

Offices of the Church - Elder

A. Terminology used for the word elder

Scripture References	Greek words		
	Presbuteros	Episcopos	Poimen
Acts 20:17, 28	Elders in v. 17	Overseers or oversight in v. 28	Shepherd or feed in v. 28
1 Peter 5:1-2	Elders in v. 1	Overseers in v. 2	Shepherd or feed in v. 2
Titus 1:5, 7	Elders in v. 5	Overseer or bishop in v. 7
Ephesians 4:11	Pastors
Philippians 1:1	Overseers or bishops

Note: The term pastor and elder mean the same but in most churches, the pastor serves as the paid elder (1 Timothy 5:17-18) since he is full time whereas the others on the elder board are usually working men.

B. Duties of an elder

1. The general responsibility of an elder is to shepherd and oversee those in the local church (Acts 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2). This is to be done in an exemplary not lording manner (1 Peter 5:3; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7-8). The focus of activity is to be the ministry of the word and prayer (Acts 6:3-4). The goal is to equip believers in a manner that promotes growth, stability and unity in Christlikeness and doctrine (Ephesians 4:11-14). These responsibilities may occur in a group or individual setting at or away from the church.

2. The responsibilities in ministering the word include:

- a. To give instruction and encouragement in sound doctrine and obedient living (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Titus 1:5, 9; 2 Timothy 4:2).
- b. To guard the truths of God's word and the believers in the local church (2 Timothy 1:13-14; Acts 20:28) by refuting, rebuking and correcting error in doctrine and living (2 Timothy 2:24-25; 4:2-4; Titus 1:5, 9-13).
- c. To instruct and appoint future elders and teachers (2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5).
- d. To exercise church discipline (1 Timothy 5:19-20). Keep in mind the church discipline process is ministry of the word as the Great Commission's final section is not simply concerned with teaching believers all Christ commanded but teaching obedience to all He commanded (Matthew 28:20).
- e. To actively share the gospel with those who are unsaved (2 Timothy 4:5).
- f. Counseling is included if it involves the ministry and use of God's word.

3. The responsibilities in prayer include:

- a. To pray with and for those in the local church (Acts 20:36; 21:5).
- b. To pray with and anoint with oil very ill believers of the church who call for them (James 5:14-16).

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C. The number of elders in a church

1. God's word teaches more than one elder for each local church (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14).
2. The idea of one elder/pastor with several subordinate assistant pastors is not scriptural. However, sometimes a one-pastor/elder setup is necessary until men can be sufficiently instructed to be pastors/elders (Acts 19:8-10). By comparing Acts 19:10 with 20:31 we see daily instruction went on for about 3 years.

D. Congregational responsibilities for pastors/elders

1. To pay the pastor or pastors who are full time a decent wage (1 Timothy 5:17-18 cp. Galatians 6:6). However, pastors may decline pay and work at a secular job (1 Corinthians 9:14-15; Acts 20:34-35).
2. Other responsibilities
 - a. To obey them (Hebrews 13:17).
 - b. To imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7).
 - c. To appreciate them, esteem them highly in love and live in peace with one another (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).