

Who is an Elder?

How do we recognize an elder?

What is an elder supposed to look like, anyway?

1. “Elder” a spiritual description, not a physical one, therefore an elder does not have to be old. While he is not necessarily elderly, he is old enough to have been tried and tested. His faith is not academic but actual and “road tested.” (1Tim 3:6,10).

2. An elder is called and ordained by God. Although he is filled with joy, he takes this responsibility very seriously (sober-minded). An elder is not a political animal. He does not rise or fall with polls or popularity contests. (1 Tim 1:12; 2:7).

3. An elder is gifted. He is equipped, and able to teach (1Tim. 3:2; 2Tim 2:25)

4. An elder has a desire to do the work. He understands that while he is never (let me repeat) never the head, he is usually the heart. Of all those in fellowship in an assembly it is the elder who feels the most. He cries the most, laughs the most, cares the most. He gives the most for the assembly and for the sheep. His desire is not for the “office” but for the opportunity to serve the Savior as he serves others (1Tim. 1:17; 3:1; 6:15; 2Tim. 2-4)

5. An elder does the hard things. He defends the flock from wolves (doctrinal, and moral) who would devour the lambs. He is the first to

“smell a rat” or spot a wolf in sheep’s clothing. He also warns careless sheep who stray too far from the Good Shepherd (the Lord Jesus) and sometimes has to give a gentle rebuke. (1Tim. 5:20)



6. An elder does not drive sheep, but leads them. Oxen are driven, not lambs. An elder knows the best way to lead is by example. He shows zeal, faithfulness, obedience to God, burden for the lost, with what he does more than with what he says. (1Tim. 1:16; 4:12)

7. An elder is spiritual, therefore he walks in the Spirit and is controlled by the Spirit. (2Tim. 2:24-25)

8. An elder must keep spiritually fit for he must endure. (1Tim 4:8; 2Tim. 4:5).

9. A elder is someone who is faithful. An elder (called of God) does not quit. He is faithful “in season and out of season.” (2Tim. 4:2,7)

10. A elder works for God. While some may honor the ministry of a teaching elder with respect, many will minimize or malign his work, he knows he must give an account of his ministry to God (1Tim 5:17; 2Tim. 1:15; 2Tim. 4:8).

The Bible also describes what an elder is not. He is not someone who has failed to lead his own wife and children at home. He is not necessarily a wealthy business man. He is not a brawler or greedy or materialistic person. He is not a lover of money (1Tim. 3; 4:10; 6:10)

An elder is at most a man and at best just an under-shepherd. He is a servant and assigned to both wash the feet, tend the wounds and wipe the tears of God’s children. He is never to think more highly of himself than he ought and must remember that he will one day give an account of his stewardship to God. Woe to the assembly that does not have shepherds to care for the sheep. Woe to the assembly that does not have faithful shepherds who “keep that which is committed to their trust.” (1Tim. 6:20).