

BIBLICAL INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Similar instructions are given to all believers to strive for, as well as to leaders, of whom is expected more spiritual maturity and more consistent pursuit and demonstration of God's transforming grace in their lives. Consider how Scripture inspires and empowers change in character as well as behavior and function...

1. **Followers** – Jesus said, "follow Me"... His disciples are learners and followers, becoming more like Him, as they live for Him and serve under the instruction and authority and commission of Christ our Lord.
2. **Servant-leaders** – Jesus said worldly leaders "lord it over" others, "but it shall not be so among you"... "for I am among you as one who serves" ... "for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost"...
3. **Leading** – Leadership is intentional serving, by living out the message of Christ, while pointing others to the manner of Christ, to fulfill the mission of Christ's disciples, as together we learn and follow the Master.
4. **Humble** – Jesus is our greatest example of not exalting yourself but rather putting the best interests of others ahead of your own... humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking more of others...
5. **Examples** – Leaders intentionally serve as good role models of being learners and followers of the master of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom we will give account, for how we represent Him.
6. **Responsible** – Knowing well the condition of your flock and yourself... alert to dangers and needs, serving willingly, eagerly, not domineering, watching over the souls of the flock, to whom you are examples.
7. **Prayerful** – Interceding on behalf of the flock, primarily for spiritual and secondarily for physical & other needs, asking God to apply the life-transforming grace of His Word of truth, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
8. **Ministers of the Word** – Leaders submit to the Lordship of Christ by knowing and obeying God's Word as revealed in Scripture, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live out God's truth & grace.
9. **Recognized** – Leaders are not self-appointed... their gifts and skills are recognized by others as fruitful, and they are set apart for service, responsibility for others, and accountability to Christ and one another.

SELECTED SCRIPTURES - 1 Tim 3:1-7,8-15; 5:17-22; 2 Tim 2:2,15,24-25; Titus 1:5-9, 2:1-8; 1 Pet 5:1-7; Heb 13:7-21; James 5:13-16; Acts 6:1-7; Acts 14:23, 20:17-38; Luke 22:24-27; Mark 9:35; Phil 2:1-18

Acts 14:23 (15:22) - And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20:17-38 - he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church... and said to them... "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. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert..."

1 Peter 5:1-7 - So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Hebrews 13:7-21 - Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings... Through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.

BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELDERS, OVERSEERS, STEWARDS, SHEPHERDS

The leadership terms "elder, overseer, shepherd" are used interchangeably in Scripture.

- a. **Above reproach** – Elders must be willing to serve, lead by example, and demonstrate a well-directed lifestyle free of patterns of sin, and modeling Christ's vision for His church, as Spirit-led followers of Christ.
- b. **Husband of one wife** – Elders must be morally pure, and if married, devoted, faithful husbands (taking into consideration the Greek expression "one-woman man" - variously interpreted as referring to no marital infidelity, divorce, or polygamy; or remarriage after divorce; or as 'requiring marriage').
- c. **Sober-minded** – Elders must be sensible, prudent, wise, humble, balanced in judgment, magnanimous, open to information, not arrogant or given to quick, superficial decisions based on immature thinking.
- d. **Self-controlled** – Demonstrating a well-ordered life, honorable behavior, serving as good role models for all believers, not controlling of others or self-centered, but seeking to be Spirit-led and Spirit-controlled.
- e. **Respectable** – Elders must not be arrogant, but rather unselfish servants, not forcing their opinions or abusing authority, but helping to guide others, serving as under-shepherds who will give an account.
- f. **Hospitable** – Elders must be unselfish, generous with personal resources, time, talent, and treasure, seeking to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, holy and upright, as they intentionally practice the Christian life.
- g. **Able to teach** – Not the spiritual gift of teaching, but willing and able to communicate truth and sound doctrine in a non-argumentative way, sensitive to people and to situations in which opportunities arise.
- h. **Holding firm to the truth** – Stable in the Christian faith, obedient to and demonstrating understanding of the authority of God's Word, able to instruct others in sound doctrine, and to correct those who contradict it.
- i. **Not quarrelsome** – Elders are not argumentative, arrogant, quick-tempered, abusive, violent... but gentle, patient, and exercising self-control in difficult situations, with a broad view of their place in God's world.
- j. **Temperate** – Elders must be free from excesses or addiction to substances, willing to limit personal liberty for the sake of others, balanced in words, attitudes, actions...living in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- k. **Free from the love of money** – Elders model laying up treasures in heaven, as well as good financial judgment, as God's stewards, without being stingy, greedy, or preoccupied with amassing material things.
- l. **Manage own household well** – Elders must maintain a well-ordered household, a healthy family life, and be dignified fathers whose children are not insubordinate but obey them him with proper respect.
- m. **Not a recent convert** – Elders must not be new believers, but believers long enough to demonstrate the reality of their conversion and the depth of their spirituality, without being pridefully ambitious.
- n. **Good reputation with outsiders** – Elders are well-respected in their communities and by unbelievers. Free from hypocrisy, their walk should keep in step with their talk, as they show and tell God's grace.
- o. **Not arrogant** – Elders are not selfish or self-willed, but rather unselfish servants, not forcing their opinions or abusing authority, but helping to guide others to know Scripture and follow God's will.
- p. **Loving what is good** – Elders seek and obey the will of God in every decision, speaking God's truth in love, as they seek the best interests of others, as they help to build up the body of Christ.
- q. **Upright** – Elders must be just, fair, impartial, and discerning, steadfastly basing judgments on the principles of Scriptural, rather than on personal or pragmatic or popular trends and opinions.
- r. **Holy** – Elders must be devoted Christ followers who are seeking to be conformed to His image, and committed to prayer, worship, the study of Scripture, and devoutly guarding their own walk with the Lord.
- s. **Disciplined** – Good examples of discipleship, knowing and doing God's Word, as Spirit-controlled servants who can encourage, lead, and follow others, as well as exercise appropriate church discipline.

Note: Scripture addresses Elders (overseers) with several descriptions of qualifications and commands, which are also expected of all Christians and which they should aspire to. Elders should demonstrate consistent spiritual maturity. Deacons are servant-leaders described in similar terms, except for the expectation to teach God's Word, and their responsibilities are more administrative. Deaconesses are understood as either their wives or else female servant-leaders (not Elders). In many churches today, these roles are often fulfilled by Elders, or by others selected to serve, even if the title or Biblical word is not used.