

*Qualifications  
&  
Appointment  
of Elders for  
Faith Bible Church*

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## **Elder Qualifications from 1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1**

- 1. 1 Tim 3:1 – Desire to serve in the office of Elder** – *He seeks the office of elder because he wants to serve in this way, rather than merely a sense of duty. [See #24, p.6]*
- 2. 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6, 7 – Above reproach** – *This certainly doesn't mean moral perfection, but rather “one whose character and conduct has not been called into question, or one who is free from accusation...the fundamental qualification under which all other qualifications are subsumed” (Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, p. 171).\* The idea in this qualification is an ongoing perception of sin, something that is current and relevant, rather than the absence of any accusation ever. The elder's public reputation reflects on the reputation of our Lord and His church.*
- 3. 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6 – Husband of one wife** – *This qualification restricts the office of elder to men. It literally means a “one-woman man.” The emphasized aspect of this qualification is “one.” This refers to a “man who is not flirtatious, promiscuous, or involved in a questionable relationship with another woman...Paul is not referring exclusively to the marital status of the prospective elder, but to a character trait ... he is loyal and faithful” (ibid, p. 193).*
- 4. 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8 – Temperate; Self-controlled** – *While this literally is used in the context of wine, this probably is to be taken “metaphorically, referring to mental, behavioral, and spiritual sobriety... Sober or temperate are good translations of the Greek and imply self-control, clear-mindedness, and freedom from all excesses” (ibid, p. 195). This “man must be characterized by self-discipline, self-restraint, and self-control in every aspect of life – particularly over physical desires (Acts 24:25; 1 Cor 7:9; 9:25)” (ibid, p. 179).*

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\**Biblical Eldership*, Alexander Strauch, Copyright 1986, 1988, Second Edition, Lewis and Roth, Publishers, Littleton, CO

5. **1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8 – Prudent; Sensible** – *This word literally means ‘soundness of mind’ and means that one is “balanced, discreet, and controlled because of sound judgment, sensible thinking, and reasonableness” (ibid, p. 196). This truth is expressed in Rom 12:3.*
6. **1 Tim 3:2 – Respectable** – *This characteristic refers to an “orderly, disciplined, and honorable man” (ibid).*
7. **1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8 – Hospitable** – *This word technically refers to a “love of strangers.” It describes those who care for the practical needs of others by opening their home in generosity. See also Job 31:32; 3 Jn 5-8; Rom 12:13; 1 Pt 4:9; Heb 13:2.*
8. **1 Tim 3:2 – Able to teach** – *This description “entails three basic elements: a knowledge of Scripture, the readiness to teach, and the capability to communicate. Elders must be able to open their Bibles and instruct others. This requirement has nothing to do with the ‘gift’ of teaching, nor does it have anything to do with preaching” (ibid, p. 197). [See #21, p. 6]*
9. **1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7 – Not addicted to wine** – *This word literally means “not beside wine, or not addicted, preoccupied, or overindulgent with wine. The term has a secondary meaning, that of being violent or a brawler because of wine” (ibid, p. 199).*
10. **1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7 – Not pugnacious** – *“A pugnacious person is a fighter – a quick-tempered , quarrelsome individual who is prone to physical assault on others” (ibid).*
11. **1 Tim 3:3 – Gentle** – *This characteristic describes “a forbearing, gracious, and conciliatory man...A gentle man exhibits a willingness to yield and patiently makes allowances for the weakness and ignorance of the fallen human condition” (ibid).*

12. **1 Tim 3:3 – Peaceable** – *A “Christian elder is required to be ‘uncontentious,’ which literally means, not fighting. That is, he is not quarrelsome. Positively stated, he is a peaceable man” (ibid, p. 200). This does not mean that an elder should not confront false teaching or sin – Scripture teaches the necessity of this, but he must do so in a gentle, peaceable way. See also Titus 3:2; 2 Tim 2:24-25.*
13. **1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7; 1 Pt 5:2 – Free from the love of money** – *This characteristic describes greed, a money-loving materialism that is motivated by sinful lust. See also Heb 13:5; 1 Tim 6:10; Acts 20:33ff.*
14. **1 Tim 3:4-5; Titus 1:6 – Manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity** – *“A Christian elder must have obedient and submissive children, but not be a spirit-crushing tyrant who gains submission by harsh punishment or unjust oppression. He must control his children in an honorable, respectful, and dignified way...Caring for the local church is more like managing a family than managing a business or state” (ibid, pp. 201-202). The children must not be accused of dissipation (wild, debauched, reckless living) nor of rebellion.*
15. **1 Tim 3:6 – Not a new convert (To prevent conceit)** – *This refers to a “beginner in the faith, a baby Christian, a recent convert. No matter how spiritual, zealous, knowledgeable, or talented a new convert may be, he is not spiritually mature. Maturity requires time and experience for which there is no substitute. There is nothing wrong with being ‘a new convert.’ All Christian begin life in Christ as babies and grow to maturity (1 Cor 3:1-2). An elder, however, must be mature and know his own heart” (ibid, pp. 202-203).*

16. **1 Tim 3:7 – Good reputation with those outside the church** – *Hypocrisy must not describe the character of an elder. “A man’s image before his Christian brethren must not be different from his image at work, in the family, or in the neighborhood” (ibid, p. 204) as well as those in the community.*
17. **Titus 1:7 – Not self-willed** – *“‘God’s steward’ must not be...a man who wants his own way regardless of others (self-willed literally means self-pleasing)...A self-willed man is headstrong, independent, self-assertive, and ungracious toward those of a different opinion...He is stubborn, arrogant, and inconsiderate of others’ opinions, feelings, and desires” (ibid, p. 175). This trait includes those who may not even realize they exhibit this characteristic.*
18. **Titus 1:7 – Not quick tempered** – *A Christian elder needs to be slow to anger. “The fierce looks and harsh words of a quick-tempered man tear people apart emotionally, leave people sick, destroy the spirit, and turn people away from God’s family...With his ugly, angry words, a quick-tempered man will destroy the peace and unity the Lord desires for His people” (ibid, p. 176).*
19. **Titus 1:8 – Loving what is good** – *Strauch quotes several people with these compiled descriptions of this characteristic: “one who willingly and with self-denial does good, or is kind...ready to do what is beneficial to others...the unwearying activity of love.” He will “always seek to do helpful things for all people. He will be loving, generous, and kind towards all and will never sink to evil, retaliatory behavior” (ibid, pp. 177-178).*
20. **Titus 1:8 – Just** – *This refers to being “an upright, righteous man who conducts himself in accordance with the principles of divine truth. Such a man can be counted on to make a wise, fair, and righteous judgment for the community [of faith].” (ibid, p. 178).*

21. **Titus 1:9-11 – Holds fast to the faithful Word > Exhort in sound doctrine and refute false teaching** – *One who is so described “must be solidly committed to the truth of God’s Word...an elder must cling firmly to, be devoted to, and adhere wholeheartedly to God’s Word...This implies strong conviction and commitment to the Word. [See #8, p. 3]*

### **Elder Descriptions from 1 Peter 5**

22. **1 Pt 5:1 – Among the flock** – *This little phrase describes an elder as one who sees himself as part of God’s flock and fellowships with God’s people rather than one who remains distant from the flock or sees himself as “over” the flock in a way that separates him from the flock.*
23. **1 Pt 5:2 – Shepherds God’s flock** – *An elder must be a man who actively cares for God’s flock by ministering God’s Word and praying for those about whom He will give an account to God.*
24. **1 Pt 5:2 – Exercises oversight voluntarily without compulsion, according to God** – *While being a part of God’s flock, he needs to be aware of the ministry of God’s flock to make sure that these ministries serve to honor God. This evaluation needs to be from a willing desire and not merely a duty imposed upon him by others. The ministry of an elder should be done willingly, not out of a sense of duty or precedent. If an elder feels consistently “trapped” or “overwhelmed” by the responsibilities, he should re-examine his motivation and role. [See #1, p. 1]*
25. **1 Pt 5:3 – Not lording it over the flock but as an example** – *This oversight needs to be done with gentleness, rather than heavy handed authority. The commended oversight in this requirement involves setting an example of imitating Christ for the flock to imitate.*

## **Elder Characteristics of F.A.I.T.H.**

- 26. Faithful** (2 Tim 2:2) – *This describes a man who can be depended upon to fulfill God’s priorities for his life.*
- 27. Available** – *For a man to be a faithful elder, he needs to be able and willing to spend the time that the office of being an elder requires. It means that he is able to fulfill the office of elder without neglecting his other God-given priorities. He needs to make availability to the ministries of the church and his ministry as an elder a priority over other discretionary commitments.*
- 28. Initiative** (1 Pt 5:2 – “eagerness”) – *This quality means that the man is looking for ways to fulfill the office of elder and then goes about seeking God-honoring ways to meet those ministry needs. He does this from a heart motivated to serve rather than merely being compelled by others.*
- 29. Teachable** (1 Pt 5:5-6 – Humble) – *A teachable man will be humble to listen and learn from God’s Word and others. He realizes that he has much to learn and eagerly looks for truth with a discernment based upon God’s Word. He is willing to change his views on a particular issue based on biblical principles and perspectives in interaction with godly people.*
- 30. Heart for God** – (Titus 1:8 – Devout) – *This describes “a man with a firm disposition who is committed to faithfully observing his religious obligations and practices” (ibid, p.178), not merely from a sense of duty but from a heart motivated by his love for God.*

## **Elder Qualities Remaining**

- 31. Team Player** (1 Pt 5:1 – “elders”) – *Since God’s Word clearly describes a plurality of elders as those who shepherd God’s flock, each elder must work together with the other elders to achieve unanimity in decisions, protect the peaceful unity of God’s flock, and own the decisions that have been made, whether or not he agrees with these conclusions. This may mean gracious deferring to others in matters of personal preference in order to achieve consensus. It will certainly mean publicly supporting decisions made to others outside of elders meetings. It is important to protect our spirit of love and respect for one another while working through any differences in perspective.*
- 32. – Statement of Faith** – *Those who would serve as elders must be in complete agreement with the Statement of Faith of Faith Bible Church. (For any disagreements with the statement of faith, the elders are willing to discuss with a prospective elder how it could be changed to reflect more accurately the teachings of God’s Word.)*



# PROCESS FOR APPOINTMENT OF A NEW ELDER

Note: The biblical qualifications for Elders are found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Further descriptions of Elder ministry roles and responsibilities are seen by example and description in many other references, e.g.: Acts 6:4, 14:23, 15:1-35, 20:17-38; 1 Pet. 5:1-4. The purpose of this document is not to present a biblical case for an Elder-led polity or to expound on the ministry of Elders per se. Rather, it deals with the practical considerations involved in identifying and appointing qualified shepherds for this particular local church.

## *Background from ministry philosophy:*

Elder-qualified men should be involved in ministry whether or not they are publicly recognized or installed in a position of leadership/authority. Men aspiring to the office of elder will not wait to be recognized; they will naturally want to and find ways to minister to others in the church (and outside of the church) because they are driven by a love of the Lord and His church. A position or title should not change or initiate their passion for the Word and for ministry to others, though such recognition may clearly enhance it.

The church may be endowed with any number of elder-qualified men. However, biblical qualification does not automatically infer that any particular man must be recognized and/or installed into a position of leadership and authority in the church. There may be any number of factors which could preclude or prevent even a qualified man from joining the Eldership of a particular church. These factors may include, but not be limited to:

- A. Need.** There may or may not be a specific need for Elders based on the size and complexity of the ministry of the church
- B. Personal History.** The nature and history of leadership in the individual's past may be examined, including his ability to work in a team and to embrace the concept of

plurality of leadership and consensus/unanimity in the decision process.

- C. **Balance.** There is a general desire to be an Elder-led church rather than a staff-led or staff-driven church. Keeping the proper ratio of staff vis-à-vis lay Elders is one key to keeping that balance.

The character of biblical elder-qualification should be the goal of every spiritually-minded man in the congregation. Many men in the congregation should have lives, homes, and ministries which aim at fulfilling those qualifications. So, those men should be functioning like elders in every way except for the responsibility for leadership and whole-church shepherding inherent in the office. The “office” is a public recognition of both fulfillment of the biblical qualifications and installation into the responsibilities for official direction, decision-making, etc. of the local church.

## ***Practical Considerations:***

**“Election”.** There are a variety of ways in which an Elder may become publicly recognized as holding the office of an Elder. Different traditions hold to various forms or manners of nomination, election, and confirmation. While it may be advisable to have congregational initiative and/or participation in the process, it seems clear that the final authority rests with the recognized Eldership to approve new Elders. In other words, whatever mechanism is used for the process, the Elders are a self-perpetuating body, approving new members to serve in the ministry with themselves, having common qualifications but diversity in personalities and giftedness.

**Equality.** In general, all Elders serve with equal authority, each of them under the authority of the leadership team/group. Exercising humble deference, each Elder submits to and accepts the counsel and decisions of the body of Elders. There is no separate level of status or authority, whether staff or lay Elder. While there should be proper respect for prior precedents and experience of longstanding Elders before them, newer Elders have no less authority or rank among the Elder Team. Legally, each year certain Elders may be named as “Chairman” or “Vice-Chairman” or some such terms associated with state requirements for identifying the officers of a non-profit organization. Usually, the “title” and responsibility for these roles is rotated among those Elders willing and able to handle it for the year in question.

**Processing.** Again, different churches may have different processes for nomination, examination, preparation, evaluation, confirmation, etc. The process may even vary somewhat from candidate to candidate, as circumstances may require.

**Approval.** Similar to any ministry appointment, ultimate approval comes from the Lord from a consistent and

faithful ministry over the course of a lifetime. Spiritual leaders continue to learn, grow, and mature for a lifetime. Approval and public confirmation/recognition is just another step in continuing development as a Christian leader.

**Confirmation/Ordination.** It is fitting and biblical to have a special time of public recognition and installation as an official Elder of the church. Just how much ceremony and time given to the ordination may vary from church to church. At a minimum, it seems biblical to call the congregation's attention to the public recognition of a man as Elder in a Sunday morning service. The recognition should normally include a prayer of dedication and "laying on of hands" of those Elders receiving the new Elder/s. The service might include such elements as: teaching on the biblical role of Elder, teaching on the congregation's relationship to Elders, a charge to the candidate, and/or the centrality of the local church and its ministry in God's program.

**"Term".** Here are some thoughts on the concept of the "term" of an Elder's service.

**A. Lifetime.** The biblical evidence seems to point toward an expectation of a lifetime term. Western business and democratic ideas have seemed to push the current practice in many circles toward limiting the terms of Elders. Except for special cases listed below, one should consider recognition as an Elder in a particular local church as a lifetime commitment to the ministry as a shepherd and leader in that local church.

**B. Sabbaticals.** From time to time family, work, or health (including burnout?) considerations may make it infeasible to fulfill the ministry as an Elder. Ideally, the individual facing such obstacles would voluntarily offer to take a limited-time sabbatical during which he gives up the rights and responsibilities as an active Elder and, thus, concedes submission to the decisions and direction of the Elders in his absence. The Elders, likewise, might ask an individual to take a sabbatical

- for a stated period of time for similar reasons. During a sabbatical, the Elder is expected to not attend the meetings of the active Elders. It is up to the Elder anticipating a sabbatical and the other Elders to determine whether or not the terms and duration of the sabbatical is generally announced to the congregation.
- C. Transfers.** “Once an Elder, always an Elder” does not in any way compel a local church to accept someone recognized as an Elder (or any other role of leadership) in any other church as adequate qualification to be installed as an Elder. While someone transferring to our church may have had a valuable ministry in another church, all the above concerns still apply; they still have to prove themselves in the immediate local church setting. Thus, even staff pastors hired by the church would undergo the same process and scrutiny, if considered for Eldership.
- D. Disqualification.** Each Elder is under authority of the leadership and authority of the Elders as a whole. There are many issues which could, though confronted with consideration and discretion, disqualify an Elder. Such disqualification could be temporary or permanent depending on the issue, the severity, and the judgment of the Elders.
- E. Retirement.** Is it possible for an Elder to “retire” as an Elder? Yes. For whatever reasons, if a man wishes to retire from Eldership, he may request the Elders to release him from Elder responsibilities. Such a step should not be taken lightly; once “retired” he should not consider that he could be easily reinstated. Again, he should submit to the agreement of the whole Elder Team. Even when released from the day-to-day responsibilities of Elder meetings, etc., he should continue to pursue ministry of a quality fulfilling the qualifications of an elder.
- F. Missionaries.** Though all male missionaries supported by FBC should be “elder qualified” and though a male missionary (or missionary candidate) may be invited

to attend the regular meetings of the Elders, such men will not automatically be considered to have the office, authority, and responsibility of an Elder unless they are specifically requested to do so and are publicly recognized as an active Elder of FBC.

### ***Process:***

**Nomination** – no set time; at least annually the Elders should ask themselves if they need to add any Elders.

- A. The Elders might, either discreetly or publicly, request church members to submit names of those whom they believe to be good candidates for Eldership.
- B. The Elders choose a person whom they believe to be qualified.
- C. The Elders confirm that candidate's willingness to be considered.
- D. The candidate is invited to begin the process.
- E. The candidate then chooses whether or not to accept this invitation. Upon accepting the invitation to be considered, the timeline for evaluation (below) begins.

**Evaluation** – not less than three months and not more than nine months; steps under evaluation, mentoring, and public scrutiny may occur simultaneously.

- A. Orientation
  1. The candidate is invited to attend Elders' meetings, being excused from issues of higher confidentiality or sensitivity as the Elders may determine.
  2. The candidate may be asked to read certain books or to write position papers in order to better educate and prepare him for his prospective ministry as an Elder.
  3. A checklist will be created to track their foundational understanding of Eldership, including such things as: a biblical and practical exposition of the qualifications of an elder, reading Strauch's book *Biblical Eldership*, and an intensive review of the FBC doctrinal statement.

- B. Elder evaluation and mentoring
1. The candidate may be assigned a mentor relationship with an established Elder in order to:
    - i. help the candidate process what they are seeing and hearing
    - ii. examine the candidate more personally as to their biblical qualifications as an elder, personal history, doctrine, ministry philosophy, etc.  
The assigned mentor will report the candidate's progress and concerns to the Elders.
  2. The candidate, his commitment to ministry, and his interaction with the Elders during the Evaluation period is always under the scrutiny and observation of the established Elders.
  3. The candidate is given opportunity to share observations and/or concerns about the way the present Eldership functions and their own fittedness for the responsibilities of Eldership.

C. Public scrutiny

1. Some announcement is made regarding the candidacy of an individual. The congregation is invited to submit feedback, issues, or concerns to the present Elders for consideration in the candidate's evaluation process.
2. Any significant issues which arise from public input will be shared with the candidate, including the bearing of those issues on his candidacy.

**Approval and Confirmation** – not more than twelve months after initially accepting candidacy

- A. The Elders decide whether to approve, decline, or suspend consideration of the candidate for the office of Elder.
- B. Upon approval, a time is set for a public announcement and confirmation/ordination of the individual for this ministry.

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