

9 Marks : Building Healthy Churches

What are warning flags to watch out for when considering a man as a potential elder?

In general, a church should not affirm any man as an elder who does not meet the biblical qualifications laid out in [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#) and [Titus 1:6-9](#). Here are several warning flags which a church should heed:

1. A contrarian spirit. If you say “black,” he’ll say “white.” An elder must build unity, not stir up division.
2. A lack of spiritual fruit. If a man is not already shepherding the flock he won’t beginning do so just because you give him a title. An elder should be a man who is already hard at work building up the body.
3. An unsupportive wife. Eldering done well is a demanding task. It takes time to teach and disciple and exercise hospitality. Is the man’s wife happy to further her husband’s ministry even when that requires a considerable sacrifice on her part? If not, it would be unwise to appoint this man as an elder.
4. A record of broken relationships behind him.
5. A “me” focus. Every time he opens his mouth, whether in a Sunday school classroom or at a restaurant table, he seems to have his own interest in mind and not everyone else’s. An elder must be a man who’s always looking out for the good of the body.
6. An inability to encourage others.
7. An inability to show compassion and tenderness. A man may be rigorously strong and biblical, but if he can’t be tender and compassionate he’ll make a poor shepherd.
8. A tendency to exaggerate and embellish. An elder should be a man whose word is utterly trustworthy.
9. A tendency to prize creativity and innovation over biblical faithfulness. This is not to say that creativity and innovation are bad things, but they must always be servants to faithfulness to God’s Word.
10. An inability to admit he’s wrong.
11. An inability to submit to other leaders.
12. A refusal to be inconvenienced or make sacrifices in order to serve others.
13. A feeling of entitlement to the office.

(Some of this material has been adapted from Matt Schmucker’s article [“Disagreements and Differences Among Elders”](#))