

# Lay Elder Team

*Some information below is comprised with help from “A Job Description for Lay Elders” by Jeramie Rinne*

A lay elder is a faithful man raised up from within the body to help shepherd God’s people. Though he is not paid, his calling is no less weighty—he walks with the church family, teaches the Word, leads with humility, prays for the church, assists the pastoral team, and reflects Christ in everyday life.

## ***Responsibilities of Lay Elders***

Lay elders are often devoted members who care for the church but may not fully grasp the biblical role of an elder—an issue even paid pastors can share. As a result, lay elders sometimes rely on their own backgrounds, equating eldership with roles like trustees or managers, which don’t truly match the responsibilities required.

So, what is a lay elder’s actual role? Is it just attending meetings, approving budgets, or distributing communion?

### **Shepherd God’s Flock**

Peter instructs elders to "shepherd God's flock" (1 Pet. 5:2; see also John 21:15–16, Acts 20:28), meaning they provide spiritual guidance and care for church members as a shepherd does for sheep. Shepherding is a helpful metaphor, but new elders require clear instructions. The Bible outlines specific duties to guide elders in their roles.

Outlined below are **four key responsibilities that are fundamental to the role of an elder**. Although this list is not comprehensive, focusing on these areas can significantly enhance effectiveness in fulfilling pastoral duties.

#### **1. Teach**

An elder must be “an able teacher” (1 Tim. 3:2; see 5:17). He must hold “to the faithful message as taught, so that he will be able both to encourage with sound teaching and refute those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Jesus’ under-shepherds feed Jesus’ sheep with Jesus’ word.

If you’re an elder, find venues for teaching the Bible regularly. Teach a Sunday class, lead a group, give a lesson to the youth group, or study Scripture with a member over coffee.

Further, tune in to the church’s overall teaching ministry. Keep a finger on the pulse of what’s being taught through congregational singing or in the Sunday curriculum. Listen closely when members talk about what they’re reading and be alert for unhealthy teachings.

Finally, remember that teaching includes training others to perpetuate the church’s teaching ministry. As Paul said to Timothy, “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). So, bring along someone whenever you can.

Elders who embrace their teaching role also help guide and build up the church by leading the congregation with wisdom and courage. As overseers, they’re called not only to instruct but to actively shepherd the flock through life’s challenges, addressing issues head-on and encouraging spiritual growth in every member. By faithfully modeling Christlike character—serving humbly and walking closely with those they lead—elders foster a community shaped by discipleship and authentic relationships. Ultimately, their impact is measured not by organizational efficiency or doctrinal precision alone, but by the transformation and maturity of the church as members imitate the faith and love exemplified by their leaders.

## **2. Lead**

Just as shepherds lead their flocks, so elders lead local congregations. The biblical writers also call elders “overseers,” a title that highlights their role as leaders (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:5, 7). Hebrews instructs Christians to “obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account” (Heb. 13:17).

Elders, be brave and lead your church. Don’t hide among the baggage like King Saul. When you see challenges in your church, face them proactively and plot a course forward.

Courageous leadership might involve reaching out to a frustrated member who’s stopped attending or confronting an unrepentant member through church discipline. Or it could mean wrestling through staffing strategies, budget challenges, or important policies that affect the spiritual identity of the congregation.

As you lead, don’t lose sight of the destination. The goal isn’t to lead a church to become an efficient organization, as important as that may be. Rather, elders should lead church members toward maturity in Christ. Jesus gave teaching shepherds to the church “to build up the body of Christ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness” (Eph. 4:12–13).

Elders bring the flock to green pastures and still waters when they help members know Jesus more and increasingly reflect his glory together.

Such leadership, grounded in biblical conviction and pastoral courage, paves the way for elders to become living examples to their flock, not as domineering authorities but as humble guides who model Christlike maturity in daily life. By walking closely with church members, inviting them into authentic relationships, and demonstrating godliness under pressure, elders set a standard for the congregation to follow.

This commitment to visible, accessible leadership—one that is marked by openness, integrity, and genuine love—enables the church to flourish spiritually, nurturing a community where discipleship is lived out and faith is deepened through shared experience. Ultimately, the effectiveness of eldership is measured not only by organizational success or doctrinal soundness, but by the transformation of lives as church members witness and imitate the faith, hope, and love embodied by their leaders.

## **3. Model**

Significantly, elders are expected to provide leadership by setting a positive example. They are instructed to guide the church not through dominance but by serving as role models for the congregation (1 Pet. 5:3). The qualifications for elders outlined in the New Testament emphasize personal character (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet. 5:1–4). At its core, an elder’s principal responsibility is to exemplify behavior worth emulating, as stated in “Imitate me as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

The imperative to demonstrate maturity involves two essential considerations. First, effective modeling requires vigilant self-examination and integrity: Leaders must closely monitor both their personal lives and their teaching (1 Tim. 4:16). Maintaining a close relationship with the Lord, nurturing one’s family, resisting sinful tendencies, and showing genuine care for others are paramount. Additionally, elders should invite constructive accountability from their peers, recognizing that fostering maturity is a collaborative endeavor.

Second, authentic modeling necessitates regular engagement with church members. This approach is only effective when leaders are accessible and transparent. Elders are encouraged to welcome members into their personal lives, homes, interests, and ministries. Such openness enables congregants to observe firsthand how leaders manage stress, interact with their families, address challenging situations, and respond with humility when mistakes occur.

When elders embody the qualities, they teach and remain open and available to those they serve, their influence extends beyond instruction, shaping the spiritual culture of the church. By consistently modeling Christlike character in everyday interactions, elders foster trust and set a standard for sincere discipleship. This ongoing example encourages others to pursue spiritual growth and unity, laying a foundation for genuine community and collective transformation. As leaders invest in relationships and faithfully walk alongside church members, their example becomes a living testimony that inspires, instructs, and strengthens the body of Christ, preparing the ground for shared prayer and deeper engagement with God's work among his people.

#### **4. Pray**

Elders must focus on prayer and preaching, recognizing that spiritual growth comes only through the Holy Spirit's work with God's Word. Realizing their limitations, elders should regularly pray for their church and themselves.

Whether lay or paid, elders should integrate prayer into daily routines—praying for members during commutes or walks, setting aside lay elder meeting time for focused prayer, and praying immediately with church members when speaking with them.

Such persistent devotion to prayer not only connects elders to the heart of God but also deepens their reliance on his guidance and power as they shepherd the flock. As leaders intercede for the church with humility and faith, they become conduits for God's grace, modeling dependence on Christ and fostering a spirit of unity among the congregation. In every circumstance—whether moments of joy, seasons of hardship, or times of uncertainty—elders who pray faithfully both with and for those they serve help weave prayer into the fabric of church life, ensuring that every aspect of ministry is upheld by God's sustaining presence and transforming love.

#### **Shepherd like Jesus**

An elder's responsibilities can be concisely described as shepherding church members with the care and guidance modeled by Jesus toward His disciples.

It is essential to prioritize teaching within ministry, ensuring that both Jesus and the gospel remain the central focus. In every decision, elders should guide their congregation towards a deeper knowledge and trust in Jesus, serving as an example of His character through personal conduct. Additionally, elders are encouraged to follow Jesus' practice of prayer, dedicating time to intercede on behalf of others.

Elders serve most effectively when they exemplify the leadership and character of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd.

To truly shepherd like Jesus, elders must also cultivate humility, approachability, and a willingness to serve in every aspect of church life. By engaging regularly and transparently with the congregation, they create an environment where trust flourishes, challenges can be addressed openly, and spiritual growth is nurtured. Their commitment to fostering genuine relationships and walking alongside members through both celebrations and struggles not only strengthens the church community but also reinforces the unity and love that characterize Christ's body. As elders remain attentive to the needs of the flock, continually seeking God's wisdom and leading by example, their faithful presence becomes a source of encouragement and stability, ensuring that each member experiences the transformative care and guidance of a shepherd who reflects the heart of Jesus.

## ***Biblical Qualifications of Lay Elders***

### **1. Above Reproach (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)**

An elder must have a reputation for integrity and faithfulness. It doesn't mean sinless perfection, but rather that no one can bring a legitimate, disqualifying charge against his character or conduct.

### **2. Husband of One Wife (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)**

Literally "a one-woman man." Elders must be faithful to their wives, demonstrating sexual purity, loyalty, and marital integrity.

### **3. Sober-Minded (1 Tim. 3:2)**

Sound in judgment, self-controlled in thought and decision-making, not impulsive or reckless.

### **4. Self-Controlled (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)**

Exhibits discipline in desires and behavior; not driven by passions, greed, or anger.

### **5. Respectable (1 Tim. 3:2)**

Well-ordered, honorable, and dignified in conduct. His life commands respect rather than ridicule.

### **6. Hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)**

Opens his home and life to others, generous with his time, possessions, and care. Shows love for strangers and members of the flock alike.

### **7. Able to Teach (1 Tim. 3:2)**

Skilled in communicating Scripture clearly, applying it faithfully, and guarding the church against error. This doesn't always mean a pulpit ministry, but an ability to rightly handle the Word of God.

### **8. Not a Drunkard (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)**

Not controlled by alcohol or other substances. Displays moderation and freedom from addictions.

### **9. Not Violent but Gentle (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)**

Elders must not be quarrelsome, harsh, or domineering, but instead patient, kind, and peaceable in dealings with others.

### **10. Not Quarrelsome (1 Tim. 3:3)**

Avoids unnecessary conflict, not argumentative or divisive.

### **11. Not a Lover of Money (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)**

Free from greed, not motivated by personal financial gain, and trustworthy with material resources.

### **12. Manages Household Well (1 Tim. 3:4–5)**

Leads his family with dignity, discipline, and love. His household provides a small-scale model of his leadership in God's household, the church.

### **13. Children Who Are Believers (or Faithful) (Titus 1:6)**

His children should show evidence of being well-disciplined, not accused of wild or rebellious living. The emphasis is on faithful parenting, not ultimate salvation (which only God gives).

### **14. Not a Recent Convert (1 Tim. 3:6)**

Spiritual maturity is required. New believers should not be placed in leadership too quickly, lest pride and inexperience lead to spiritual downfall.

### **15. Well Thought of by Outsiders (1 Tim. 3:7)**

Elders must maintain a good testimony in the community outside the church, avoiding scandal or reproach that would dishonor Christ.

### **16. Lover of Good (Titus 1:8)**

Finds joy in what is morally excellent and godly, not in sin or corrupt practices.

### **17. Upright, Holy, Disciplined (Titus 1:8)**

A life marked by personal holiness, justice in relationships, and consistent spiritual discipline.

### **18. Holds Firm to the Word (Titus 1:9)**

Strongly committed to the truth of Scripture, able to encourage sound doctrine and refute error.

Together, these qualifications show that character is central to biblical eldership. Skills like teaching and leadership matter, but Scripture emphasizes integrity, holiness, and godly example as the foundation.

## ***Duties for Lay Elders***

### **1. Teaching and Guarding the Word**

- Regularly teach in some context: Sunday classes, small groups, youth, or one-on-one Bible studies.
- Review and affirm the church's doctrinal statement and ensure all teaching aligns with it.
- Read through the church's curriculum and listen to sermons from other leaders to ensure soundness.
- Identify and mentor at least one younger man to develop as a future teacher (2 Tim. 2:2).
- Be ready to gently correct members when false teaching or misunderstandings arise (Acts 20:30–31).

### **2. Leading with Courage**

- Attend and actively contribute to elder meetings, making decisions prayerfully and biblically.
- Take initiative to reach out to members drifting from fellowship.
- Be willing to confront sin lovingly, pursuing Matthew 18 church discipline when necessary.
- Participate in strategic planning for the church's mission, budget, and ministry direction.
- Lead by example in evangelism and disciple-making, encouraging members to follow.

### **3. Modeling Christlike Character**

- Live transparently: invite church members into your home and let them see your life up close.
- Pursue ongoing accountability with fellow elders to guard against hidden sin.
- Keep your marriage strong and prioritize family discipleship — your home is your first ministry.
- Maintain financial integrity; be open and accountable in how you handle resources.
- Demonstrate humility by admitting mistakes and asking forgiveness when needed.

### **4. Devotion to Prayer**

- Pray through the church membership regularly; cover each member in prayer over the course of weeks.
- Set aside time in elder meetings for focused prayer for the congregation and mission.
- Offer to pray with members immediately during conversations, not just later.
- Intercede for your fellow elders, staff, and deacons by name.
- Lead the congregation in public prayer, modeling dependence on God in worship gatherings.

## **5. Cultivating a Shepherd's Heart**

- Visit the sick, homebound, and grieving members regularly.
- Be accessible: make time for coffee, meals, or home visits to encourage members personally.
- Keep a pulse on the spiritual health of the church — listen well and ask questions.
- Celebrate spiritual growth: recognize faithfulness and encourage members in visible ways.
- Walk with members through trials, offering both biblical counsel and compassionate presence.

## **6. Guarding the Church's Witness**

- Maintain a good reputation in the community: integrity in work, family, and neighborhood.
- Lead the way in community involvement, showing that faith extends beyond Sunday gatherings.
- Be above reproach in financial dealings, speech, and conduct in public.
- Encourage members to live missionally so the church is known for love and truth.

## ***Summary of Duties Required***

- Complete Lay Elder Team Training sessions
- Attend regular Lay Elder Meetings with the Pastors
- Availability on Sunday mornings to greet people and engage conversation with guests
- Occasional visits to church members (spiritual needs)
- Monthly contacting of assigned members to better pray for them (phone, email, or in-person)
- Teach somewhere at least once a quarter
- Invest in someone in a regular discipleship relationship
- Be visible among the church body on Sundays and programming per your schedule

# Lay Elder Application

Because we are human, no person is perfect, and we are certainly not looking for people who are perfect. Just because you don't have your whole life "perfected" doesn't mean you are disqualified. We are looking for people who are authentic and recognize areas where they might struggle. It's okay and even encouraged to be honest. We are looking for people who are qualified, growing in their maturity, and willing to accept the responsibilities associated with this position. Consider the **responsibilities**, **qualifications**, and **duties** for elders and then answer the questions accordingly.

## Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Spiritual Life

Share your personal testimony of salvation. How did you come to faith in Christ?

Describe your current relationship with the Lord. How do you cultivate prayer, Scripture reading, and holiness in daily life?

How would you explain the gospel to someone who has never heard it?

In what ways are you currently serving in the church?

**Family Life**

If married, describe your relationship with your wife. How do you lead and love her biblically?

If you have children, how are you shepherding them toward Christ? Are they respectful and well-disciplined?

What does “managing your household well” (1 Tim. 3:4–5) mean to you?

**Character Qualifications (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1)**

Are there any areas of your life that might bring reproach to the church?

Would others describe you as self-controlled, sober-minded, and respectable?

Are you free from addictions (alcohol, pornography, gambling, etc.)?

Do you struggle with anger, quarrelsomeness, or domineering tendencies? Is your social media presence free from anger and an argumentative spirit? Please explain.

How do you guard yourself against the love of money?

How do unbelievers (neighbors, coworkers, extended family) view your character and integrity?



**Doctrinal Convictions**

What do you believe about the authority and sufficiency of Scripture?

What is your understanding of the gospel and justification by faith?

How would you define the role of elders in the church?

How would you counsel someone in the church who is living in unrepentant sin?

What are the essential doctrines that must be preserved for a church to remain faithful?

How would you respond to false teaching in the congregation?

**Teaching Ability**

Have you taught the Bible before (small group, Sunday class, preaching, one-on-one)? Describe.

How do you prepare a Bible study or sermon?

What steps do you take to apply Scripture accurately and faithfully to real-life situations?

### **Shepherding & Leadership**

How do you view your role in leading and caring for the church body?

How do you pursue members who are straying or discouraged?

Describe how you would handle conflict within the church.

Are you willing to confront sin biblically, even when it is uncomfortable?

How do you balance humility with exercising authority?

### **Prayer Life**

How would you describe your personal prayer life?

Do you pray regularly for the members of the church?

How do you incorporate prayer into ministry settings (meetings, visits, conversations)?

### **Commitment to Eldership**

Why do you desire to serve as an elder? (1 Tim. 3:1)

How do you see your gifts and experiences serving the church in this role?

Eldership requires time, sacrifice, and accountability. Are you prepared to embrace this responsibility?

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_