

Our Local Church Leaders

Part 2: The Elder

Elder (Presbyter) = Overseer (Bishop) = Shepherd (Pastor)

Introduction:

- Our Lord considers having leaders in every local church as a priority issue for each congregation.
 - (On slide) 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 as I directed you.
 - (On slide) Acts 14:23 – And 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.
- Why? Because (1) wolves are coming and (2) people need examples to follow.
 - In Acts 20 we are shown the 3 terms/job descriptions of the local church leader.
 - Elder / Overseer (bishop) / Shepherd (pastor)
 - (On slide) Acts 20:17,28 – Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the **elders** of the church to come to him...Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which (the idea of “among you”) the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers** (bishops), **to care for** (shepherd / pastor) the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.
 - We also see the “why” in Acts 20.
 - Because wolves are coming, the days are evil, and sometimes the wolves look like sheep!
 - Because God’s children need a pattern to follow!
 - Last lesson we compared 1 Peter 2:21-25 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 – The NT elders, like Jesus, are examples, overseers and shepherds.

4 “E’s” of the Elder:

Example

- Paul was a mentor, a pattern for others to follow because he first and foremost followed Jesus Christ.
 - **Philippians 4:9** – *What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*
 - **Philippians 3:17-19** – *Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.*
 - Paul’s emphasis in Philippians is on the Mindset of Christ, but a subpoint of that is to imitate the examples of those who have the Mindset of Christ Jesus (starting with Jesus, Philippians 2:5-11).
- An elder is an example worthy of followership because:
 - He is an older, seasoned Christian (not a novice – 1 Timothy 3:6).
 - A good follower of Jesus – We all need examples worthy of followership.
 - Living the qualities that God expects of every Christian (1 Peter 5:3).
 - **Chart comparing the elder and every Christian.**
 - He is to be blameless (above reproach, not sinless) because he is serving as an example of what God wants (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6,7).
 - They lead by example in generosity / hospitality, helping the weak because that is what God expects of all Christians (Acts 20:33-35; James 5:14-15; 1 Timothy 3:2,3; Titus 1:8).
 - He is to handle conflict with a godly heart because that’s God expectation for all of us!
 - **All older Christians should be able to say, “Follow me, as I follow Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:1-8).**

Experienced

- **A reputation – A consistent repeated pattern of behavior over time.**
 - Who has been “tested”? (1 Timothy 3:10).
 - In speaking of deacons, Paul said, *“let them also first be tested.”* I believe that implies that the elders were to be tested as well. We have to be able to see that these men can stand the test.
 - An elder is one who has proven character, tested over time.
 - Who is faithful? Timothy was told to “commit these” teachings to “faithful” men (2 Timothy 2:2).
 - Who is wise and understanding among you?
 - **James 3:13-18** – *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*
 - Who, like young Timothy, has “proven character”? (Philippians 2:19-24).
 - What is the outcome of your way of life? (Hebrews 13:7).
 - Can I count on you when everything is going crazy in life? (Proverbs 25:19).
- **Experienced men:**
 - Experienced in the faith, not novices or new converts (1 Timothy 3:6).
 - Experienced to care for God’s church because they first demonstrated it at home (1 Timothy 3:5).
 - Experience in using spiritual wisdom to guide the congregation in doctrine and in matters of judgment (Acts 15:13-22; Titus 1:9; 1 Timothy 3:2,6; Hebrews 5:14).
 - Experienced in the Word. They have demonstrated being able to teach, being able to convict those who contradict (1 Timothy 3:2). Their senses are exercised to discern (Hebrews 5:11-14).
 - **Titus 1:9-16** – *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. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.*

Engaged

- **“Among you”** – The elders / overseers / shepherds (pastors) are to care for the local church. That is the extent of the oversight. The sheep among them.
 - Here are some passages that show how a leader behaves among those who he leads (Joshua 8:9; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 5:12-13).
 - **Acts 20:31-38** – *Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” And when he had said these things, he*

knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

- **The elder is well aware of the pulse of the congregation.**
 - When there is controversy and cooler heads need to prevail, the elders are there (Acts 15:2,6,22)
 - They know which mouths must be stopped (Titus 1:9-16).
 - Where there are trials and adversity, the elders are there (Acts 11:27-30)
 - When there is sickness of any kind spiritual or physical, the elders are called (James 5:14).
 - When you have unruly, weak and fainthearted Christians, call the elders. They have spent enough time with them to know the difference.
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:14** – *And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.*
- **All Christians! Engage in the lives of others** (ball games, weddings, funerals, school activities, having a younger couple over for dinner, take some younger ones shooting, encourage a young preacher and his family).

Equippers

- **Why did God give elders/pastors? For equipping the saints to be able to serve.**
 - **Ephesians 4:11-12** – *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*
- **Elders who are equippers:**
 - Think generationally. Like Moses. Like David. Like Jesus. Like Paul. Like Timothy.
 - Are completely vested in the sheep (John 10).
 - Are teachers, not tyrants; they are brothers, not bullies; they are leaders, not lords.
 - Are actively pursuing the next generation to help prepare them.
- **Christians will learn the shepherd's voice by learning to watch the elder's good example.**

(On slide) Acts 4:13 – *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.*

Who have you been with? People are smart and perceptive, they can tell who you've been with.

The Elder and Every Christian

The elder serves as an example of what God expects of every Christian!

Elder (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1)

Blameless, above reproach

Husband of one wife

Sober-minded

Self-controlled

Respectable

Hospitable

Able to teach

Not a drunkard

Not violent

Gentle

Not quarrelsome

Not a lover of money

Must manage his household well

Keeping his children submissive

Not a recent convert, novice

Well thought of by outsiders

Not arrogant, not self-willed

Not quick-tempered

Lover of good

Upright, just, righteous

Holy

Disciplined

Hold firm to the trustworthy word

Examples, not lords (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Every Christian

Blameless, above reproach (Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Tim. 5:7; 6:14)

Husband of one wife (if married, Romans 7:1-4)

Sober-minded (1 Peter 5:8)

Self-controlled (Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6)

Respectable (1 Timothy 2:9)

Hospitable (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9)

Able to teach (2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 5:11-14; 1 Peter 3:15)

Not a drunkard (1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:18)

Not violent (Matthew 5:38,39)

Gentle (Galatians 5:23; James 3:17)

Not quarrelsome (Titus 3:2)

Not a lover of money (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

Must manage his household well (Ephesians 5:21-6:4)

Keeping children submissive (Ephesians 6:4; Hebrews 12:9)

Don't stay novices, grow up (Ephesians 4:14-15; 2 Peter 3:18)

Well thought of by outsiders (Philippians 2:15; 1 Peter 2:12)

Not arrogant, not self-willed (James 3:17; 4:6,10; 2 Peter 2:10)

Not quick-tempered (Colossians 3:8; James 1:19)

Lover of good (2 Timothy 3:3)

Upright, just, righteous (1 Peter 3:12; 1 John 3:7)

Holy (1 Peter 1:15,16)

Disciplined (dd)

Hold firm to the trustworthy word (Eph. 4:14; 1 Thes. 5:21)

Examples, not lords (Matthew 20:20-28)