# TABLE OF CONTENTS | PART 1

**BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS**

The *Purpose of This Examination* ................................................................. 1

Qualifications for Eldership ........................................................................... 1
  - Relation to God ....................................................................................... 2
  - Relation to Family .................................................................................. 2
  - Relation to Self ....................................................................................... 2
  - Relation to Others ................................................................................ 2

Qualification #1 | Relation to God | A Man ................................................................. 3
Qualification #2 | Relation to God | Desire .......................................................... 6
Qualification #3 | Relation to God | Above Reproach ........................................... 8
Qualification #4 | Relation to God | Able to Teach ............................................... 10
Qualification #5 | Relation to God | Not a Recent Convert ...................................... 12
Qualification #6 | Relation to Family | Husband of One Wife ..................................... 14
Qualification #7 | Relation to Family | Submissive Children ......................................... 16
Qualification #8 | Relation to Family | Manages Household Well .................................. 18
Qualification #9 | Relation to Self | Sober-Minded ................................................. 20
Qualification #10 | Relation to Self | Self-Controlled ............................................ 22
Qualification #11 | Relation to Self | Not a Drunkard ............................................. 24
Qualification #12 | Relation to Self | Not a Lover of Money .................................... 26
Qualification #13 | Relation to Others | Respectable ................................................. 28
Qualification #14 | Relation to Others | Hospitable .................................................. 30
Qualification #15 | Relation to Others | Not Violent .................................................. 32
Qualification #16 | Relation to Others | Gentle ..................................................... 34
Qualification #17 | Relation to Others | Not Quarrelsome .......................................... 36
Qualification #18 | Relation to Others | Well Thought of By Outsiders ....................... 38

Conclusion | What Should I Do Now? ................................................................. 40
THE PURPOSE OF THIS EXAMINATION

Spring Creek is a church that makes an effort, by God’s grace, to remain consistent with the Scriptures. This part of the examination reveals the biblical qualifications for present elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) and examines the potential for a man who has the desire to lead as an elder within the local church.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERSHIP

Many wonder why it is necessary to have qualifications for eldership - "If someone wants to be an elder, should he not have that right, regardless of whether he meets a list of qualifications...and who decides what the qualifications are anyway?"

However, the truth is that all of us see the need for qualifications in other offices of oversight in our society. No one would board a plane if they knew that the "pilot" loved planes but did not have a pilot's license. No one would want to be operated on by a "surgeon" whose only credential was that his dad was a doctor. No one would entrust the design of their home to an "architect" whose portfolio consisted of Lincoln Logs. Qualifications are important in every line of work, and the more important the work, the more important the need for clear-cut qualifications.

The New Testament places a strong focus on the importance of appointing qualified elders in the church (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). As Alexander Strauch notes, "The New Testament offers more instruction regarding elders than on other important church subjects such as the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Day, baptism, or spiritual gifts." There is also more teaching in the New Testament about the qualifications for eldership than about any other aspect of biblical leadership.

The reason for this strong focus is that the elders are charged with the sacred task of caring for the eternal souls for whom Christ died. Since an elder has the extremely important job of teaching and caring for eternal souls, it is important to make sure that the wrong men are not appointed to this office. When an unqualified doctor performs surgery, or an unqualified pilot flies a plane, or an unqualified architect builds a house, people get hurt and things fall apart. It is no different in the church: people usually end up getting hurt when they are under unqualified leaders, and everything is likely to fall apart.

The New Testament allows much flexibility with regard to exactly how elders are to function in the church. We are told to have elders, but we are not told everything about elders. The pattern for leadership that the New Testament has set, however, is a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23; 15:1-41; 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 5:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 1:1; 5:1). Elders serve as the lead overseers of the church, teach and preach the Word, protect the church from false teachers, exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine, pray for the sick, and judge doctrinal issues. Elders are men who are well known by the community, have tested character and proven integrity, and are doctrinally sound. Elders must be men who can pastor themselves as well as others, having personal self-discipline and maturity, as well as the ability to relate well to others and to teach and care for them. In plurality, there is an accountability and a strength that one man alone lacks.

There are a few different lists of qualifications for eldership, but the most extensive is 1 Timothy 3:1-7:

*The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*
In one regard, this list of qualifications for eldership is so noteworthy because it is so un-noteworthy. Almost all of what is required here of elders (overseers) is required of any believer elsewhere in Scripture. For example, the qualification that elders not be drunkards does not imply that other believers are allowed to imitate frat boys and binge drinkers. Likewise, the fact that an elder must not be a lover of money does not suggest that non-elders in the church can make money their functional savior. Anyone who serves Christ is required to not be a drunkard or a lover of money. So what sets elders apart?

Elders are not a higher class of Christians. Rather, as D.A. Carson notes, “...what is required in some sense of all believers is peculiarly required of the leaders of believers.” Carson could not be more right. Elders are called to uniquely focus on and live out the virtues to which all Christians aspire.

The term overseer comes from the Greek episkopē, which is used interchangeably with the term elder (Titus 1:5, 7). Episkopē is one who looks after, considers, examines, and provides covering for someone or something. In ancient Greek society, an overseer was a controller, guardian, manager, or ruler.

What does an elder oversee? Elders oversee people - people who are made in the image of God, people for whom Christ died, people deeply loved by God. One of the reasons it is essential for elders to be godly men is that when elders are not godly, it is very difficult for the people to become godly. As John MacArthur notes, “...whatever the leaders are, the people become. As Hosea said, ‘like people, like priest’ (Hosea 4:9). Jesus said, ‘...everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher’ (Luke 6:40). Biblical history demonstrates that people will seldom rise above the spiritual level of their leadership.”

Although Paul’s list is not exhaustive and was written to address a particular set of circumstances in a particular context, the list is helpful for discerning what type of person Paul thinks will make a good elder. Let us consider Paul’s list of qualifications and see what kind of people he has in mind for this office:

**RELATION TO GOD**

1) A MAN: a masculine leader, a “manly man”
2) DESIRE: Spirit-generated, Spirit-given motivation
3) ABOVE REPROACH: without any character defect
4) ABLE TO TEACH: an effective and efficient Bible communicator
5) NOT A RECENT CONVERT: a mature Christian

**RELATION TO FAMILY**

6) HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE: a one-woman man, sexually pure
   *(this does not require a man to be married, as Jesus, Paul, Timothy, and widowed men could qualify)*
7) SUBMISSIVE CHILDREN: a successful father
8) MANAGES HOUSEHOLD WELL: disciplines, leads, loves, organizes, plans, provides, speaks up, stands up

**RELATION TO SELF**

9) SOBER-MINDED: mentally and emotionally stable
10) SELF-CONTROLLED: a disciplined life of sound decision-making
11) NOT A DRUNKARD: without addictions
12) NOT A LOVER OF MONEY: financially content and upright

**RELATION TO OTHERS**

13) RESPECTABLE: worth following and imitating
14) HOSPITABLE: welcomes strangers, especially non-Christians, into the church and home for evangelism
15) NOT VIOLENT: even-tempered
16) GENTLE: a gracious, kind, and loving spirit
17) NOT QUARRELSOME: a peaceable spirit, not contentious or divisive
18) WELL THOUGHT OF BY OUTSIDERS: respected by non-Christians in the community

The fulfillment of these qualifications is required for a potential elder as Part 1 of the Eldership Examination. Therefore, let us consider the applications for eldership and everyday life for each of these qualifications:
QUALIFICATION #1 | RELATION TO GOD | A MAN

There is a reason that these qualifications are written by a man to men and written about the kind of men who are needed as elders to lead the church of God and proclaim the gospel in a dying and lost world.

The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

Paul sets the stage for his list of eldership qualifications with what he calls a “trustworthy” saying. In effect, it says that what is stated is indeed true and deserves constant repeating among the Lord’s people: “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Timothy 3:1), indicating an accepted view among early Christians that the task of the office of overseer is a noble task.

The overarching phrase “the office of overseer” (episkopē) can be literally translated “overseership,” which represents both the position and the practice of the church official referred to as the “overseer.” From Paul’s use of singular and plural constructions of this phrase, we can confidently conclude that the church structure follows the simple, brotherly, elder system of oversight recorded in the New Testament.

Paul also says that overseership is a “noble task,” conveying the idea of excellent, fine, or worthwhile work. Acts 20:28 explains why overseership is an excellent work: overseers shepherd God’s church that He purchased with His own blood. To God, the church is the most precious thing on earth. In the face of many problems and labors, the greatest encouragement and incentive an elder can have is to know that he performs an exceedingly excellent work - one that is worthy of the sacrifice of one’s life.

In brief, this early Christian saying declares the great value of the work of the office of overseer (elder) while also encouraging those who desire the work. It is equally important that local churches today realize the worthwhile character of the elders’ task. They need to realize its significance so they will encourage and support the elders in their work on behalf of the church.

Since God declares the office of overseer to be a noble task, a male overseer must be of noble character. An excellent, fine, and worthwhile work of God naturally demands an excellent, fine, and worthwhile man. To assure that only men of godly character assume the role of overseer, Paul provides the local church with objective, observable qualifications to protect both the office and the church.

The overseer “must be” a man of a certain moral and spiritual character in order to qualify as an overseer. Paul emphasizes this point because it is probably where the church failed, as many churches do today. God wants us to know that a properly qualified man is a non-negotiable qualification for the government of God’s household.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references) (How does being a *man* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples) (How does being a *man* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
Explain the following areas of your Christian life in regard to being a *man* of God: (using specific examples)

**Conversion**

**Calling**

**Character**

**Courage**

**Competency**
Qualification #2 | Relation to God | Desire

The following explanations of this qualification are excerpts from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

An obvious but not insignificant qualification is a potential elder’s desire to love and care for God’s people. Paul knew from years of personal experience that the shepherding task cannot be done by someone who views spiritual care as an unwanted duty or obligation. Elders who serve grudgingly or under constraint are incapable of genuine care for people. They will be fearful, guilty, impatient, ineffective, and unhappy. Shepherding God’s people through this sin-weary world is far too difficult a task - fraught with too many dangers, demands, and problems - to be entrusted to a man who lacks the will and desire to do the task.

A true desire to lead the family of God is always a Spirit-generated desire. Paul reminded the Ephesians elders that it was the Holy Spirit - not the apostles or the church - who placed them as overseers in the church to shepherd the flock of God (Acts 20:28). It was the Spirit who called them to shepherd the church and who moved them to care for the flock. The Spirit had planted the pastoral desire within their hearts. The Spirit gave the compulsion and strength to do the work and the gifts and wisdom to care for the flock. The elders were His wise choice for the task. In the church of God, it is not the will of man that matters, but the will of God; so the only men who qualify for eldership are those whom the Holy Spirit gives the motivation and gifts for the task.

As John Zens writes, "Better to have no elders than the wrong ones." The church must in all earnestness insist on biblically qualified elders who have a God-given desire, even if such men take years to develop.

One of the first matters to consider in appointing a man as a potential elder is the man’s personal desire. The desire to be an elder is neither self-promoting or sinful, that is, if it is generated by God’s Holy Spirit. So the starting point is a Spirit-given desire to be a shepherd of God’s people.

A Spirit-given desire for pastoral eldership will naturally demonstrate itself in action. It cannot be held in. A man who desires to be a shepherd elder will let others know of his desire. That is one way in which the congregation and elders can know of a potential elder. The knowledge of this desire will prompt the elders to pray and to encourage such desire through biblical examination, leadership development, and training. More important, the man with a Spirit-created motivation for the work of eldership will devote much time, thought, and energy to caring for people and studying the Scriptures. There is no such thing as a Spirit-given desire for eldership without the corresponding evidence of sacrificial, loving service and love for God’s Word. Eldership is a strenuous task, not just another position on a decision-making board. In fact, the stronger a man’s desire for eldership, the stronger will be his leadership and love for people and the Word.

So before a man is appointed to eldership, he is already proving himself by bearing responsibility, leading, and teaching in the church. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Paul reminds the congregation of its responsibility to acknowledge and recognize those in the congregation who work hard at leading and instructing others: “We ask you...to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you...” One way the church and elders acknowledge a man’s diligent labors is to recommend and encourage him to prepare for eldership. So it ought to be clearly known in the church that “...if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.” (1 Timothy 3:1b)

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does having *desire* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does having *desire* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
God provides objective qualifications to test the subjective desire of all who seek the office of overseer; simply put, being a male and having a desire is not enough; it must be matched by godly character and spiritual capability.

*The following explanations of this qualification are excerpts from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:*

Heading the list of qualifications is the general, overarching, “all-embracing” qualification: “above reproach.” To be above reproach means to be free from any offensive or disgraceful blight of character or conduct.

When an elder is irreproachable, critics cannot discredit his Christian profession of faith or prove him unfit to lead others (Nehemiah 6:13). He has a clean moral and spiritual reputation. Since all God’s people are called to live holy and blameless lives (Philippians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:23), since the world casts a critical eye at the Christian community (1 Peter 3:15-16), and since Christian leaders lead primarily by their example (1 Peter 5:3), an irreproachable life is indispensable to the Christian leader.

Job, for example, was an elder among his people (Job 29:7, 21, 25; 31:21), and he, the Scripture says, was morally above reproach: “There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.” (Job 1:1)


The term “above reproach” means “unaccused,” that is one whose character or conduct is free from any damaging moral or spiritual accusations. This...qualification...stands out as the fundamental qualification under which all other qualifications are subsumed. John Calvin’s summary of this overarching qualification is worth repeating: “By...blameless, he does not mean someone who is free from every guilt, for no such man could ever be found, but one marred by no disgrace that could diminish his authority - he should be a man of unblemished reputation.”


*The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:*

The term “above reproach” (anepíllēmptos) describes a man who is free from any serious character blights, is respected by those who know him, and is widely known to live a godly life within his circle of influence. One of the early church fathers, named John Chrysostom, notes that, “every virtue is implied in this word.” William Mounce also notes that “above reproach” is really the fountain from which all the others flow: “over all these qualities: the overseer must be above reproach; all that follows spells out what this entails.” This qualification is the most basic, all-encompassing title of all that Paul describes in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Mark Driscoll calls “above reproach” the “junk drawer” term that Paul applies to what it is to be qualified.

Explain the _eldership_ application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references) (How does being _above reproach_ relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the _everyday_ application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples) (How does being _above reproach_ relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
The following explanations of this qualification are excerpts from *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch:

The Christian community is built on Holy Scripture. So those who oversee the community must be able to guide and protect it by instruction from Scripture. According to Acts 20, the elders must shepherd the flock of God. A major part of shepherding the flock involves feeding it the Word of God. Therefore, elders must be “able to teach” in order to do the work of a shepherd.

The ability to teach entails three basic elements: 1) a knowledge of Scripture, 2) the readiness to teach, and 3) the ability to communicate. This does not mean that an elder must be an eloquent orator, a dynamic lecturer, or a highly gifted teacher (of which there are very few!). But an elder must know the Bible and be able to instruct others from it.

In his parallel list of elder qualifications in Titus 1:5-9, Paul expands upon the means of “able to teach.” He writes, “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught,...” By “word” (logos), Paul means the original preaching and oral proclamation of the gospel message which they heard and received. It is God’s message of salvation and life in Christ. This “word” is described as both “trustworthy” and “taught.” The “word” is “trustworthy” because it is in full agreement with what has been “taught.” What has been “taught” refers to the apostolic message, that is, the authentic, authoritative, fixed body of doctrine taught by Christ and communicated by His holy apostles. There is only one apostolic doctrine (Acts 2:42; Ephesians 4:5), one standard, and one teaching, and it is absolutely “trustworthy.” Any teaching that contradicts the apostles’ teaching as recorded in the New Testament is false, untrustworthy, and from the devil (Titus 1:10; Galatians 1:8-9).

God requires an elder to “hold firm” to His Word, meaning to “be devoted” or to “adhere wholeheartedly.” This term implies unshakable, fervent conviction and commitment. ... The reason an elder is required to hold fast to the Word is “so that he may be able,” that is, “equipped” to perform two very specific tasks: 1) instruct believers and 2) rebuke nonbelievers. “A pastor needs two voices: one for gathering the sheep and the other for driving away wolves... The Scripture supplies him with the means for doing both.”

Instruction is closely associated with teaching (1 Timothy 4:13; 6:2), but while teaching primarily relates to the intellect, instruction primarily relates to the conscience, heart, will, and actions of the one listening. Instruction urges people to receive and to apply the truth that has been taught.

Specifically, elders are to exhort believers “in sound doctrine,” meaning correct or wholesome teaching, standing in direct contrast to false teaching, which is diseased, corrupted, defiled, and ruins people’s lives (1 Timothy 6:3-5). But sound doctrine produces godly, clean, wholesome, healthy lives (Titus 1:13; 2:1). The church’s health and well being depends upon elders who continually “(instruct) in sound doctrine.” No man qualifies for eldership unless he is able to use God’s Word in such a manner.

...an elder’s duty is to protect the church from false teachers - those who speak against “sound doctrine.” Therefore, an elder must be able to “rebuke those who contradict it”...that they may be sound in the faith. To qualify for eldership, then, one must be able to detect false teaching and confront it with sound doctrine.

The phrase “able to teach” (didaktikos) indicates great skill in teaching. An elder must take the Scriptures and help people understand what it means both in its original context and in its contemporary application.
Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does being *able to teach* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does being *able to teach* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
QUALIFICATION #5 | RELATION TO GOD | NOT A RECENT CONVERT

The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

Scripture prohibits a “recent convert” - a “baby” Christian, a beginner in the faith - from serving as an elder. No matter how knowledgable, talented, or zealous a recent convert may be, he is not spiritually mature. Maturity requires both time and experience for which there is no substitute, so a recent convert is simply not ready for the arduous task of shepherding God’s flock.

There is nothing wrong with being a “recent convert.” All Christians begin as babies and grow to maturity. An elder, however, must be mature and know his own heart. A new Christian does not know his own heart or understand the craftiness of the enemy, so he is vulnerable to pride - the most subtle of all temptations and the most destructive of all sins. Pride caused the devil’s ruin (Ezekiel 28:11-19; Genesis 3:5, 14-15). The prideful elder will inevitably fall. “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18) Scripture shows that pride destroyed the greatest of men (2 Chronicles 26:16; 32:25).

The office of elder (especially in a large, well-established church) carries considerable honor and authority. For a recent convert, the temptation of pride would be too great. Pride would destroy the man, causing personal disgrace, loss, exposure, divine chastisement, and possibly wrecking his faith. It would also hurt the church. So Paul warns against appointing a recent convert as an elder, “or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.” (1 Timothy 3:6)


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “not a recent convert” (mē neophytos) means that an elder must not be a “baby” Christian. This qualification has to do with the spiritual maturity of the elder, specifically his longevity as a Christian. Obviously this qualification, along with the other qualifications, is subjective, which is why a local church should be intimately involved with regard to this qualification issue.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references) (How does not being a *recent convert* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples) (How does not being a *recent convert* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
QUALIFICATION #6  |  RELATION TO FAMILY  |  HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE

The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

In two lists, Paul places the qualification “the husband of one wife” immediately after “above reproach.” This phrase can be literally translated as “one-wife husband,” “one-woman man,” or “husband of one wife.” So the first and foremost area in which an elder must be above reproach is in his marital and sexual life.

“The husband of one wife” is meant to be a positive statement expressing faithful, monogamous marriage. In English we would say “faithful and true to one woman” or “a one-woman man,” which follows the Greek.

Negatively, the phrase prohibits all deviation from faithful, monogamous marriage; thus it would prohibit an elder from concubinage, homosexuality, polygamy, prostitution, or any questionable sexual relationship. Positively, Scripture says that the candidate for eldership should be a “one-woman man,” meaning he has an exclusive relationship with one woman. Such a man is above reproach in his marital and sexual life.

What does 1 Timothy say about marital and sexual sins committed before a man’s conversion to Christ? What about men who have legally divorced and remarried? What about the forgiveness and restoration of a fallen spiritual leader? These and many other painful and controversial questions are not answered directly here. They must be answered from the whole of Scripture’s teaching on divorce and remarriage, forgiveness, grace, and restoration, as well as its teaching on leadership example and the full spectrum of eldership qualifications.

All deviations from God’s standard of marital and sexual life confuse us. Sin always distorts and divides, so there will always be diverse opinions on questions such as these. This in no way, however, diminishes the local church’s obligation to face these issues and make wise, scripturally sound decisions. In all these situations, the honor of Jesus’ name, faithfulness to His Word, and prayer are the supreme guides.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “husband of one wife” (mias gynaikos andra) describes a man exclusively devoted to his wife. He is a “one woman man” - emotionally, financially, mentally, physically, sexually, and spiritually.

At first glance, Paul might appear to be prohibiting a divorced man from being an elder. But it is more likely that he is speaking of a man’s devotion for and connection to his wife. To be qualified, a man must be exclusively devoted to his wife, having a deep emotional, social, and sexual connection to her.

Practically, this means that an elder’s marriage must be sound. More than that, it seems to indicate that a lack of emotional or physical intimacy in a marriage would keep an elder from ministry. In other words, it suggests that an unspectacular sex life would keep a man from being a qualified elder. Elders are to take the lead in emotional, social, and sexual connection with their wives. As in all the qualifications, this does not mean that the elder, or his marriage, is perfect. It means that the marriage is worth imitating. It means that other single and married men look at how the elder loves and serves his wife as a model for their own devotion to their wife or future wife.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does being a *husband of one wife* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does being a *husband of one wife* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
QUALIFICATION #7 | RELATION TO FAMILY | SUBMISSIVE CHILDREN

The following explanations of this qualification are excerpts from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

The key measurement when evaluating a man’s management of his household is his children’s behavior. Paul requires that he must “...with all dignity (keep) his children submissive.” Concerning this qualification, Donald Guthrie says, “A most important principle, which has not always had the prominence it deserves...Any man unable to govern his children graciously and gravely by maintaining good discipline, is no man for government in the church.”

A well-managed family means that the children obey and submit to the father’s leadership. The way in which that relationship is manifested is especially important: it is to be “with all dignity.” The father is not to be a spirit-crushing tyrant who gains submission by harsh punishment. Elsewhere Paul writes, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4) A Christian father must control his children in a dignified, honorable, and respectful way. Of course, there are no perfect, problem-free children in this world. Even the best Christian fathers and mothers have child-rearing problems, but these parents resolve the problems and are involved with their children in responsible, caring ways. They guide their children through the many storms of life.

We must note that the children referred to here are children who live at home, under their father’s authority: “keeping [present tense] his children submissive.” Also, in Titus 1:6, the phrase “his children are believers” indicates that the children are presently in the home and under the father’s authority. This is important because some people believe that a man is not a viable candidate for eldership until all his children have reached adulthood. But this is not what the passage says. Some men still father children at the age of forty or forty-five, and God does not intend for them to wait until they are nearly seventy years of age before they are qualified to serve as elders. Furthermore, we must note that the passage doesn’t teach that an elder must have children. This instruction simply applies to men who do have children.

In Titus 1:6, the phrase “his children are believers” is better to be translated as “his children are faithful.” The Greek word for “believe” is pistos, which can be translated either actively as “believers” or passively as “dutiful,” “faithful,” or “trustworthy.”

The contrast is not made between believing and unbelieving children, but between obedient, respectful children and lawless, uncontrolled children. The strong terms “ debauchery or insubordination” stress the children’s behavior, not their eternal state. The concept is similar to that of the “faithful servant” who is seen as faithful because he or she obeys the Master and does what the Master says (Matthew 24:45-51).

The passage in 1 Timothy 3:4 says that an elder must “...with all dignity (keep) his children submissive.” Since 1 Timothy 3:4 is a clearer passage, it should be allowed to help interpret any ambiguity in Titus 1:6.

The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “keeping his children submissive” (tekna echonta en hypotagē) refers to a man who is able to keep his children under control with all dignity - to cause children to obey in a graceful manner because of loving, pastoral parenting. Too many elders’ kids behave like rebellious little demons. It is not their fault. Many elders discipline their kids’ rear ends but fail to discipline their kids’ hearts, the root of misbehavior. This does not mean that the kids of an elder should always be perfect, sweet little angels, but that they should be under the loving control of parents whose discipline nurtures within them a healthy fear of God.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does having *submissive children* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does having *submissive children* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
The following explanations of this qualification are excerpts from *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch:

An elder must be able to manage - lead and care for (see 1 Thessalonians 5:12) - his household “well.” This means he must be a responsible Christian father, husband, and household manager. He must have a reputation for providing for his family, financially, emotionally, and spiritually.

The critical importance of this requirement is immediately underscored by the rhetorical question Paul asks in 1 Timothy 3:5: “...if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?” The answer to that question is a resounding negative - he cannot care for the church of God if he does not know how to manage his own household. The Greek word “care for” (epimeleśetai) stresses the loving, personal attention of meeting the church’s various needs. It does not, however, eliminate the idea of leading or directing, which is an essential part of caring for the church.


Since an elder must manage God’s household, it logically follows that he must...manage his own family.

The Greek word oikonomos means house manager, so a steward manages someone else’s household, property, or business (Luke 12:42; 16:1-8; Galatians 4:2). A steward acts on behalf of another interests. He is accountable and responsible to another for what is entrusted to his care.

“Steward” is an appropriate description for an elder. Since the local church is called the household of God (1 Timothy 3:15), an elder who manages it can be rightfully called a steward. Paul’s point in using the household steward imagery is simple and profound: since an elder is God's household steward, he must be morally and spiritually above reproach. E.F. Scott succinctly expresses Paul's logic: “In an ordinary household the most trusty servant was chosen as steward, and the same rule must obtain in the household of God.”

We should also note that Paul's emphasis is on God as the steward’s Master and owner. The steward is God’s household manager, not the church’s. Thus the household belongs to God, and not to the elders. God demands that those to whom His precious children are entrusted be both morally and spiritually fit. He will not have unfit, untrustworthy stewards caring for His children and the truth of the gospel.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from *Church Planter* by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “manage his own household well” (prohistēmi) means to be diligent, stand before, and rule, which practically means that an elder is the spiritual leader of his family.

The Puritans used to say that you can’t pastor the big church (the local congregation) if you can’t pastor the little church (your family). If you cannot teach your kids Scripture, you cannot teach the church either. If you cannot answer your wife’s theological questions, you can’t be the one who answers the theological questions of the church either.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does *managing a household well* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does *managing a household well* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
QUALIFICATION #9 | RELATION TO SELF | SOBER-MINDED

The following explanations of this qualification are excerpts from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

The word “sober-minded” can mean sobriety in the use of alcohol, but here it means mental sobriety, and it denotes self-control, balanced judgment, and freedom from debilitating excesses or rash behavior. Negatively, it indicates the absence of any personal disorder that will distort a man’s judgment or conduct. Positively, it describes a man who is cautious, clear-headed, self-restrained, and stable.

It is necessary that elders, who face many serious decisions, pressures, and problems, be mentally and emotionally stable. Elders who lack a balanced mental and emotional perspective can easily be snared by the devil or false teachers.


One of God’s attributes is that He is slow to anger, so His stewards must also be slow to anger, as well. Man’s anger is a hindrance to the word of God, "...for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1:20) Since an elder must deal with people and their problems, a “hothead” will quickly find much material to fuel his anger. Proverbs warns against the dangers of an angry man: “A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.” (Proverbs 29:22) With his ugly, angry words, a quick-tempered man will destroy the peace and unity of God’s family. The fierce looks and harsh words of the quick-tempered man will tear people apart emotionally, leaving people sick and destroyed in spirit. So a man who desires to be an elder must be patient and self-controlled.

Of course, everyone experiences anger, and leaders who must deal with contentious situations often may experience a great deal of anger. The issue is whether or not an individual who aspires to eldership recognizes and controls his anger. If he is not controlled, he is a powder keg ready to go off in the midst of the next problem.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The term “sober-minded” (nēphalios) means that an elder must not be controlled by emotions or lusts, and has freedom from debilitating excesses or rash behavior.

This qualification speaks to the emotional life of a man. A qualified elder must be a man who is able to control both his desires and emotions through submission to the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. The issue Paul seems to be addressing here is that a qualified man is led by the Spirit, not by emotions. This does not mean that an elder must become dead inside, unable to feel at all. It does mean, however, that a man who submits to the Holy Spirit will likely avoid sins like marital infidelity, financial impropriety, and unrighteous anger. The hope is that he will lead the church he serves to avoid the same.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references) (How does being *sober-minded* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples) (How does being *sober-minded* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
Qualification #10 | Relation to Self | Self-Controlled

The following explanations of this qualification are excerpts from *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch:

Similar to “sober-minded,” “self-controlled” stresses common sense, good judgment, and wise discretion. To be self-controlled is to be discreet, sensible, and sound-minded, able to keep an objective perspective in the face of disagreements and problems. Being self-controlled is an essential quality of heart and mind for a man who must exercise a great deal of practical discretion in handling people and their problems. Being self-controlled tempers issues of authority, pride, and self-justification.


God’s steward must be characterized by self-control and self-discipline in every aspect of life, particularly in his physical desires (*Acts 24:25*; *1 Corinthians 7:9; 9:25*). An undisciplined man has little resistance to sexual lust, anger, slothfulness, a critical spirit, and other base desires. He is easy prey for the devil.

Solomon warns against the undisciplined man’s vulnerability to all the enemies of his soul: “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.” (*Proverbs 25:28*) In Solomon’s time, walls were a strategic part of a city’s defense system. A strong and secure city fortified its walls. Solomon likens a man’s power of self-control to the walled fortifications of a city. Without self-control, a man is exposed to attack and becomes easy prey for an enemy.

Self-control is an essential part of the Spirit-controlled life (*Galatians 5:23*). Leaders who lack discipline frustrate their fellows workers as well as those they lead. Not only are they poor examples, but they cannot accomplish what needs to be done. Consequently, their flock is poorly managed and lacks adequate spiritual care.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from *Church Planter* by Darrin Patrick:

The term “self-controlled” (*sōphrōn*) means that a man is able to be focused and not be distracted easily. He has common sense, good judgment, and a sound mind.

Paul teaches in *Galatians 5:22-23* that self-control is a result of the Spirit’s work in our lives. In the context of that passage, Paul seems to indicate that self-control is not a result of willpower but is the fruit of God’s power as we walk in and are led by the Holy Spirit. So it seems that Paul is saying here that an elder should be a man whose life is characterized by the Spirit’s controlling him with the result that his “self” is controlled.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does being *self-controlled* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does being self-controlled relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
QUALIFICATION #11 | RELATION TO SELF | NOT A DRUNKARD

The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

An elder must be above reproach in his use of alcohol. Paul uses strong language here that means not overindulgent or preoccupied with alcohol. Drunkenness is sin, and persistently drunken people require church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-10; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Peter 4:3). So a man in a position of authority and trust over other people cannot have a drinking problem.

The Bible contains many warnings against the potential dangers of alcohol (Isaiah 5:11, 22; Proverbs 20:1; 23:30-35; Hosea 4:11). It specifically warns leaders about the dangers of alcohol:

“...it is not for kings to drink wine,
or for rulers to take strong drink,
lest they drink and forget what has been decreed
and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.”
(Proverbs 31:4-5)

Drunkenness ruins lives - nearly half of the murders, suicides, and accidental deaths relate to alcohol. One in four families has a problem with alcohol, making it one of the largest health problems in America. The misery and heartbreak that alcoholism has caused multitudes of families is beyond imagination. No one who has worked with the people or families who are its victims jokes about its destructive power. Alcoholism reduces life expectancy, breaks up marriages and families, and destroys people financially. It is a moral and spiritual problem of the greatest magnitude.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “not a drunkard” (mē paroinon) means that a man has no known addictions or idolatries.

This qualification seems to speak to the release valve of the elder. Working out is a legitimate way to blow off the pressure of the day. Playing with your kids is an acceptable manner of relieving stress. Making love to your wife is a biblically encouraged way of distracting yourself from the difficulties of ministry. Hitting the bottle is not. As Mark Driscoll has said, “You know you are in trouble as a pastor when your accountability group is Jack Daniels, Jim Beam, and Jose Cuervo.”

This qualification seems to be speaking to addiction to substances generally and is not limited to alcohol. The number of elders who are either addicted to alcohol or prescription drugs is increasingly shocking. Many cannot relax without several beers after work and cannot sleep without the aid of a sleeping pill. Not only is this emotionally, physically, and mentally dangerous, it is a sign of deep distrust in God’s ability to meet our needs and to provide our strength.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does not being a *drunkard* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does not being a *drunkard* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
Qualification #12 | Relation to Self | Not a Lover of Money

The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

An elder must not love money or be greedy. So this qualification prohibits a materialistic interest that uses Christian ministry and people for personal profit. Both Paul and Peter condemn what we would say today as “being in it for the money” (Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2). False teachers, Paul points out, are overly interested in money and in personal financial gain (1 Timothy 6:5; Titus 1:11). The Pharisees were lovers of money who devoured the homes of widows (Mark 12:40; Luke 16:14). The chief religious leaders of Jesus’ day turned the temple into a merchandise mart for their own profit (Mark 11:15-17).

Like a powerful drug, the love of money can delude the judgment of even the best men. Scripture sternly warns men against the love of money: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” (1 Timothy 6:10) Therefore, elders cannot be the kind of men who are always interested in money. They cannot be men who need to control the funds of the church and who refuse financial accountability. Such men have distorted spiritual values and set the wrong example for the church. They will inevitably fall into unethical financial dealings that will publicly disgrace the Lord’s name.

In stark contrast, an elder should be content with God’s provision. In Hebrews 13:5 the writer exhorts his readers, “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” Paul states the matter this way: “....we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.” (1 Timothy 6:7-9) Elders, then, must model godly contentment and faith in Christ’s loving provision for them.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “not a lover of money” (aphilargyron) describes a man who desires God more than money (Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:7-9).

Elders who love money will eventually put that love before the good of the church. They will make decisions to ensure their own job security and salary increase, decisions that the majority of the time will hinder the forward progress of the gospel. In additions, elders who love money tend to misappropriate money (using the church credit card for personal purchases, stealing from the offering, and increasing their salary without the elders’ approval, to give just a few examples).

Temporary satisfaction with money and the pleasure it offers pales in comparison with eternal satisfaction with the gospel and the pleasures that comes with forgiveness of sins and a right relationship with God.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references) (How does not being a *lover of money* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples) (How does not being a *lover of money* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

“Respectable” is linked to the word “self-controlled,” as one will be properly ordered and well-behaved. An elder cannot expect people to follow him if he is not respectable.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The term “respectable” (kosmios) means to have a well-ordered life that is not characterized by chaos. This qualification seems to deal with the general character of an elder’s life, something of a decibel meter for the life of an elder.

For example, some elders do not have their lives together: their vehicles are never clean on the outside, and the insides are worse; their yards are landscaped by nature, which means they are full of weeds; not only are their cars, houses, and lawns disheveled, they are disheveled. There is a general franticness about the way they carry themselves. They are always in a hurry, their conversations are always rushed, and chaos permeates any environment in which they find themselves. The result of all of this is that they are not respected, and that is because they are not respectable.

To be respectable means that an elder has a good handle on the responsibilities of his life, to the point that others view him not necessarily as a man who has it all together, but as one who can bear the weight and complexity of his life, which then qualifies him to lead the various complexities of the church.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does being *respectable* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does being *respectable* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
QUALIFICATION #14 | RELATION TO OTHERS | HOSPITABLE

The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

As an important Christian virtue, hospitality is a concrete expression of a Christian's love and family life. Unfortunately, most Christians, and even some Christian leaders, are unaware that hospitality is a biblical requirement for pastoral leadership in the church. Some may even argue against such a seemingly insignificant point being a requirement for church shepherds.

Such thinking, however, shows a lack of understanding in authentic Christian community, agape love, and the elder's work. For an elder to be inhospitable is a poor example of both Christian love and care. The shepherd elder is to give himself lovingly and sacrificially for the care of the flock. This cannot be done from a distance - with a smile and a handshake on Sunday morning or through a superficial visit. Giving oneself to the care of God's people means sharing one's life and home with others. An open home is a sign of an open heart and a loving, sacrificial, serving spirit. A lack of hospitality is a sure sign of selfish, lifeless, loveless Christianity.

God has given the home to be one of the most important tools for reaching out to and caring for people. Although an elder's ministry of hospitality may seem like a small thing, it has an enormous, lasting impact. Those who benefit from it will say that it is one of the most important, pleasant, and memorable aspects of their shepherd's ministry.

In His mysterious ways, God works through the guest-host relationship to encourage and instruct people. So we must never underestimate the power of hospitality in ministering to people's needs. Those who love hospitality love people and are concerned about them. If the local church's elders are inhospitable, the local church will also be inhospitable and indifferent toward the needs of others.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The term "hospitable" (philoxenon) refers to a man who loves and welcomes strangers and is not cliquish.

Contrary to popular belief, this qualification does not mean that an elder and his wife must have potlucks at their house for all the people in the church. Nor does it mean that elders' homes should be a revolving door for people in the church to come and hang out, watch television, and "do community."

Instead, the word "hospitable" refers to the way the elder and his family welcome those outside the faith. In other words, to be hospitable is to be a friend of sinners and thus to be like Jesus.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does being *hospitable* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does being *hospitable* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
QUALIFICATION #15 | RELATION TO OTHERS | NOT VIOLENT

The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

A violent man is a fighter, a bad-tempered, irritable, out-of-control individual. The Greek word is derived from the verb “to hit” or “to strike” and suggests a violent man who is prone to physical assault on others. Wives and children especially feel the blows of a violent man, and anyone who seriously frustrates a violent man is a potential target for verbal, even physical, assault.

Elders handle highly emotional interpersonal conflict and deep doctrinal disagreements between believers. Elders are often at the center of very tense situations, so a bad-tempered, violent person is not going to solve issues and problems. He will, in fact, create worse explosions. Because a violent man will treat the sheep roughly and even hurt them, he cannot be one of Christ's undershepherds.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “not violent” (mē plēktēn), when translated literally, describes a man who is “not a hitter.” Simply put, you cannot be an elder if you are getting into fistfights with church members or lost people. In short, you cannot be an elder if you tend to handle conflict like Mike Tyson “handled” Evander Holyfield. Suffice it to say that tending the flock with brass knuckles is roundly frowned upon in Scripture.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does not being *violent* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does not being *violent* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
The following explanations of this qualification are excerpts from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

“Gentle” is one of the most attractive and needed virtues required of an elder. No English word adequately conveys the fullness of this word’s beauty and richness - “forbearing,” “kind,” “gentle,” “magnanimous,” “equitable,” and “gracious” all help capture the full range of its meaning. Gentleness comes from God and is a chief source of peace and healing among His people. So in his letter to the Philippian Christians, who were experiencing internal as well as external conflict, Paul says, “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.” (Philippians 4:5)

The gentle man stands in vivid contrast to the violent man. A gentle man exhibits a willingness to yield and patiently makes allowances for the both the ignorance and weakness of the fallen human condition. One who is gentle refuses to retaliate in kind of wrongs done by others and does not insist upon the letter of the law or his personal rights. ...

Gentleness is a characteristic of God: “For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving (the same word for gentle), abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.” (Psalm 86:5) Gentleness also characterized the life of Jesus: “I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ...” (2 Corinthians 10:1).

God fully expects His undershepherds to shepherd His people in the same way He does. He will not let His people be driven, beaten, condemned, or divided. Thus the shepherd must be patient, gracious, and understanding with the erring - and at times, exasperating - sheep. So many wrongs, disagreements, faults, hurts, and injustices exist in this sinful world that one would be forced to live in perpetual division, anger, and conflict were it not for gentleness. So elders must be “gentle” like Christ.


To be arrogant is the opposite of being “gentle” ... An arrogant man wants his own way. He is stubborn and inconsiderate of others' desires or feelings. An arrogant man is headstrong, independent, self-assertive, and ungracious, particularly toward those who have a different perspective. An arrogant man is not a team player, and the ability to work as a team is essential to leadership.

We must remember that the local congregation belongs to God, not to the overseer. The overseer is God’s servant, not a master or owner; therefore, he has no right to be self-willed when caring for God’s precious people. An arrogant man will scatter God’s sheep because he is unyielding, overbearing, and blind to the needs of others (2 Peter 2:10).


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The word “gentle” (epieikē) does not refer to soft, passive, dead-fish handshake guys who need rearview mirrors implanted in their heads because they back down so much. In this context, “gentle” means lenient, willing to yield when yielding is possible. It describes a man who does not always have to be right. A gentle man will not be right for the sake of the church.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does being *gentle* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does being *gentle* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
QUALIFICATION #17  |  RELATION TO OTHERS  |  NOT QUARRELSOME

The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from Biblical Eldership by Alexander Strauch:

Along with being gentle, it is important that an elder not be quarrelsome; or stated positively, peaceable. Since the day Cain killed Abel, his brother, men have been fighting and killing one another (Genesis 4:5-8). This is one of the wretched consequences of man’s sinful nature. Christians, however, are commanded to be different, “…to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.” (Titus 3:2)

God hates division and fighting among His people: “There are six things that the LORD hates… a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.” (Proverbs 6:19) Yet fighting paralyzes and kills many local churches. It may be the most distressing problem Christian leaders face. Therefore, an elder must be “not quarrelsome...” Positively stated, an elder must be a peaceable man. As Paul writes, “…the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness.” (2 Timothy 2:24-25a)


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from Church Planter by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “not quarrelsome” (amachon) refers to a man who is not only “not a hitter,” but also peaceable. You cannot be an elder if your “pastoral counseling” produces more heat from you than light from Jesus. In other words, you are not a qualified man for eldership if you turn most of your discussions into debates. There are men who love to “take the other side” and “play the devil’s advocate” (he does not need one!). This behavior might make you a successful seminary student, but disqualifies you from being an elder.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does not being *quarrelsome* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does not being *quarrelsome* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, and friend?)
The following explanation of this qualification is an excerpt from *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch:

Finally, and of significant importance, an elder “must have a good reputation with those outside the church.” Both Paul and Peter express concern that all Christians have a good reputation before a watching, non-believing world (*1 Corinthians 10:32; Philippians 2:15; Colossians 4:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 5:14; 6:1; Titus 2:5, 8, 10; 3:1-2; 1 Peter 2:12, 15; 3:1, 16*). If all believers are required to have a good testimony before non-Christians, then it is imperative that the leaders have a good reputation with unbelievers; both the church’s credibility and witness are tied to the moral reputation of its leaders.

In all reality, the non-Christians may know more about the character and conduct of the potential elder. Quite often the potential elder’s non-Christian fellow workers or relatives actually have more daily contact with the church leader than do the people within church. So “Paul is concerned,” writes George Knight, “that those who may judge less sympathetically but perhaps more realistically and knowledgeably will render a ‘good’...verdict from the perspective of their own consciences...and also from their awareness of the particular man’s commitment and consistency in terms of his Christian faith.”

An outsider’s opinion of a Christian leader’s character cannot be dismissed, for it affects the evangelistic witness of the entire church, “the pillar and support of the truth.” That is why Paul emphatically states “he must be well thought of by outsiders.” The verb “must,” is the same verb Paul used in *1 Timothy 3:2*, again stressing the absolute necessity and importance of this matter.

The reason for emphatically insisting on this qualification is that an elder with an unfavorable or sinful reputation among non-Christians will “fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil” in a far more destructive way than those he leads. If an elder has a reputation with nonbelievers as a dishonest businessman, womanizer, or adulterer, then the unbelieving community will take special note of his obvious hypocrisy. Non-Christians will say, “He acts that way, and he’s a church elder!” and they will mock and ridicule him. They will scoff at the people of God. They will talk about him and will generate plenty of sinister gossip. They will raise tough, embarrassing questions. He will be discredited and suffer both disgrace and insults. His influence for good will be ruined and he will endanger the church’s evangelistic mission and witness. The elder will certainly become a liability to the church, not a spiritual asset.

But that is not all. Fully aware of the devil’s ways (*2 Corinthians 2:11*), Paul adds that the defamed elder will also fall into “a snare of the devil.” Elsewhere, the devil is pictured as a cunning hunter (*1 Peter 5:8*). Using public criticism and the elder’s own inconsistencies, the devil will entrap him into more serious sin - it may be uncontrolled bitterness, angry retaliation, lying, further hypocrisy, or stubbornness of heart. What may begin as a small offense can become something far more destructive and evil in the church. Therefore, an elder must have a good reputation with those outside the Christian community.


The following explanation of this qualification is an edited excerpt from *Church Planter* by Darrin Patrick:

The phrase “well thought of by outsiders” (*martyrian kalên apô exōthen*) means that an elder must have a good reputation with those outside the church, one who knows unbelievers and is respected for his faith. Of course, this qualification implies, first and foremost, that elders will have relationships with unbelievers. This qualification makes no sense otherwise. Elders should be men who are respected not just by the church but by non-Christians as well. While elders are called to a biblical standard, which is higher than the world’s standard, they should at least meet the world’s standard for decency. A good reputation with non-Christians also protects against character attacks from those outside the church.

An elder must exhibit integrity in his workplace and also be known as a hard worker (*Colossians 3:22-23*). He will pursue relationships with non-Christians with interest and will allow himself to be known by others. In such relationships, elders will be honest about their faith and their life in Christ.

Explain the *eldership* application of this qualification according to the Bible: (using Scripture references)
(How does being *well thought of by outsiders* relate to the role of an elder in the church?)

Explain the *everyday* application of this qualification in your life as a Christian: (using specific examples)
(How does being *well thought of by outsiders* relate to your roles as a husband, father, coworker, friend?)
CONCLUSION | WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

Once you have completed Part 1 of the Eldership Examination in regard to these Biblical Qualifications, please contact the lead pastor or one of the other present elders in order to assess your examination. After the assessment, if you and the present elders do not discover any disqualifications for eldership, you will then be approved to complete Part 2 of the Eldership Examination in regard to Biblical Doctrine.

However, if you have any “red flags” that surface in your heart and mind as you study these qualifications, please do not foolishly ignore them. If the Spirit is convicting you in one of these areas of qualification, then it must be addressed. While some of us who have tender consciences need to be reminded that the only person who is ultimately qualified for ministry is Jesus, others of us need to spend some serious time in prayer about these issues and not just brush them off. These qualifications are not arbitrary or optional: they are designed to protect you, your family, and the church from failure, pain, and sin. It would be much better to take a season off from ministry as an elder than to disqualify yourself from ministry as an elder.

If you realize that you are not yet qualified for eldership, then consider these three encouragements:

1) *The biblical qualifications for eldership are not a “now-or-never” issue.*

In other words, being disqualified from ministry is not necessarily permanent; it may only be temporary. For example, if you are a potential elder who is struggling with some kind of addiction, it may be that the Lord wants you to make progress in that struggle for a time before you enter ministry or in order to help you minister more effectively; but it does not necessarily mean you can never enter ministry as an elder. Or if you are currently an elder guilty of neglecting your family, it may mean you need to take a season away from ministry and circle the wagons in order to invest in your wife and children; but it does not necessarily mean that you can never be in ministry again.

2) *Being an elder is not the most important thing in your life.*

Your first calling is not to be an elder, bishop, overseer, or a pastor. Your first calling is to be a Christian. We must never idolize the ministry by thinking that we are of no value without it. We must look to Christ and His work on the cross on our behalf in order to find our deepest identity and purpose. If you have to choose between continuing ministry as an elder or being a faithful Christian, then please choose the latter. It will be much better for you, your family, and Christ’s church.

3) *Being an elder is not the only way you are valuable to the church.*

If you take a season away from the eldership, that does not mean you are prohibited from supporting the church and its leadership, from serving in the church as a member, or from using your spiritual gifts to edify and encourage the body. Your willingness to step down for a season will be instructive to others about the need for personal holiness and the height and weight that comes with the office of eldership. Ultimately the Lord can use such a scenario for His glory, your joy, and others’ good.

For all of us, wherever we are in our calling, these qualifications are a challenge to seek holiness and blamelessness in our personal lives, in our relationships, and in our public office. Ultimately none of us are qualified to serve God’s people. As Paul asks, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Corinthians 2:16). Our hope is not in ourselves but in Christ who calls us, equips us, qualifies us, and purifies us.