



Elder Board

The Role of the Elder

At Browncroft Community Church, the Elder Board and Senior Pastor are responsible for the direction of the church, including its mission, vision, and core values. In addition, BCC has a Board of Elders whose primary role is serving as leaders. The elders' gifts and strengths will be used, in conjunction with others serving on the Board, to ensure that the church stays on course to fulfill its vision and mission.

The key qualifications for service as an elder include: spiritual maturity; alignment with the church's vision and values; current involvement in the life of the church; a teachable spirit; and an ability to work as a member of a team. This person should be an effective problem-solver, display a positive spirit, and have a heart for people. Moreover, an elder needs to possess a level of maturity to make difficult decisions in the best interest of God's church. Collectively, the Board represents the congregation, but its charge is to lead the church in line with our vision and values. At times, this can be a difficult, complex, and demanding task. However, this is the leadership task of an elder, based on Scriptural Character mandates as outlined in the New Testament.

Biblical Characteristics of an Elder

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task (1 Tim. 3:1).

As we read in scripture, desiring to become an elder in God's church is a noble task and a worthy calling. There are also many responsibilities. It is imperative to have qualified individuals serving in this capacity. In its by-laws, Browncroft Community Church states that "candidates for the Board of Elders shall be mature Christians who are above reproach, worthy of respect, and exhibit qualities of spiritual leadership as defined in scripture."

Scripture clearly portrays the characteristics and abilities of those in church leadership. The overseers (or elders) are addressed in I Timothy 3 and in Titus 1. The characteristics listed target the moral and spiritual character rather than a fixed standard. Paul's primary concern was that church leaders be mature Christians whose lives would not be called into question.

Because of the responsibility and privilege of serving as an elder, Paul warns us to choose our leaders only after close examination. We need to take this change seriously. Each of us should take time to carefully and prayerfully consider God's will regarding our leaders. Please carefully consider the characteristics Paul has listed in I Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9 (NIV):

Note: Each characteristic will use the following format:

Characteristic: Definition. Application or clarification. Questions to ponder regarding biblical characteristic

Above reproach: Cannot be laid hold of; blameless; irreproachable. An elder should live so that no occasion for scandal is possible.

- Does this person have anything in their life that would invite credible accusation?
- Does this person seek to honor God in every area of their life?

Husband of but one wife: one-woman kind of man. An elder should be sexually pure and faithful. Paul is addressing the character and nature of the person rather than a single experience. Singleness, divorce and adultery are all called into question by this characteristic and are therefore addressed here.

- Singleness is not a concern as long as the person remains sexually pure.
- Divorce is a concern but not an automatic disqualification. Circumstances surrounding a divorce should be fully understood before making judgment. Scripture does allow, but not encourage, divorce in certain instances.
- Adultery is a direct violation of this characteristic and has life long consequences. Only through one's total repentance, God's grace, the Spirit's transforming power and time, can one ever meet this characteristic after committing adultery.
- Has this person ever been unfaithful to their spouse?
- If single, has this person had sex outside of marriage?

- Has this person ever been married before? If so, was the divorce prior to conversion? What were the circumstances?
- Has this person struggled with pornography?

Temperate and self-controlled: vigilant and sober-minded; moderate in opinion and passion. An elder must be watchful of Satan's ploys and be able to live a life uncontrolled by the need to 'have'. They must be of sound mind and maintain reason. They should see beyond the emotion and passion of any situation.

- Does this person exhibit balance in their life?
- Does this person have the ability to maintain reason even in emotionally charged situations?
- Does this person maintain a disciplined, godly walk?

Respectable: Orderly and modest. An elder should be of such behavior and character that attention is not brought to themselves but to God.

- Does this person respect others?
- Does this person live an orderly life?
- Does this person have an unhealthy need for attention?

Hospitable: Generous to guests. An elder should enjoy the company of others and be generous.

- Does this person enjoy entertaining others or do they live a life of solitude?

Able to teach: Ready and qualified to teach. Although not all elders in our church are required to have the gift of teaching, their spiritual walk should be of such a nature that others will have high regard for their words of instruction and leadership.

- Does this person 'practice what they preach'?
- Do others respect the opinions of this person?
- Do others listen to instruction given by this person?

Not given to much wine: Not staying near wine. Not drunken. Alcohol should have no controlling impact on an elder's life.

- Can this person give up alcohol if it were a stumbling block?
- Does this person drink? If so, does this person ever get drunk?
- Does this person have a reputation of being a 'drinker'?

Not violent but gentle: not a striker. An elder should not be one given to a violent temper. Others should view them as gentle and kind.

- Does this person have any history of abuse?
- Does this person become violent when things don't go their way?
- Do others view this person as being gentle?

Not quarrelsome: Peaceable . An elder should be one to seek peace in troubling situations rather than having a spirit of contentiousness.

- Does this person tend to be argumentative?
- Does this person seek to bring peaceable resolutions to problems?
- Does this person have a critical spirit?

Not a lover of money: Not covetous or greedy. An elder should not have a desire to hoard or amass great wealth or possessions. Having wealth is not the problem but rather the unhealthy desire to gain wealth.

- Does this person appear to be controlled by earthly possessions?
- Does this person hold tight reign on their wealth or do they recognize it as God's?
- Does this person exhibit spiritual maturity through wise stewardship?

Must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect: An elder should be a godly leader in the home where he leads in a morally upright and honest manner. The children should reflect a spirit of submission and respect for their parents.

- Does this person have a balanced and healthy family life?
- Does this person have the respect of their children and spouse?
- Does this person's family appear to be orderly and well managed?

Not be a recent convert: Not newly-planted or young convert. An elder should be spiritually mature. No number of months or years can be placed on this characteristic. It takes ample time to gain a mature faith. Someone who is not mature may be subject to a prideful spirit.

- When did this person enter into a personal relationship with our Savior?
- Does this person show evidence of submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?
- Does this person evidence spiritual maturity outside the walls of the church?

Good reputation with outsiders: Good report from those outside . An elder must have a reputation reflecting a morally upright and honest life. No one from within or without the church should have evidence to soil an elder's integrity.

- Does anyone have any credible evidence that would call into question this person's reputation?
- Does this person have habits unbecoming of a Christian that would reflect negatively upon the church and upon their faith?

Children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient: The intent behind Paul's original words seems to indicate that the children should be faithful and trustworthy rather than necessitating a saving faith. The children's behavior is a reflection upon the way the children have been managed in the home.

- Are children respectful of parents and others?
- Do children obey their parents and authorities

Loves what is good: Promoter of virtue . An elder should be desirous of good things as testified to by his desire to be obedient to God's will.

- Does this person pursue what is good and right?
- Does this person associate themselves with truth, honor, and integrity?

Upright: Righteous and virtuous . An elder should conform to the highest standards and desire to follow the commands of the Lord.

- Is this person respected because of their Christian character and integrity?
- Does this person's life reflect a higher standard than the world around them?

Holy: Pure and undefiled by sin. An elder obviously cannot live a perfect life. Their life is made holy through their relationship with Jesus Christ and the righteousness that only He can impart. Because of this gift, the life of a believer will exemplify the desire to please the Lord through living a life devoted to Him.

- Is this person wholly devoted to Christ?
- Has this person made Jesus Christ the Lord of their life?

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it: An elder must have a firm grasp on the Word of God and be able to identify and refute any gospel other than the true gospel.

- Does this person subscribe to Browncroft's doctrinal statement?
- Does this person waver on any of the basic truths of the gospel?

Resources:

- Bibles: NIV, KJV, Interlinear
- Commentaries: Matthew Henry's, Wycliffe
- Dictionaries: Strong's Greek/Hebrew Definitions, Thayer's Greek Lexicon
- Other: Mark Van Bebber of Eden Communications, miscellaneous materials from other churches