

7. Elders

- 1. Following the organizational flow chart down from Christ the head, where does the line of authority go?** In a previous lesson, it was argued that the line of authority flows down from Christ directly to the church as a whole. The elders do not stand between Christ and the church.
- 2. Why were church leaders not mentioned in the greetings of the epistles, and often not even mentioned or written to in entire letters?** Because the elders are not the kingpins around which everything revolves. They are an important part of a healthy church, but they are not the church's lords. There was no clergy-laity distinction as such.
- 3. What examples did Jesus give, in Luke 22:24-27, of the authority that church leaders have over the church?** Jesus said that those men great in the church should have the same authority as a household servant or as the youngest among them.
- 4. Why were elders not mentioned in the church discipline process of Matthew 18?** Perhaps it is because the authority to make decisions lies with the church corporately, not simply its leaders in isolation.

The Meaning of Various Terms

PPT>>> 5. New Testament church leaders are referred to in Scripture by several different titles. **What is the difference in emphasis between the words elder, overseer (bishop) and pastor? (Do word studies on elder, overseer (bishop in KJV), and pastor, Titus 1:5, 7 and Ephesians 4:11).**

PPT>>> **What does “elder” mean (Titus 1:5)?** From *presbuteros* (4245), which at its root means “an old man” or the “older” of any two people or the older generation in contrast to the younger generation; another usage of *presbuteros* is more figurative, as the designation of an official (the Latin “senator” [“senior”] parallels this). It is from *presbuteros* that we derive the word “presbyter” and also the English word “priest” (BAGD, p. 699).

This title thus refers to the maturity of character which helps makes a person a leader.

PPT>>> **What does “overseer” (or “bishop”) mean (Titus 1:7)?** From *episkopos* (1985); *epi* means “upon” or “over” and *skopos* refers to a “watchman.” Thus the translation “overseer.” It refers to a definite function or a fixed office within a group, i.e., that of “superintendent, guardian” (BAGD, p. 299). It is from *episkopos* that we derive the name “Episcopalian.”

This title thus indicates the nature of a leader’s work — overseeing, guarding, influencing, prompting the church.

PPT>>> **What does “pastor” mean (Ephesians 4:11)?** It is from *poimén* (4166), “shepherd, sheep herder” (literally). Figuratively, it refers to the leaders of humans. A cattle rancher drives cattle, but a shepherd leads sheep. The noun form is used with reference to church leaders only one time in the entire New Testament (Ep 4:11), BAGD, p. 684.

This title points further to a leader's work — guiding, feeding, shepherding and protecting the church.

Summary: Each title emphasizes a different aspect of the same person's function. "Elder" emphasizes spiritual maturity, "shepherd" emphasizes the feeding and care role of the leader, and "overseer" emphasizes the guardian role of the leader.

How the Terms are Related

6. Based on their use in Acts 20:17, 28, Titus 1:5-7 and 1 Peter 5:1-3, how are the terms elder, overseer (bishop, KJV), and pastor related to each other? In Acts 20:17, Paul called for the elders and then in 20:28 called the same men overseers. Also, in Acts 20:28, "be shepherds" is from the verbal form of *poimén* (shepherd). In Titus 1:5, Paul told Titus to appoint elders, and in 1:7, Paul called the elders overseers. Finally, in 1 Peter 5:1-2, Peter addresses the "elders" and exhorts them to "shepherd" (*poimén*) the flock, serving as "overseers." Thus, we see that all three terms are used interchangeably. They are synonyms. All refer to the same office; there is no difference. Any modern church that makes a distinction between the three terms is going way beyond the New Testament pattern! Neither is there any Scriptural evidence to suggest a hierarchical structure of leadership within the local church. All elders had equal footing.

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 20:17** Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 20:28** Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers . . .

PPT>>> ESV **Titus 1:5-7** This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you - if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.

PPT>>> ESV **1 Peter 5:1-2** 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 . . .

PPT>>> An example of the artificial and false dichotomy that exists today between an elder and a pastor is seen in the subtitle of the book, *A Guide to Hospital Calling* (Dennis Saylor, Baker Book House). The subtitle is, "For Deacons, Elders and Other Laypersons." The assumption is that elders are laypersons whereas pastors make their living from the church. Such a distinction is absolutely unwarranted from Scripture.

Note: In Ephesians 4:11, since "pastor-teacher" is mentioned along with what are clearly itinerant ministries (prophets, apostles, evangelists), some feel that this ministry is slightly different from that of a local elder. To wit, the "pastor-teacher" may be more mobile than the local elder, perhaps ministering city-wide rather than in just one house church.

The Number of Elders: Just One or a Plurality?

7. How many elders should each church have (Acts 14:23, 20:17, Philippians 1:1, Titus 1:5, James 5:14)? Generally, speaking each house church should have as many men serve as elders who are qualified, whether that be only one or a plurality. More specifically, New Testament references to local church leaders are generally in the plural (Acts 14:23). From this, some have inferred that each local church should, ideally, have a plurality of elders.

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 14:23** . . . 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.

PPT>>> ESV **James 5:14** Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

8. Did the plurality of elders serve the city-wide church as a whole, or only one specific house church? Sometimes the plurality is clearly with reference to the elders of an entire city (Phlp 1:1, Titus 1:5), not a single house church. Such references would not prove that each house church necessarily had its own plurality of elders.

PPT>>> ESV **Philippians 1:1** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons . . .

PPT>>> ESV **Titus 1:5** This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town . . .

There is only a single instance in which a New Testament writer seemingly made mention of all the believers in a region as comprising the church of that area (Acts 9:31, but even this is disputable, see the KJV, depending on which Greek manuscript family is used). Luke may have merely meant “the” church of Jerusalem that had been scattered into these three geographical areas. Even if Luke did mean the church of these regions, such a regional church was not a single organized entity, but rather a more of an abstract concept (for instance, we might today speak of the church of China). It is theoretically possible that the New Testament also speaks of the church of a city in this same way, as an abstract reference to all the believers in a city). Thus, such texts as Acts 14:23 or 20:17 may have reference to elders (plural) in the church of the entire city, not just one house church.

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 9:31** So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up.

PPT>>> KJV **Acts 9:31** Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified . . .

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 20:17** Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

Summary: Considering the smaller numbers of men involved in a house church, the reality is that the church may be doing well to have even one brother who is qualified to be an elder. Be content with this situation. Later, if the Holy Spirit raises up another brother (or brothers) qualified as elder, then a plurality can be achieved. However, as the church grows, the need to start new house churches may soon result in the original church losing its plurality of elders as some of them go out to serve the newer churches.

What are the practical benefits of a plurality of leaders?

1. There is less chance of a dictatorship developing. However, even if there is only one elder, an understanding that church government is ideally to be by the consensus of all the brothers will help avoid the problem of a dictatorship developing. Church government is to be by elder-led consensus, not command.
 2. There is better advantage in dealing with attack of “savage wolves” (Ac 20:29-30).
PPT>>> ESV **Acts 20:29-30** 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.
PPT>>> NIV **Ecclesiastes 4:12** Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
 3. There is more wisdom in numbers (wise counsel, Pr 24:6).
PPT>>> ESV **Proverbs 24:6** By wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.
 4. A plurality of elders distributes the work load for hospital visitation, teaching, counseling, dealing with problems, etc.
 5. It taps into a broader range of spiritual gifts.
 6. It has been said that “it is lonely at the top.” A plurality of elders makes for mutual encouragement. Being a sole elder could be lonely.
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Assuming there are qualified men in the congregation, why is it important for a church to have formally appointed leaders?

- Far too many house churches are infected with the spirit of the French Revolution and are anti-establishment, anti-leadership, anti-authority.
- a. Since there was an official, public appointment, the congregation knew who the elders were. For instance, Paul specifically greeted the overseers in Philippi (Phlp 1:1). Neither was there was there confusion when James told the sick to call for the elders of the church (Ja 5:14). Thus, and if for no other reason, it should be done because it is a New Testament pattern. *Why would the New Testament give such detailed qualifications for elders unless they are needed?*
 - b. Another reason this clear official acknowledgment is needed because of the important and sensitive work done by the elders. Official appointment greatly facilitated their effectiveness, helped avoid confusion and added a greater sense of accountability (Strauch, p. 77).
 - c. Also, public appointment is especially important when Hebrews 13:17 factored in (*to whom should those who disagree yield?*). To have qualified, predetermined arbiters in place is very beneficial to problem resolution.

d. Everybody's job is no body's job. The buck has to stop somewhere. Without leadership a church can become lackluster, lethargic and apathetic. The elder's job is to oversee all that is done in and by the church to be sure all is well and to help when problems arise.

PPT>>> The elephant and the rabbit: The gestation period of an elephant is quite long compared to that of rabbits. Rabbits multiply much quicker than elephants. Some church planters and evangelists want to quickly start many new house churches. They are all about multiplication, growth and reproduction. Here is what one said, "Put two elephants in a room together, close the door and in 22 months you'll end up with one baby elephant. Put two rabbits in a room together, close the door, and in 22 months you'll end up with thousands of baby rabbits!" **One wonders however how all these new house churches could possibly have qualified elders? Indeed, how could most of them have even one elder?** Given the importance placed on elders in the New Testament, it may be better to multiply new house churches a little slower, like elephants, as qualified leadership is in place, rather than so quickly (like rabbits), with no leadership and with a lot of birth defects. Quantity is not quality.

Job Description for Elders

9. The New Testament does not give a systematic job description for an elder. An elder's duties must therefore be deduced by examining various passages of Scripture. **Why are elders needed in a church? What function do they serve? See Acts 20:28-31, Ephesians 4:11-16, 1 Timothy 1:3, 3:4-5, 5:17, 2 Timothy 1:13-14, 3:16-17, 2 Timothy 2:2, 4:2-4, Titus 1:9, 2:15, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-3. Also, read the chapter in *House Church* entitled "Preaching & Teaching Ministries".**

PPT>>> Acts 20:26-31. Elders are to declare the whole council of God to the church, to care for the church, to guard and protect against wolves (both internal and external).

PPT>>> Ephesians 4:11-16. Those elders who are gifted as pastor-teachers are responsible to equip the church for ministry (through teaching) with the goal of building consensus and unity, helping people grown to maturity in knowing Christ, and be well-trained in doctrine.*

*Some existential Christians have adopted a "just Jesus" approach ("they don't ask me about my beliefs and I don't ask them about theirs" or "doctrine divides, Christ unites"). These same people are usually strongly against a church having elders. However, Ephesians 4:14 shows the importance of being well grounded doctrinally and how having elders can contribute toward love, maturity and working together properly as Christ's body.

PPT>>> 1 Timothy 1:3. Timothy was an apostle, not a local elder. However, in newly planted churches he functioned as a local elder until the Holy Spirit raised up local elders. The kinds of things he did in these churches are the kinds of things local elders would do. In this case (1:3), his job was to put a stop to false teaching in the church.

PPT>>> 1 Timothy 3:4-5. Obviously, one duty of an elder is to manage the church. **What is there to manage in a house church setting?** Plenty! Weak brothers need to be encouraged and strengthened, couples with marital problems need counseling, the weekly logistics of where the church will meet needs to be dealt with, intentionality in fulfilling the Great Commission needs to be focused on (evangelism and discipleship), problems have to be sorted out (not enough food at the Lord's Supper, unedifying comments in the 1 Corinthians 14 meeting, inattentive parents letting their children destroy the host's home, etc.), future elders need to be trained, all God's people need to be systematically equipped. The elder may not have to solve all these problems himself, but he does have to be sure someone is attentive to these needs. He is overseeing. He is managing. He is identifying needs and delegating responsibility for meeting them. This is one reason a local church leader is called an "overseer." If nothing else, the elders are the church's quality control men, especially as concerns keeping church meetings edifying.

PPT>>> 1 Timothy 5:17. Some elders will excel in "ruling well"* and also work hard at teaching.

*From *proistémi*, which can mean to rule or to be concerned about, to give aid to, to care for. Literally it means "to stand before."

PPT>>> 2 Timothy 2:2. Elders are to be training future church leaders.

PPT>>> 2 Timothy 4:1-5. Teaching to affect life-change is a critical part of an elder's ministry. Doctrine is important and so are calls to duty via reproof and rebuke.

PPT>>> Titus 1:9. A clear qualification for an elder is that he know sound orthodoxy, be able to teach it, and be able to defend it.

PPT>>> Titus 2:15. Like Timothy had done, elders have authority from Christ to boldly declare the truth, exhort people to obedience and rebuke disobedience.

PPT>>> Hebrews 13:7. Elders are to lead by example and life-style. They are to embody Christian maturity. Thus church leaders are called "elders" (from the Greek word for a mature man).

PPT>>> Hebrews 13:17. Elders are persuade with the truth and be willing and able to engage in a process of convincing those who oppose or disagree. However, at the end of the process, Hebrews 13:17 does call upon the church to yield to its elders (see study on Hebrews 13:17 in the previous lesson on elder-led congregational consensus).

PPT>>> 1 Peter 5:1-3. Their job is to shepherd (feed, guide, protect) the flock and to serve as examples to the flock.

In sum, church leaders are men of mature character who embody the teachings of Jesus and lead by example. They oversee, teach, protect, equip, and encourage the church. They are also like quality control men! Every now and then, after persuasion, discussion and a long reasoning process, they may need to call on a dissenting section of the church to “submit” (Heb 13:17) to their leadership.

10. Is a church without an elder really a church? There are examples in the Scriptures of new churches that did not have elders. However, this was a temporary situation. Any church without a qualified elder is not mature and is liable to a host of problems that may arise because of this lack.

The Qualifications for Elders

PPT>>> ******What is 1 Timothy 3:1-7 about?** It is about the qualifications for local church leaders. The main point is this: Only morally and spiritually qualified men should be appointed as elders. Does this seem overwhelming to you? Are you amazed that anybody qualifies? Do not despair. God would not have given these requirements unless the Holy Spirit was able to mature men for this ministry.

Interesting: Where does it mention anything about seminary (3:1-7)? Obviously, it does not. Too often a church will appoint someone as a pastor in large part because he has a seminary degree, and then deny another man simply because he does not have such a degree. Seminary education is a wonderful blessing. It should not be looked down upon. But neither is it a requirement for service.

According to 1 Timothy 3:1, what is a trustworthy saying?

Why do you suppose Paul felt the need to explain that this is a “trustworthy saying” (1Ti 3:1)? Evidently there were then (as now) some misunderstandings concerning what was involved with becoming a church leader. Based on this emphatic statement, there is nothing wrong with wanting to be an overseer.

Some house church folks are so mystical, anarchist, suspicious, paranoid or isolationist that they are convinced that anyone aspiring for leadership must secretly be selfishly ambitious, lusting to become a pope, or bent on imposing a fleshly agenda on the church. According to Paul, “*it ain’t necessarily so!*”

What does it mean if someone “sets his heart” (1Ti 3:1) on something? It is from *orego* (3713), “to stretch out, to reach after”; thus, to stretch oneself out in order to touch something, to reach out after something (Thayer).

Review: What is an “overseer” (1Ti 3:1)? From *episkopé* (1984), basis for the English word “episcopal.” *Epi* generally means “over, upon” and *skopos* means “to look, see” (basis for “scope, optic”). Thus, one who oversees something.

PPT>>> In Homer’s *Iliad*, the *episkopos* was the guard of the city, the protector of the people.

PPT>>> Classical Greeks used *episkopos* in reference to the gods as protectors and guardians of truth.

PPT>>> *Episkopos* was also a title for an administrator in the Greek legal system (Henderson, *1 Timothy*).

PPT>>> Thus, the root concept of *episkopos* is “overseer, guardian”; one who keeps watch over the needs of people (*DNTT*, I, p. 188).

PPT>>> Thayer defines it as “an overseer, one charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done are done rightly.” An elder is a quality control man as regards decorum in the Lord’s Day gathering (the Lord’s Supper and the Participatory Meeting).

Review: The terms overseer, elder and pastor all refer to the same person, the same office.

What is the Greek behind “desires” in 1 Timothy 3:1? From *epithumeo* (1937), “desire, lust, covet, crave.” *Epi* is a preposition that can denote increase or addition when use in composition. Thus, here, *epi* is an intensifier. *Thumos* means “heat, passion” and is basis for “thermos.” Thus, *epithumeo* denotes hot heat, intense passion, even lust.

Is wanting to be an overseer actually one of the requirements for being one? Though there is nothing inappropriate about having a desire to be an overseer, such a desire is not a requirement. Paul is here making a statement of fact, not laying down a prerequisite. Many men may be hesitant to take on the responsibility of the office, but would be willing do so anyway because the church (or an apostolic worker) asked it of them. However, a man should not have to be pressured into being an elder, 1 Peter 5:2 (“not under compulsion, but willingly”).

“Call to Ministry.” It is the work of the Holy Spirit that anyone becomes a church leader (Acts 20:28). However the New Testament never refers to any type of mystical “call” to be a pastor. The call may consist of an earnest desire to be an overseer, coupled with the ability to meet the qualifications that follow in 3:2-7. Perhaps those who falsely elevate the “office” of full-time pastor higher than that of elder invoke some sort of mystical “call” to justify separating themselves from bi-vocational elders (?). Or perhaps such men really do feel a call and are better suited as itinerant workers than local elders. A call to preach the Gospel as an evangelist (Ep 4:11) or be a missionary is indeed different than doing the work of local elder.

What adjective does 1 Timothy 3:1 use to describe the ministry of overseer? It is described as a noble “task” or “work” (NASV). It is from *ergon* (2041), “work, employment, labor.” Serving as an overseer is hard work, a labor of love. It also is not an “office” to be filled. Despite how some English versions render this verse, there is no underlying Greek word for “office.” It is ministry, not a position.

In 1 Timothy 3:2, what is the significance of the word “must”? It indicates that these requirements are not optional. The Greek word *dei* (1163) is used in conjunction with “must” and means “it is necessary, binding.” Though you may see the requirements as an overall picture rather than a grocery list, a Monet more than a Rembrandt, it is still critical not to relax the standards. Too much is a stake.

PPT>>> What does it mean to be (#1) “above reproach” (1Ti 3:2, ESV, NIV, NAS, 1Ti 3:2)? NKJV: “blameless.”

PPT>>> From *anepileptos* (423); *an* means “not”, *epi* means “upon” and *lambano* means “to take.”

PPT>>> Hence, “unreproachable” or “not able to be taken hold of” (Rienecker, p. 622). It refers to someone totally above any reasonable criticism, someone upon whom there is no handle at all for accusation, one who cannot be laid hold upon (Wuest, II, p. 52). It refers to spotless character, to a man who is of good report, who has a good reputation.

PPT>>> Example: ESV **Job 1:1** There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

11. What is the difference between being “above reproach” (1Ti 3:2) and being sinless?

Everybody sins and everybody is tempted. Elders, however, are to generally have their lives in order and be men of mature character. But they will still sin.

PPT>>> 12. What does it mean to be the (#2) “husband of one wife” (1Ti 3:2)? An examination of the actual Greek here is helpful.

PPT>>> From *mias gunaikos andra*, literally

PPT>>> “a one woman man.” First, it is helpful to realize that there is not a specific Greek word for “wife.” Instead, if “wife” is meant, the word “woman” (*gunikas*) often used in conjunction with a definite article (“the”). However, when used with an indefinite article (“a”), as here in 3:2, *gunikas* is often rendered “woman.” Also, using the word “woman” without a “the” also tends to denote essence or nature.

PPT>>> Thus, an overseer is to be a one woman kind of man; the issue here is **moral purity**, not marital status. There are men with only one wife who are infamous womanizers. The same is not true of a one woman type of man! This phrase implies loyalty and faithfulness.

Does this mean that a divorced man cannot be an elder? The word “divorce” is not used here. The fact that a man is divorced may not disqualify him in and of itself. The requirement that he be a “one woman man” refers to his character, not his actions from the past. Divorce is not the issue here — faithfulness is the issue.

PPT>>> Caution: Concerning divorced men, Strauch notes, “divorce often (but not always) reveals hidden character traits that would disqualify a man from church leadership. A divorced man may have been self-willed, quick-tempered, pugnacious, harsh, or not gentle toward his wife even though he may not have initiated the divorce” (*Biblical Eldership*, p. 197).

Could Paul have had polygamy in mind when writing this? When Paul wrote this, polygamy was not a problem in the Roman world, due to the widespread pagan practice of affairs outside marriage. Concubines were regularly maintained for sexual pleasure (as an informal but permanent union outside of marriage).

Suppose a man was a shameless womanizer before his conversion, but after salvation he lived in faithful union with his wife. Should a man’s pre-conversion sins be held against him so that he is barred from eldership? Regenerate behavior cannot be expected from unregenerate people. To do so in this case would be unreasonable.

Does the phrase “one woman man” imply that a single man (i.e., never married) cannot be an elder? Not in and of itself. The requirement is that the man, single or married, not be a womanizer. Any prohibition of a single (never married) man being an elder would occur in a later qualification.

PPT>>> What does (#3) “sober-minded” (1Ti 3:2) mean (“temperate”, NIV)? Sober-minded sounds very dour! It is from *nepalios* (3524), “sober.” This word literally refers to the opposite of being intoxicated. Also used figuratively, it meant complete clarity of mind and the resulting good judgment. In 3:2, it would seem to refer to the figurative use since the consumption of literal wine is dealt with in 3:3. Thus, the overseer is to be levelheaded, well balanced, clearheaded, freed of all excess, stable. A good translation might be “focused” or “vigilant” or “alert.” My mental picture here is on a minuteman, prepared, alert and ready for action.

Imagine the scene: A drunk man driving a car down the road versus a sober person driving a car down the road. **What differences would there be?**

PPT>>> What does it mean to be (#4) “self-controlled” (ESV, 1Ti 3:2)? It is from *sophron* (4998), which describes someone who is reasonable, prudent, of a sound mind. From the root *sozo* (“to save”) and *phren* (“thinking, mind”). Thus, saved thinking, of a wholesome mind, sensible thinking. Homer, in the *Odyssey*, uses *sophron* as the opposite of ignorance and frivolity (DNTT, I, p. 501). It is rendered in the NASV as “prudent”, in NKJV as “sober-minded.” A good rendering might be “sensible” or even “studied.”

PPT>>> What does (#5) “respectable” (1Ti 3:2) mean? It is from *kosmos* (2887), “orderly, proper”; basis for the English “cosmos, cosmetic, cosmonaut”. An overseer’s life is to be well-arranged, well-ordered. He is to have his “act” together. Perhaps “organized” would be a good translation.

PPT>>> “The ministry is no place for the man whose life is a continual confusion of unaccomplished plans and unorganized activity” (Homer Kent, p. 127).

What is the meaning of (#6) “hospitable” (NIV, NAS, NKJV, 3:2)? From *philoxenos* (5382); taken literally, *philos* means “affection” and *xenos* means “stranger.” Thus, “one who is fond of strangers.” In a house church context, it would be important for a church leader to have an open home and hearth, inviting people over for counseling, or training or discipleship, or meals, or to host itinerant church workers and if possible to host church meetings.

PPT>>> Example: NAS **Job 31:32** "The alien has not lodged outside, For I have opened my doors to the traveler.

What is the purpose of an overseer being “hospitable” (3:2)? It sets an example for the flock. New Testament Christianity was very home based.

Gaius is an example of a church person who was hospitable to others:

PPT>>> ESV **3 John 1:5-8** Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

PPT>>> 13. Why is it important for an overseer to be (#7) “able to teach” (1Ti 3:2)? See *Acts 2:42, 2 Timothy 2:24-25, Titus 1:9-11, 2:1*. Ability and skill in teaching are essential duties of an overseer. His main authority lies in his ability to persuade people with the truth.

PPT>>> Strauch observes that this requirement entails three basic elements, “a knowledge of Scripture, the readiness of teach, and the capacity to communicate” (p. 197). The following texts show the importance of teaching:

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 2:42** . . . they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Does this (Acts 2:42) describe the attitude of the people in your house church?

PPT>>> ESV **2 Timothy 2:24-25** . . . the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth . . .

PPT>>> ESV **Titus 1:9-11** He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.

There is just as much error today. There are people wrongly into Torah-compliant house churches, baptismal regeneration, the prosperity Gospel, who are “charismaniacs”, hyper-preterists, a protestant purgatory, etc.

PPT>>> ESV Titus 2:1 But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.

Application: To be avoided is a “just Jesus” reductionist approach to theology. The mantra “doctrine divides but Christ unites” is overly simplistic. **Which Christ?** The Christ of the Mormons or the Jehovah’s Witnesses or the Unitarians? One writer bragged that in his house church, “I don’t know their beliefs and they don’t ask me about mine.” This is a recipe for disaster. I once visited a house church where I was the only person present with a copy of God’s Word!

PPT>>> P.T. Forsyth.* “The real strength of the Church is not the amount of work but the quality of its faith. One man who truly knows his Bible is worth more to the church’s real strength than a crowd of workers who do not” (quoted in Strauch, p. 198). *(Scottish pastor and theologian, 1848-1921)

Application: The ingredients of a 1 Corinthians 14 meeting only barely include teaching (neither is prayer or Scripture reading mentioned). Yet teaching is an important factor in the life of any healthy church. Though the participatory meeting should not be dominated by teaching, it is never-the-less appropriate for an elder to give a quality teaching every Lord’s Day as part of the participatory meeting, along with everything else that is contributed. Example: Out of a 1.5 to 2 hour participatory meeting, perhaps 45 minutes of it could be teaching by an elder.

14. How is the *ability to teach* (1Ti 3:2) different from having the *gift of teaching* (Ro 12:7)? A man could be gifted to teach and yet not be an elder. Conversely, a man could be an elder without being supernaturally gifted as a teacher (Ep 4:11). The requirement in 1 Timothy 3 is simply that the elder be able to instruct the church from the Bible. Those elders actually gifted to teach may be referred to in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Timothy 5:17ff.

Note: Some have suggested that this would be better rendered by “teachable” since all the qualifications up to this point have been character qualities rather than skills. However, there is no basis for this suggestion in the Greek. There is a word for “teachable” (*didaktos*), but that is not used here. Instead, *didaktikos* is used, which clearly means “apt to teach” (also found in 2Ti 2:24).

PPT>>> 15. According to 1 Timothy 3:3, what relationship to wine (#8) is an overseer supposed to have? He is to be not a drunkard.

PPT>>> The Greek here is two words, *me paroinon*; *me* means “not”, *para* means “beside” and *oinos* means “wine.” That is, he must not linger long beside a bottle of wine, thus being addicted or drunk. The issue here is drunkenness, not abstinence. A dynamic translation might be “must not abuse alcohol”. The NASV has, “not addicted to wine”.

PPT>>> Another quality required of an overseer is that he be (#9) “not violent but gentle” (1Ti 3:3). What does this mean?

“Violent” is from *pléktés* (4131), “a striker, one who is apt to violence.” It is the basis for the musical term “plectrum” (the pick used to strike a string), an in plectrum banjo. You do not want a guy to be an elder who is given to punching people in the nose!

“Gentle,” on the other hand, is from *epieikés* (1933), “seemly equitable, yielding, forbearing, kind.” It is used of someone who has the legal right and capacity to bring down harsh judgement, but is fair; it is in contrast to those who demand that their own rights be upheld at all costs (DNTT, II, p. 256).

The Greek word for “gentle” (*epieikés*) was used in the LXX in Psalm 86:5.

PPT>>> ESV **Psalm 86:5** For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving (*epieikés*), abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

Thayer defines *epieikés* as “sweet reasonableness.” An example of this type of gentleness would be Paul’s reasoning with Philemon to take back Onesimus. The idea is of someone who avoids contention.

PPT>>> NAS **Proverbs 15:1** A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.

PPT>>> **What does it mean to be (#10) “not quarrelsome” (1Ti 3:3)?** It is from *amachos* (269); *a* means “not” and *maché* means “fight, combat, battle” (basis for the English “macho”); thus, “not quarrelsome, not given to combat.” Uncontentious may be the idea, “not a brawler” (KJV). The elder must be able to keep his temper under control. He must not be the type of man who is always insisting on his rights.

PPT>>> ESV **2 Timothy 2:24-26** . . . the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome (*machomai*) but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

PPT>>> **16. Why is it important for an overseer to (#11) not be a “lover of money” (3:3)?**

See Acts 11:30, 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 1 Peter 5:1ff*.

- a. Greed in business would be well known in a community and could thus be a bad witness.
- b. Further, being a full time elder was not a lucrative way to make a living in the first century. If an elder were not content with less income, a real problem could develop. He might be tempted to steal, or to envy.

Example: One American missionary quit his corporate job to minister to Vietnamese refugees who had settled in the U.S. As they became Christians and began to prosper in American society, some of them soon became more prosperous than the missionary and lived the kind of lives he had give up to serve them (driving nice cars and living in nice houses). The missionary admitted to feelings of jealous and resentment.

- c. If the elder were a lover of money, there is always a temptation to temper the truth if a certain teaching could hurt result in lost donations.

Example: One full-time house church elder taught against the error of believing that the KJV of the Bible is inspired. So many people left the house church that his support dropped and he had to go back to secular employment.

PPT>>> **ESV 1 Timothy 6:9-10** But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

PPT>>> **ESV 1 Peter 5:2** 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;

d. In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter requires that elders not be “greedy for money.” It is unlikely that elders in the New Testament received so many gifts in appreciation for their ministry that Peter was warning against becoming an elder to get in on the gravy train! More likely is that the typical elder was well established in his business and earning a good income. It would be very tempting for him to sideline or even refuse the ministry of elder as it could cut into the time he spends in his business and thus result in lost revenue (Thus the exhortation for him to not be greedy for money, but rather to be eager to serve). As above, there must be contentment.

e. The elders handled the church’s money at times, Acts 11:30.

PPT>>> **ESV Acts 11:29-30** . . . the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

PPT>>> **What requirement (#12) is laid down in 1 Timothy 3:4?** He must manage his own household well.

17. What is the answer to the question in 1 Timothy 3:4-5? See Matthew 25:21. A man who cannot manage his own home cannot manage the church. If he an over-bearing tyrant and unreasonable at home, so too will he be in church. If he is totally tuned out at home, so too will he be in church. If he is disorganized at home, so too at church.

PPT>>> The home is the test ground and will be evidenced in his children: **(#13) his children must be submissive.**

PPT>>> **ESV Matthew 25:21** His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

What does 1 Timothy 3:4-5 imply about an elder’s job description? It involves management. House churches do not simply run themselves. Someone has to oversee it, to guide things, to serve in quality control, to motivate, to comfort, to serve as a sort of father figure. The elder has to have his hand on the rudder!

PPT>>> According to 1 Timothy 3:6, what danger lies in allowing (#14) a “recent convert” to be an overseer? Maturity requires time and experience. When Paul wrote this, the Ephesian church had been in existence twelve years, time enough for elders to have developed (Kent, p. 130).

Word Studies:

- “Recent convert” (3:6) is from *neophutos* (3504); *neo* means “new” (as in neo-orthodox or neophyte) and *phutos* means “plant” (basis for neophyte).
- “Conceited” (3:6) is from *tuphoō* (5187), and means “to wrap in smoke, to cover with a mist.” Thus, figuratively, to puff up with pride; clouds of conceit, to be blinded with pride, to have a swelled head, an inflated ego (Thayer).

ESV **Proverbs 16:18** Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

What has the devil got to do with all this (3:6)? Pride caused the Devil’s destruction (Ez 28). Satan is alive and well on planet earth and seeking opportunities to hurt the church. House churches are not exception. There is a spiritual war raging all around us. Look how the mainline churches have been destroyed by liberalism and feminism. **Do you imagine that Satan has overlooked house churches?**

PPT>>> Based on 1 Timothy 3:7, why must an overseer have (#15) a “good reputation with outsiders”? The world is often a shrewd judge of character, readily observing insincerity and inconsistency. No matter how respected within the church, if outsiders distrust him, then he is not to be an overseer!

PPT>>> “The *vox populi* . . . is in some sort a *vox Dei*” (Kent, p. 131).

Is the implication here (3:7) that you could fool your friends (3:7)?

Insight: New Testament overseers were “home grown.” That is, they were well known both in the church and the community before becoming overseers. They had secular jobs. Unlike today, they were not unfamiliar professional pastors who were imported from afar by some pulpit committee.

The Devil gets mentioned a second time. **What is the devil’s snare (1Ti 3:7)?** The devil’s snare appears to be disgrace coming from a poor reputation with outsiders. Perhaps some bad information will come to light after he is made an elder, bringing disgrace upon him. If everyone he works with has a low view of him, if his neighbors are scandalized by him, then beware . . . the devil will make it known.

18. What role would the devil like to play in the selection of elders (1Ti 3:6-7)?

Comparing 1 Timothy 3 to Titus 1

19. Compare 1 Timothy 3 to Titus 1:3-11. What qualifications are elaborated on more in Titus than in Timothy? Holding firmly to the truth and the ability to use the truth to encourage or refute, Titus 1:9-11.

PPT>>> In Titus 1:6, what does (#1) “above reproach” mean? It is from *anegklétos* (410) “unaccused.” The Greek word here literally is “not called in.” This is in essence a synonym to the first requirement in 1 Timothy 3:2, “above reproach.”

Note: The numbers assigned to each qualification in Titus 1 are not sequential, but rather correspond to the numbering of qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3 (all based on the listing found in the *ESV Study Bible*).

PPT>>> The second requirement in Titus 1:6 is identical to the 2nd requirement in 1 Timothy 3, that he be (#2) a “one woman man.”

PPT>>> 20. In Titus 1:6, how is the requirement that (#13) an elder’s children “believe” different from what was required of an elder’s children in 1 Timothy 3:4-5? Actually, there is no difference. The Greek word translated “believe” (*pistos*) can also be rendered “faithful”, as was done by the KJV. It means loyal, trustworthy, trusted, or dutiful and, observes Strauch, “better suits the strong contrast with ‘dissipation or rebellion’ that follows” (*Biblical Eldership*, p 174).

In 1:7 the overseer is called (#12) God’s “steward.” The *ESV Study Bible* list places it parallel with qualification #12 (manage his household well). What is a steward? The Greek word *oikonomos* (house law) means a house manager, someone who is a manager or administrator or trustee of someone else’s home, property or business (Strauch, p. 174). A steward acts on behalf of another’s interests; he is accountable and responsible for what has been entrusted to his care.

PPT>>> In Titus 1:7, (#1) “above reproach” (*anegklétos*) comes up a second time (1:6). Perhaps this trait summarizes all the character qualities required of an elder; all else written explains what “above reproach” means.

PPT>>> What does (#10a) “not . . . arrogant” (Titus 1:7) mean? The Greek (829) actually says, “not self-pleasing” or “self-willed.” Such a man would be “headstrong, independent, self-assertive, and ungracious toward those of a different opinion” (Strauch, p. 175). Thus, not stubborn, not demanding his own way. An arrogant man is not a team player, he is headstrong, independent, self-assertive and ungracious toward those of a different opinion (Strauch, p. 175). You can have an opinion without being opinionated. You can make a judgment without being judgmental. You can have sure convictions without being arrogant.

PPT>>> What does it mean to be (#10b) “quick-tempered” (Titus 1:7)? It is from *orgilon* (3677). He is not to be a hot-head, not one who losses his temper quickly. “The fierce looks and harsh words of a quick-tempered man tear people apart emotionally . . .” (Strauch, p. 176). It destroys unity and peace. Picture here a volcano. One fellow who quickly lost his temper earned the name “blusterfool” by his fellows.

Example: A company once hired a salesman who, during his brief time with the firm, got into fights with his fellow salesmen, with management, with customers, with the bus driver, with people at the bus stop and with his roommate. And, surprise (!), surprise (!), he was also divorced. This is not the type of person who can be an elder.

NAS Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression.

PPT>>> Hudson Taylor. “My greatest temptation is to lose my temper over the slackness and inefficiency so disappointing in those on whom I depend. It is no use to lose my temper — on kindness. But oh, it is such a trial” (Strauch, p. 176).

Note: In the *ESV Study Bible* comparison chart (p. 2329), arrogant and quick-tempered are grouped together as parallel to not quarrelsome (1Ti 3:3).

PPT>>> Quality (#8) “not . . . a drunkard” (Titus 1:7) is from the same Greek as “not given to drunkenness” in 1 Timothy 3:3.

PPT>>> In Titus 1:7, (#9) “not violent” is from the same Greek word (*pléktés*, 4131) as Paul used in 1 Timothy 3:3 (“violent”).

PPT>>> How is (#11) “not . . . greedy for gain” (Tit 1:7) different from “not a lover of money” (1Ti 3:3)? The Greek in Titus 1:7 is *aschrokerde* (146), a different word that Paul used in 1 Timothy 3:3. Here, the idea is gain that is made by unfair financial advantage or seeking that which rightfully belongs to others (Strauch, p. 177).

Examples: Mark 11:15-17 (money-changers in the temple), John 12:6 (Judas stealing from common purse), Titus 1:11 (false teachers out for profit).

PPT>>> (#6) “Hospitable” (Tit 1:8) is from the same Greek word as used in 1 Timothy 3.

PPT>>> What does it mean to be one who (#16a, new) “loves what is good” (Tit 1:8)? This is a very broad qualification. It is from *philagathos* (5358). *Philé* means good and *agathos* means good. It would refer to one who always seeks to do good to and for others. An elder is to be a good guy, known for doing good to other people.

PPT>>> The next qualification, (#4) “self-controlled” (Tit 1:8), is from the same Greek word (*sophron*, 4998), translated “self-controlled” in 1 Timothy 3:2.

PPT>>> **ESV Proverbs 25:28** A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

PPT>>> **What does (#16b, new) “upright” (Tit 1:8)?** It is from *dikaion* (1342), “just” (related to the Greek word for righteous).

PPT>>> **What does (#16c, new) “holy” (Tit 1:8) mean?** It is from *hosion* (3741), rendered in the NASV by “devout”. This is not the typical Greek term for “holy” (*hagios*). It carries the idea of unpolluted (Kent, p. 215).

PPT>>> **What does it mean to be (#3) “disciplined” (Tit 1:8)?** It is from *egkraté* (1468), “self-controlled” (NASV). Strauch says, “an undisciplined man has little resistance to sexual lust, provocation, anger, slothfulness, a critical spirit, or other desires that seek to control him . . . they are poor examples and cannot accomplish what needs to be done. Consequently the flocks they shepherd are poorly managed and cared for” (p. 179). An elder is the kind of guy who gets to work on time, gets his work done on schedule, has his finances in order, is not out of shape, etc.

PPT>>> **21. According to Titus 1:9, the elder must (#7a) “hold to the trustworthy Word as taught.” What is the “trustworthy word as taught” that the elder must hold to?** There are certain truths to which the vast majority of all Christians have always held: The Bible is God’s Word, God is One in Three (Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Ghost), Jesus was born of a virgin, Jesus’ death on the cross was to pay for all our sins, Jesus rose from the dead, justification is by grace through faith, Jesus is coming back again, hell is hot, heaven is sweet and Jesus is Lord. Throughout church history this came to be called the *regula fide*, the rule of faith, the basic Bible doctrines that were handed down to the church from the apostles and then on down through the centuries. Elders must hold to historic Christian orthodoxy. Any man who doubts the inspiration of Scripture, or denies the deity of Christ, or has a hard time with the virgin birth, or questions the work of Jesus on the cross, or says that the second coming has already happened, is not qualified to be an elder.

According 1:9, why is it important for the elder to (#7a) hold firm to what has been taught?

PPT>>> So that the elder can (#7b) “give instruction in sound doctrine” (1:9) and (7c) **refute** those who are in error. The Greek behind “give instruction” is *paraklein* (3870). The NASV renders *paraklein* as “exhort”; it is more of a motivational word.

The church will always need elders who promote the truth and refute error. This is parallel to a farmer both fertilizing the crop and removing the weeds.

That this is continually needed is illustrated in **Titus 1:10-16 (read)**. **Are things really any different now?**

Example: Many mainline denominational churches that once were sold bastions of the Truth are now given over to the doctrine of demons. Somewhere along the line their elders failed to hold firm to what had been taught. They allowed in Unitarians or theological liberals who deny the cardinal tenets of the Faith. They did not guard themselves or the flock.

PPT>>> Time: There is one more qualification that might be listed, a practical one: Time. A man may be qualified in every sense, but if he does not have the opportunity to serve the church, he is disqualified. There are seasons of life, and the age of your kids or the requirements of your job may keep you from being an elder for a while.

23. In general, what type of man should a church look for to be an elder, based on 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?

24. Are the qualifications for overseers (1Ti 3, Titus 1) primarily qualifications of character or ability? Explain. They are primarily qualifications of *character*. This is because elders are to lead by example and by moral influence. They are to be respected persuaders of the truth. They are to be the standard of what a mature believer is to be like. However, they should hold to sound doctrine and possess the *ability* to both teach and manage.

25. Why is it important that a man meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 in order to serve as an elder? See Proverbs 29:12, 31:4-5, Matthew 15:14, Acts 20:29-31, 3 John 9-10.

PPT>>> ESV Proverbs 29:12 If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked. If an elder holds to a doctrinal falsehood, the whole church is liable to led astray into error.

PPT>>> ESV Matthew 15:14 If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.

PPT>>> ESV Proverbs 31:4-5 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted.

If an elder has a drinking problem, the church will not be managed well.

PPT>>> ESV Acts 20:29-30 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.
An elder must be able to refute, resist and fight error.

PPT>>> ESV 3 John 1:9-10 I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church.

A person like Diotrephes is the last type of person you would want to appoint to be an elder.

Summary

1. The terms elder, overseer, and pastor are synonymous terms for the same ministry.
 2. There is to be no hierarch of authority within church leadership. No one elder is “over” anyone else. I.e., there is to be no senior pastor, no pecking order.
 3. Church leadership is ideally to be in the plural.
 4. Church leaders shepherd the flock by teaching, guiding, leading, modeling, protecting.
 5. Church leaders must be character qualified.
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PPT>>>

Deacons

26. How, in general, are the qualifications for overseer (1 Timothy 3:2-7) different from the qualifications for deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13)? Why is there a difference? The primary difference lies in the ability to teach. Deacons obviously do not have a teaching function as a part of their job description.

27. What is a deacon (1Ti 3:8)? See Acts 6. Deacon is transliterated from *diakonos*, “servant” (such as a table waiter, butler or maid). As with elders, the New Testament never gives a job description for deacons. Unlike elders, however, there are far less examples in the New Testament of deacons in action. Personally, based on the meaning of the word *diakonos*, it seems to be that a deacon was responsible for various areas of service in the church. In Acts 6, men who were likely deacons oversaw the charity program for widows in order to free the apostles for the ministry of teaching. As pointed out above, the primary difference in qualification difference between deacon and elder is teaching ability.

PPT>>> **ESV Acts 6:1-4** Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Based on Acts 6, it would appear that deacons serve the church by doing administrative things to free up the elders.

What does “dignified” mean (1Ti 3:8)? It is from *semnos*, “worthy of respect, stately” (Kent, p. 132).

What does “not double-tongued” (3:8) mean? It is from *mé dilogous* (“not two words”), it means no conflicting tales (“*Kemo Sabe*, elder must not speak with forked tongue!”).

What does it mean to not be addicted to much wine (3:8)? It means to not be given to drunkenness, to not drink a lot.

A deacon must not be greedy for dishonest gain (3:8). What does this suggest about the sphere of his ministry? From this we must assume that the deacon's ministry gave him opportunity to give in to this temptation. The Acts 6 "deacons" oversaw the money used to help the widows. If a deacon handles collections, there was a chance for embezzlement.

PPT>>> Erdman wrote, "Judas was not the last treasurer who betrayed his Lord for a few pieces of silver" (Kent, p. 134).

What does it mean to hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (3:9)?

Even though a deacon does not have to teach, he must never-the-less be settled in his theological convictions. Even though he does not teach publicly, he may well be in a position to counsel and encourage people. A deacon cannot be a know-nothing. Like the elder, he must be trained in theology.

Verse 10 states that a deacon must first be tested. How should that be done? It could probably be done simply by observing him over time, long before he is asked to be a deacon.

Deaconesses (?)

28. Is 1 Timothy 3:11 a reference to a deacon's wife or a deaconess? Why? See Romans 16:1.

- a. It is odd that Paul would give qualifications for a deacon's wife but give no corresponding qualifications for an elder's wife! This suggests he is giving the qualifications for deaconesses.
- b. Significant is the use of the word "likewise" (3:11), since it was used in 3:8 to flag the transition from elder to deacon. Here it perhaps flags a transition from deacon to deaconess.
- c. No pronoun was used with the word "women" to indicate that the concept of "wife" was intended.
- d. Romans 16:1 suggests that Phoebe was a deaconess.

PPT>>> **ESV Romans 16:1** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant (*diakonos*) of the church at Cenchreae . . .

- e. **Why was a lost list of qualifications given for widows in 1 Timothy 5 yet not for the supposed deaconess?** Perhaps because 1 Timothy 3:11 refers to a deacon's wife, not a deaconess.
- f. According to 1 Timothy 2:11-15, women are not to teach or have authority over men in the church, and a key difference between an elder and deacon is teaching ability (teaching is not in a deacon's job description). Thus there is not conflict between 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and the idea of a deaconess.

Joke: One requirement for women is that they are “not slanders” (3:11), from *mé diabolous* (related to the Greek word for devil), thus not a “she-devil”! Actually, *dia* means “through” and *ballo* means “to throw”, thus, to throw through, to hurl accusations at. Satan is the accuser of the brethren, the ultimate slanderer, thus “diabalos” became a Greek name for him (usually translated devil).

Male Deacons

29. 1 Timothy 3:12 goes back to male deacons and makes the same requirement of them concerning their families that was made of elders (3:4-5). Since this same requirement is made for deacons, what does that suggest about a deacon’s ministry? That it could involve management, either of people or money. Certainly, the “deacons” of Acts 6 had a big job in overseeing the church’s widow welfare program. Perhaps the male deacons did more managing that did the female deacons. Perhaps female deacons did a lot of ministering to the women in the church (widows or young mothers).

What benefit is there to serving as a deacon, according to 3:13? They gain a good standing with the church and also strengthen their faith.

30. What needs might be met by deacons in a house church today (3:8-13)? Deacons could oversee the church’s collections and handle its financial affairs. Deacons could also be sure that needs are being met in the congregation and that no one is overlooked (including those pastor-teachers worthy of double honor). Women deacons could minister to shut-in widows and young mothers at home with small kids. Deacons could oversee work details sent to aid the elderly or single mothers. A male deacon could officiate at a house church meeting in the absence of an elder. *Deacons could help the pastors with the counseling load.* All this could help free up the elders’ time for the ministry of prayer and the Word (as in Acts 6:4, deacons are to be people who are full of the Spirit and wisdom. There seems no reason why a deacon could not officiate at a church meeting in the absence of an elder.

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 6:3** Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.

Application: That we don’t have deacons on our house churches may reveal that we are not meeting people’s needs as thoroughly as the Lord would have us to.

The Appointment of Deacons

31. Assuming the men of Acts 6:1-6 were deacons, by what process were they chosen?

The apostles recognized the need for such men, gave the personal qualifications each was to have, and then let the church choose the men. Once chosen, the apostles laid their hands on them and appointed them to the ministry. This lone example would suggest that the church should select its own deacons, based on the qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3.

The Appointment of Elders

******32. Based on Acts 20:28, how do men rightly become elders? See also Titus 1:5.** The Holy Spirit does a work in their lives and raises them up to a position of leadership. **The process by which this happened is not stated in this passage.**

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 20:28** 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.

Presumably the apostles (church planters), knowing the qualifications for elders, looked to see who, in the congregation, the Holy Spirit was raising up. **After all, who would know the potential elders better than the brothers and sisters who lived and worked with them in community?**

******Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete (Titus 1:5)?** He left him so that he could appoint elders in every town. This certainly indicated that the church planter has the responsibility of appointing elders. However, nothing is revealed here either about the process or method of appointment. The fact is that Scripture is silent on this at every point.

PPT>>> NIV **Titus 1:5** The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

PPT>>> **Henry Craik.*** “The qualifications for the overseership (1 Timothy 3:1ff.), are clearly laid down, and there can be no reasonable doubt that they honestly sought to ascertain, by inquiry from the brethren generally, the character of those who might express a desire for the position. If, as Clement tell us, the approval of the church went along with the Apostolic appointment, there can be no reason given why Timothy and Titus, who appear to have acted as the deputies of Paul, should not have respected the testimony of the brethren to the fitness of the candidate, or even the selection made by them out of their own number.”

*English pastor, evangelist and friend of George Muller (1805-1866).

33. What insight might the alternative reading of Acts 14:23 offer in the appointment process (see NIV)?

PPT>>> NIV **Acts 14:23** Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

PPT>>> The alternative notes in the NIV reads that the apostles “had elders elected.” The Greek underneath “appointed” is *cheirotoneo* (an aorist active participle) the root of which means “to stretch out the hand.” The word clearly means to appoint, about this there is no doubt or confusion. But some have suggested it might also mean to vote by stretching out the hand (Strauch argues against this, p. 73). Paul and Barnabas knew the qualifications for elders. After teaching on the qualifications, they may have led the congregation to select its own elders after which Paul and Barnabas formally appointed them to the work. However, this is supposition. That this was the process cannot be proven from this passage.

Philosophy: If only the congregation can put someone out of membership (Mt 18, 1Co 5), then it seems reasonable that only a congregation can put forward those who serve as its leaders (such as seen in Acts 1 with Joseph and Matthias or in Acts 6 with the “deacons”).

Summary:

34. How should elders be appointed? A case can be made that the apostles led the churches in selecting their own elders, and then the apostles formally laid hands on them and dedicated them to their ministry.

******Based on 1 Timothy 4:14, who else laid hands on people?** See also Acts 13:1-3. In this case, the elders laid hands on the apostle Timothy! A similar thing was done by the prophets and teachers in Antioch (Acts 13).

PPT>>> ESV **1 Timothy 4:14** Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

PPT>>> ESV **Acts 13:1-3** Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

The Second Generation

Who is responsible for appointing the second generation of elders? Scripture is completely silent on this. The existing elders, as official church leaders, would naturally take the lead in this. And of course the entire congregation should be allow to have a say in confirming or doubting a potential elder’s qualifications. The standard set by God is clear (1Ti 3, Titus 1). Every member of the church is responsible to see that God’s requirements are upheld. Presumably the existing elders will teach on the qualifications, keep an eye out for those the Holy Spirit is raising up, and lead the entire congregation in achieving consensus on the appointment of new elders.

The Disappointment of Elders

What if someone wants to be an elder, but the church planter or the existing elders or the congregation feels he is not yet ready? Disappointment in such a case is highly likely. How a man handles rejection will say volumes about his maturity. He needs to realize that this road block to official leadership may well be God's way of further developing his character before he becomes an official elder. Any in any event, one can still love and serve and care for God's people without being officially tagged as a elder.

Practical Problems Facing Elders

Mute men who never share anything in the participatory meeting. The deeper problem may be that the men are not walking by faith with God. Perhaps the elder can encourage such men to adopt the SOAP method during the week. **S** = Scripture, read a chapter a day. **O** = Observe what the chapter says. **A** = Apply it to you life. What is God saying to you through this passage? **P** = pray about what you've read and what God has said. Hopefully, this will help them to begin to cultivate a closer daily walk with the Lord and give them something exciting to share!

Unedifying remarks in the meeting: Elders are quality control men and need to train and coach everyone regarding the importance of only uttering edifying comments in the meeting. Many times this will entail personal, private working with any who consistently make unedifying remarks.

Problem persons: Those who come late to any meeting, who lose their tempers easily and run others off from the fellowship, who are pushy and opinionated, or who are not well adjusted socially. Though all in the fellowship are to help such persons, it ultimately falls on the elder to keep such persons on a short leash lest he damage the church (like a bull in a china shop).

Heretics: It is the elder's job to be sure no heretic is allowed to advance his heresy publicly or privately within the community of faith. A heretic can even include one who uses the truth in such a way that it drives a wedge between the brethren.

Distracting Issues: These include such issues as the KJV is inspired, the second coming has already happened, a protestant purgatory, not all the books of the Bible are supposed to be there, we don't need the Bible since we have the Holy Spirit, the mark of the beast is using grape juice in communion, churches need to be Torah-compliant, no Calvinists are Christians, all Sabbath breakers are in sin, etc.). It is the elder's duty to be sure distracting and sometimes silly issues are not allowed to vex the church.

Kooks: Persons with a messiah complex must not be allowed to wreck the church decorum. Such persons usually have a track record and a bad reputation that precedes them. Those think themselves right and everyone else wrong are a menace to the church's peace and must be dealt with firmly by the elders.

Church not witnessing: Elders must be sure the church is intentional in fulfilling the Great Commission (Mt 28). Are its members sharing the Gospel? Are they equipped to do so? Are they encouraged to do so? Is evangelism modeled?

Church not giving: A stingy fellowship is a sign of a fellowship that is not filled with the Spirit. The church must be encouraged to give sacrificially to others (the needy and church workers).

Marital Problems: In our decayed society, men no longer know what it means to be a man, nor women to be feminine. This needs to be taught and reinforced by church leaders. Many in the church will have marital problems and need counseling. God's standards for marriage roles must be taught.

For Further Reading:

Strauch, Alexander, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call To Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth, 1988).

Kent, Homer, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982).

****Ask this question before having someone read the passage.

Next Lesson: E-mail the next set of discussion questions out to the class (or print them up and hand them out at the end of this lesson). Ask everyone to consider the issues, answer the questions and be prepared to discuss them at the next meeting.

Teacher Preparation: To help you prepare to teach this, go to www.sermonaudio.com/ntrf, go to our series on Early Church Practice and find this lesson.

Stephen E. Atkerson
www.NTRF.org
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Factor In:

What are some other of the functions of an elder? See *Ephesians 4:11ff, Acts 20:29-31, 2 Timothy 3:4-5, Titus 1:9.*

Elders also provide **direction, teaching, counsel**, and help the church grow into **maturity**. More on this will be examined in a following lesson. Church leaders are to be: plural, male, unsalaried, homegrown, non-hierarchical, and servant-like.

PPT>>> W.W.II Torpedo Bomber. Elders serve other functions as well. During the Battle of Midway (World War II), a lone American bomber squadron discovered and attacked the Japanese fleet. Tragically, the squadron attacked without American fighter escort. It proved suicidal. All the bombers were shot down by Japanese fighter planes and all but one of the airmen were killed. One function of elders is that they are to the church what the American fighters were supposed to be to the bombers: **protection** (see **Acts 20:29-31**).

Perspective: The fighters exist for the sake of the bombers. So too the church does not exist for the sake of the elders, but rather the elders exist for the sake of the church!