

Qualifications for A Man Serving the Lord At Community Bible Church In the Role of Elder

Introduction

According to the Community Bible Church (CBC) Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (d)(1) the duties of elders at CBC are to administer the ordinances; oversee the deacons, all boards, committees, ministries, and officers of the church; set goals for the church; minister to the needs of the saints; select a pastoral candidate when needed; and examine candidates for church membership. The Constitution recognizes the Biblical mandate that elders would represent Christ in all leadership, governance, and pastoral aspects in ministering as “assistant shepherds” to the Church, Christ’s flock.

This document elaborates on the more succinct listing of elder qualifications documented in the Constitution and thus can serve as a guide in the development of men toward the objective of becoming qualified to serve as elders and the evaluation of elder candidates.

In Acts 20.17-28, note the three roles of elders: **elder**, **overseer/administrator**, **pastor**

Acts 20:17-28 (ESV) ¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the **elders** of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **care for** the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Vs 17, **elders** translates **presbuteros**, elders, older men.

Vs 28, **overseers** translates **episkopos**, superintendent, officer in charge of the Church.

Vs 28, **care for** translates **poimainein**, the present active verb form of poimaino, shepherd, pastor.

Note that each elder, to varying degrees depending on spiritual gifts, calling, and circumstance, possesses and is called to serve in all three roles. There is no Biblical warrant for a single individual ruling over a church as its "pastor"¹. This is because the pastoral role is just one of the three roles of each elder. For example, an excerpt from the Grace Community Church article on Biblical Eldership reads, "overseers and pastors are not distinct from elders; the terms are simply different ways of identifying the same people," and, "The different terms, then, indicate various features of ministry, not varying levels of authority or separate offices, as some churches espouse."

Churches are to be ruled over by more than one elder (Titus 1.5, Ac 14.23) or, lacking that due to newness of the Church, by a body of elders ruling over the church that planted it.

Qualification 1: 1 Tim 3.1: He desires to serve as an elder.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (b) says elders must be church members. Paragraph (c) says of elders, "they must be righteous men who demonstrate God's call to do His work."

The elder will be a man who desires to serve the Lord by tending His flock as an elder.

Qualification 2: Ac 20.17, 1 Pet 5.1a: He is able and inclined to serve the CBC flock as a presbuteros, a mature spiritual leader able to impart wise guidance and counsel.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (b) says of elders, "They must be ... approved by three-quarters majority of the church membership."

The elder will be able and inclined to serve as an "older man"; defined as a person folks of the CBC flock can and would look to as one exhibiting the calmness, stability, and wisdom typically attributed to age and experience. The physical age where a man may reach this status among the flock depends on the makeup of the flock, its individuals' perceptions; and on the candidate elder's spiritual maturity and conduct among the flock -- both of which condition how the individual members of the flock view him and relate to him.

Because a presbuteros cannot lead, guide, and counsel without a close relationship with the members of the church, the elder will exhibit a life-pattern of interactivity with the people in

¹ Titus 1.5 may be understood by some to mean Titus was serving as a "single pastor" as he traveled through Crete and appointed elders in the town churches. However, an interpretation better fitting the overall Scriptural teaching on elders is that until Titus ordained at least two elders in a local church he would shepherd that church in concert with his communication with Paul, and possibly others of Paul's ministerial team. Thus, that local church would at all times be ministered to by a plurality of elders, albeit geographically separated from one another.

the congregation. He will be seen as exhibiting leadership qualities and, in general, congregation members will be able to relate and respond to him as a presbuteros.

Qualification 3: Ac 20.28a, 1 Pet 5.1c: He is able and inclined to serve the CBC flock as an episkopos, an officer or official in authority.

The elder will be able and inclined to serve as an officer of the church exercising oversight (shared with the other elders) over it (1 Pet 5.1); being willing to be responsible and accountable for the conduct of church life and worship, the use of the property, and the use of the Lord's money.

He will be someone faithful in attendance at and support of church services, and will be a supporter of the ministries of the church.

Qualification 4: Ac 20.28b, 1 Pet 5.1b: He is able and inclined to serve the CBC flock as a poimaino, a shepherd of the flock in leading, feeding, and protecting the flock.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says of elders, "They must be ... kind to all."

The elder will be willing and able to serve as a pastor (an English translation of poimaino) of the flock. Being willing, he will have a heart for the spiritual and overall well-being and spiritual growth of members of the flock; including providing counsel, arranging and participating in works supporting flock members' needs, providing help and comfort to those troubled, afflicted, etc.; and being inclined (1 Tim 3.2, didaktikos, apt/predisposed to/willing) to teach them the Word.

Being able, he will have an adequate grasp of the Word sufficient to explain key passages undergirding the "What We Believe" portion of the CBC Constitution, to which he personally adheres; and will be able to clearly convey the gospel of salvation, undergirded by relevant verses. He won't necessarily know the immediate answer to each question but will be able to efficiently research the Word independently and in concert with the other elders. Because the elder's ability to serve the flock as an "under-shepherd" or assistant shepherd² requires an availability affording a regular and consistent presence with and among the flock, he will be a faithful attendee at church worship and a supporter of church ministries.

Finally, since all of the elder's spiritual pastoral ministry requires direction, power, and blessing from the Lord, the elder will be a man of prayer both in private prayer and corporate prayer.

² 1 Pet 5.1-4, addressing elders, mentions in vs 2 that the flock to which they minister is God's flock, not theirs; and vs 4 mentions Christ as the Chief Shepherd. Christ, recorded in Jn 10.26-27 and 21.16-17 refers to the flock as "my sheep".

Qualification 5: Titus 1.6, 7; 1 Tim 3.2, 7: He is above reproach.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (b) says of elders, “They must be ... above reproach, (and) have a good reputation with those outside the church.” Paragraph (c) says elders must be “respectable.”

The Titus 1.6 requirement is for an elder to be *anegketos*, someone with a record and reputation containing nothing for which he can be legitimately or reasonably called to account or indicted for a sin/offense in any aspect of life, relationships, business, relations with the government, etc. In other words, this man is unreprouvable. 1 Tim 3.7 says (NASB), “he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church* so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

An example of this concern for “appearances” to forestall any possibility of legitimate accusation of wrongdoing is Paul’s arrangements for collecting and administering a financial gift from the churches of Greece for the beleaguered saints in Palestine as recorded in 2 Cor 8.16-24. Paul went out of his way, sending the Gentile Titus, plus others, to participate in the collection and transportation of the funds to insure no accusation could be reasonably laid against Paul charging conflict of interest, Jewish preference, embezzlement, etc. In 2 Cor 8.21 Paul explicitly states that he did this to insure all aspects of the management of the gift were honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but in the sight of men.

The elder will have a reputation and a “record” in his family, church, social and work/business dealings which is above reproach.

Qualification 6: Titus 1.6, 1 Tim 3.2: He is a “one woman man”.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (b) says of elders, “They must be ... the husband of only one wife.”

In the text of Titus 1.6, *mias gunaikos aner*, *mias* is translated as “one” or “of one”, *gunaikos* is translated as “woman” or when the context permits “wife”, and *aner* is translated as “man” or when the context permits “husband”. This text describes a man who, if married, has the character and the outlook of a faithful, monogamous husband. It also describes a man who, if unmarried, does not have a “roving eye” or an outlook toward females which would see them as sex objects and/or potential sexual partners. He is sexually pure internally and in his external behavior, and does not commit the sin of moral impurity or adultery as described in Mt 5.28.

This qualification accepts as an elder a man who is never married, a widower, or a man remarried after being a widower.

Qualification 7: Titus 1.6, 1 Tim 3.4: He has proven spiritual leadership through managing his household well and raising children to be young adults who are believers and not riotous or rebellious.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (b) says of elders, “They must ... manage their own household well (and) keep their children under control.” Paragraph (c) says, “Their children must believe and not be unruly.”

In Titus 1.6 the qualification employs *pistos*, faith; *asotia*, dissipation or wastefulness; and *anupotaktos*, rebelliousness. “Children” translates *teknon*, a child in a wide range of ages depending on the context. Here probably the last two terms, and certainly *asotia*, show that *teknon* in this context best refers to young adults old enough to engage in dissipation, riotous behavior, “partying” in the worldly sense of the term. In 1 Tim 3.4 the NASB translates, “*He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children (teknon) under control with all dignity.*”

A negative example of a spiritual leader who did not raise his children in a way that would satisfy this qualification is the Old Testament High Priest Eli. He did not adequately train and restrain his sons, Hophni and Phineas; with the result that when they reached young adulthood they pursued evil and were ultimately killed by God. This sad story, of a man who decided to honor his evil sons more than God (ref. 1 Sam 2.29) is recorded in 1 Sam 2.12-17, 22-25, and 27-36.

The elder’s children, old enough to evaluate their behavior on these three attributes, are not given to dissipation, and not rebellious but subject to their father’s authority as described in the Scriptures. Considering 1 Tim 3.4, the Elder’s manner of managing and ruling his household will be dignified and righteous as well as effective. He will not manage his household through unrighteous means such as intimidation, abuse of his power, aggression, retribution, etc.

Qualification 8: Titus 1.7: He is above reproach in his dealings with the property of the Church.

The literal text (YLT) is, “it behoveth the overseer to be blameless, as God’s steward...”

The elder’s practices and reputation will provide no legitimate grounds for accusation of mismanagement or misappropriation of any aspect of Church property/money.

Qualification 9: Titus 1.7: He is not be “self-willed”.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be, “not self-willed” and “patient when wronged.”

Titus 1.7 uses *authades*, self-pleasing.

The elder won't be a man who has to have his own way in decisions, arguments, or discussions and, when his preferences are not selected, is not offended or upset. This man is obviously living out the command of Phil 2.3-4 to consider others better, of higher priority, than himself.

Applying also to qualification 8, note this excerpt from MacArthur's commentary on 2 Cor 8.13-15, "Forceful, strong-willed leaders can often ram through their projects. But biblically sound stewardship programs will be led by a plurality of godly men. The church's finances are to be overseen by wise, theologically sound, spiritually mature men who agree to seek the mind of God."

Qualification 10: Titus 1.7, 1 Tim 3.3: He is not quick-tempered.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be, "not quick-tempered" and "gentle."

Titus 1.7 says the elder is not orgilos which means not inclined to anger or passion, e.g. strong feelings of a negative/combatative nature. 1 Tim 3.3 says he is epieikes, gentle, someone whose behavior interacting with others is seemly and yielding; and amachos, peaceable, not inclined to fight.

The elder has a long fuse; and only expresses righteous anger. People don't have to "tiptoe around" an elder, being careful what is said lest the elder take offense. Rather, the elder epitomizes the Col 4.12-14 attributes of relating to members of the flock with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, edifying the body of Christ in the bond of love.

Qualification 11: Titus 1.7, 1 Tim 3.3: He is not addicted to alcohol or other controlling substances.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (b) says of elders, "They must be ... not given to questionable habits, such as alcohol, drugs, etc."

In the Scripture text paroinos means addicted to wine.

Applying the cultural-historical perspective to today's conditions, the elder would not be under the influence of, or have an appetite for, any controlling "agent" except the Holy Spirit (Eph 5.18).

Qualification 12: Titus 1.7, 1 Tim 3.3: He is not given to violence.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be "uncontentious."

Titus 1.7 uses plektes which is translated as pugnacious, or "a striker". Some men have the habit or character of quickly escalating disagreements or tense situations to the physical realm.

Such men are apt to “get in your face” and “lean in” to project power and intimidate. Such men quickly see disagreements as fights they must win.

The elder must be completely free of such behavior and motivations. The elder must be the safest person any flock member can imagine being around.

Qualification 13: Titus 1.7, 1 Tim 3.3: He is not fond/greedy of unrighteous income.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (b) says of elders, “They must ... not be controlled by the love of money.”

Titus 1.7 says the elder is not aischrokerdes, “fond of base gain”, “greedy of filthy lucre”, etc. The root word, aischros, means “shameful”. 1 Tim 3.3 says he is aphilarguros, free from the love of money (NASB), not covetous (KJV).

The elder will not be inclined to seek, attracted to, or in favor of any money-making enterprise which is not worthy of the name and reputation of the Lord. All the elder’s personal financial and business dealings, and all those the elder is willing to support, approve, or be associated with, will be straightforward, transparent, honest, and provide no reasonable grounds for suspicion or accusation. He does not appear to have an undue interest in money for money’s sake, nor an interest in the property of others.

Qualification 14: Titus 1.8, 1 Tim 3.2: He is hospitable.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be “hospitable.”

In Titus 1.8 philoxenos, employing the root for brotherly love, is translated “a lover of hospitality.” In the context of this Scripture, the issue of hospitality is specifically about supporting fellow saints traveling through the local church’s locality.

The elder is a good example to the rest of the flock of being willing and inclined to expend his time and resources to take care of visiting saints.

Qualification 15: Titus 1.8: He loves what is good.

Philagathos literally means lover (philo) of good (agathos). Some translate this as a lover of good men.

The elder will be a good example to the flock of the commands in Col 3.1-2 to set hearts and minds on things above rather than things on the earth.

Qualification 16: Titus 1.8, 1 Tim 3.2: He is discreet and temperate.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be “prudent.”

Titus 1.8 uses *sophron*, which is formed from a contraction of *sozo*, safe, to save, heal, make whole; and *phren*, sympathetic feeling, understanding. It means to be moderate as to opinion or passion, to be discreet, sober, temperate, thoughtful, prudent.

The elder's way of thinking and deciding will not be "radical", erratic or extreme. He won't be unpredictable, rash, or hasty; but rather will be "cool-headed". He won't jump to conclusions but will be "sensible". He can be appealed to, and will readily consider alternate opinions and suggestions not his own. He will exhibit a consistency and steady demeanor and way of thinking informed by Biblical principles and priorities.

Qualification 17: Titus 1.8: He is just.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be "just."

The NASB "just" translates *diakios*, righteous, correct, fair, innocent, with justice. The Amplified describes this man as being "upright and fair-minded". Judgments are made in the church, whether they be practical matters such as schedule, ministerial emphasis, and resource allocation; or the more weighty matters of counseling, discipline, and guarding the church against wolves.

The elder must have an observed manner of being able and inclined to arrive at just, correct, fair decisions, including his habit and ability of thinking through decisions from a Biblical perspective and explaining the Biblical basis of his reasoning. Since most of the time elder decisions will be made in concert with the other elders, this man will be a strong proponent of the principle of unity among the elders and not inclined to "go his own way".

Qualification 18: Titus 1.8: He is devout.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be "devout."

The word *hosios* is translated "holy" by the KJV, NIV, ESV, Wuest, and HCSB; "pious" by Darby; and "righteous" by the YLT. Vines says the word "signifies 'religiously right, holy,' as opposed to what is unrighteous or polluted. It is commonly associated with righteousness. In 1 Tim 2.8 and Titus 1.8 it is used of the character of Christians. In the Septuagint (the early Greek version of the Old Testament) *hosios* frequently represents the Hebrew word *chasid*, which varies in meaning between 'holy' and 'gracious,' or 'merciful'." Zodhiates says the word means, "righteous, unpolluted with wickedness, right as conformed to God and His laws, thus distinguished from *dikaios*, righteous, which refers to human laws and duties."

The elder's words, actions, decisions and apparent priorities indicate he is committed to pursuing God's righteousness and conforming his life to that standard.

Qualification 19: Titus 1.8: He is self-controlled.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be "self-controlled."

Egkrates means to be master of oneself. It is translated as “self-controlled” by NASB³, HCSB³, YLT³, Wuest³, and the NIV³; “temperate” by Darby³ and KJV³; “disciplined” by the ESV³; and “temperate and keeping himself in hand” by the Amplified³.

The elder’s life will evidence discipline and self-control. As in Qualification 10, he will not be under the control or domination of any agent other than the Holy Spirit and his own will obviously committed to following Christ.

Qualification 20: Titus 1.9: He adheres to the Word and can effectively apply it to exhort and to refute attacks against it.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be able to “exhort in sound doctrine” and “refute those who contradict God’s Word.”

The elder’s commitment to the Word is absolute. He resists any suggestion to understate or undermine any part of it, or to add anything to it. He practices a consistent differentiation between interpretation of the meaning of the Word and its application to specific life questions and issues. He consistently employs a grammatical-cultural-historical hermeneutic approach and resists interpreting the Word symbolically, figuratively, or allegorically except where specifically allowed by the Scriptures themselves.

The elder has the interest, temperament, and skill to both employ the Word to exhort through imparting Biblical truth (teaching) and to defend the Word against attacks contradicting it.

Qualification 21: 1 Tim 3.2: He is sober-minded.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be “temperate.”

Nephalios is translated as “temperate” in the NASB, sober twice and vigilant once by the KJV. The TDNT⁴ recognizes a literal meaning of “not a drunkard” and a figurative meaning of being sober-minded, e.g. “acknowledgement of the reality of revelation and discharge of the resultant ministry in worship, hope, love, and conflict.” Because Qualification 11 already deals with alcohol and other controlling substances, Qualification 21 deals with the sober commitment to the seriousness of the task of serving the Church as an elder and in that capacity representing the Church to the world.

The elder will exhibit a serious outlook about the Church and the responsibility, and accountability of the three-fold role of elder.

³ NASB, New American Standard Bible; HCSB, Holman Christian Standard Bible; YLT, Young’s Literal Translation; Wuest, Kenneth Wuest expanded translation of the New Testament; NIV, New International Version; Darby, Darby’s Translation; KJV, King James Translation; ESV, English Standard Version; Amplified, the Amplified Bible.

⁴ TDNT: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament; by Kittel.

Qualification 22: 1 Tim 3.2: His behavior is modest, decorous, orderly.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be “sensible.”

Kosmios is translated by Vines as modest, orderly behavior. Strongs adds “decorous”. The word comes from kosmos, representing the orderly arrangement of things which is the universe God created.

The elder’s behavior, decisions, and outlook will exhibit a sensible, orderly approach. He will not be unpredictable or irrational in his manner of life and interactions with the Church.

Qualification 23: 1 Tim 3.2: He is inclined to teach.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says elders must be “able to teach.”

Didaktikos is translated by Strongs as apt (inclined, disposed, given, prone) to teach.

The elder, exhibiting the pastor’s heart of spiritually feeding and protecting the sheep, will be inclined to teach the Word in a variety of settings. This qualification does not require the elder to be a skilled pulpit preacher, but describes a man with a disposition to be always seeking opportunities to impart more spiritual truth to members of the flock.

Qualification 24: 1 Tim 3.6: He is not a new convert.

The CBC Constitution, Article IV, Section 1, paragraph (c) says of elders, “They must ... not be recent converts.”

Neophutos means “newly planted”, e.g. someone new to the faith. The reason given is that such a man, if ordained to this office, could be tempted to become conceited, translating tuphoo, meaning “to puff up like a cloud of smoke.” In other words, the danger is pride, the fundamental sin of Lucifer.

The elder will not be someone new to the faith. He will have been a believer long enough to reasonably expect him to not be unduly tempted toward pride. He will not appear to consider the role of elder as one of honor but as one of service, as the under-shepherd serves both the Chief Shepherd and the Chief Shepherd’s sheep.