

What are Elders?

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Elders are individuals who on the basis of meeting Scriptural qualifications are appointed to serve in an office of leadership in a local church and are referred to in the New Testament as elders, overseers, and shepherds.

Elders

- presbuteroi - Literally means, “older men”
- Background in the OT – elders of the city/people/land/Israel/Judah; valued for their wisdom and experience; represented the people before God and the king
- Background in the NT – Jewish leaders who typically resisted Jesus; the Sanhedrin council
- used 18 times to refer to officers of the local church

Acts 11:28–30 (NKJV)

Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. **29** Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. **30** This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 14:21–23 (NKJV)

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, **22** strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” **23** So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Titus 1:5–7 (NKJV)

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—**6** if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. **7** For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

Bishops and Elders in 1 Timothy

1 Timothy 3:1–2 - This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. **2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

1 Timothy 5:17–19 - Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. **18** For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” **19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

Acts 20:17–31 (NKJV)

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. **18** And when they had come to him, he said to them: “... 25... now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. **26** Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. **27** For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. **28** Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. **29** For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. **30** Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. **31** Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

1 Peter 5:1–4 (NKJV)

The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **2** Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; **3** nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; **4** and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

Shepherd

- poime – literally means shepherd
- Used of a church office in Eph. 4:11-12
- Background in OT – shepherd/flock
- verb form, “to shepherd” - used of elders in Acts 20:28 and 1 Pet. 5:1-4

Ephesians 4:11–12 (ESV)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

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Overseer/Bishop

- episkopos - Literally means “overseer, supervisor”
- From a verb which meant:
 - To look upon, consider, have regard to someone or something
 - To reflect on something, to examine it, to submit it to investigation.
 - To visit, esp. the visiting of someone who is sick by a friend or doctor
 - To have care or concern for

1 Timothy 3:1–2

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Philippians 1:1 (NKJV)

Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in
Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

What are Elders?

- Qualified, experienced men
- Serving as shepherds and overseers of a local church
- Appointed to that task
- “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”

Future Lessons

- The work of elders
- The qualifications of elders
- The appointment of elders
- The responsibilities of the local church to elders