respectable, be hospitable, be gentle, upright, holy, and disciplined, and one who loves what is good (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8);
- must not be given to drunkenness, or be violent, overbearing, quick-tempered, quarrelsome, a pursuer of dishonest gain, or a lover of money (1Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7);
- must manage his own family well, and see that his children, who are to be believers, obey him with proper respect and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient (1Tim 3:4; Titus 1:6)
- must be able to take care of God’s church and oversee God’s work (1Tim 3:5; Tit 1:7)
- must not be a recent convert (1 Tim 3:6)
- must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught (Tit 1:9); and
- must be able to teach and thereby to encourage others by sound doctrine and to refute those who oppose this teaching (1Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9).



The Duties of an Elder

1 Peter 5:2-4

Scriptural Description

- Lead their flock to the fold and teach and instruct, heal and restore them.
- Provide pastoral care (John 10:1-18; Act 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1, 2)
- Teaching (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9)
- Provide oversight of the congregation (Act 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2)
- Protection of God's people from heresy and error, keep the members of congregation from going astray (Act 20:28-31)
- Shepherding/Direction (Act 20:28; 1 Cor 12:28)
- Ministry to the sick (James 5:14-15)
- Correction and discipline (1 Thess 5:12; Heb 13:17)
- Leadership (1 Tim 5:17)
- Hospitality (Titus 1:8)
- Example to people (1 Peter 5:3)

Practical Duties and Responsibilities

- to share with the pastors in building up the congregation in faith and love;
- to nurture the members in their growth in grace;
- to visit regularly the members, members-in-association and adherents;
- to interview, examine, report and recommend to the Wesley Mission Council concerning applicants for training as Ministers, Lay Pastors and Lay Preachers, having regard to the Regulations to the ministry;
- to interview, examine, report and recommend to the WICC concerning applicants for any vacant position of Lay Pastor, Youth / Adult Worker or Intern, having regard to the Wesley Mission Regulations;
- to share with the minister in the conduct of worship, the administration of the sacraments, the spiritual oversight of the congregation, and in Christian education and evangelistic outreach;
- to exercise pastoral discipline;
- to assist the pastor in keeping and updating the rolls of the congregation;
- to assist the pastor in membership class;
- to make suitable arrangements for the custody of the minutes of congregational meetings.