

Who Leads the Church? The Role of the Elders

Titus 1:5 (ESV) ⁵This 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—

Acts 6:1–7 (ESV) ¹Now 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. ²And 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. ³Therefore, 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. ⁴But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” ⁵And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 11:29–30 (ESV) ²⁹So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 20:17, 28–31 (ESV) ¹⁷Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him....²⁸Pay 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. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Ephesians 4:11–16 (ESV) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

1 Timothy 4:12–13 (ESV)

¹²Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17–18 (ESV) ¹⁷Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.”

Hebrews 13:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

James 5:14 (ESV) 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.

1 Peter 5:1–4 (ESV) ¹ So 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: 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; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Three different terms are used in the New Testament (Acts 20:17, 27-28; 1 Peter 5:1-2) to refer to the same church leaders:

Greek Word	English Word	Focus
“poimen” - “ποιμην”	Pastor/Shepherd	Attitude of the leader
“presbuteros” - “πρεσβυτερος”	Elder	Character of the leader
“episcopos” - “επισκοπος”	Overseer/Bishop	Task of the leader

Elders are primarily pastors or shepherds of God’s people, not corporate CEOs, or advisers to the pastor. They are chosen on the basis of their character. They have the task of oversight. They carry out their assignment with the loving concern of a shepherd.

The Task of the Elder includes:

Protecting the Flock

Guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-31)

Feeding the Flock

Teach biblical truth (Acts 6:1-7)

Equip people for service (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Leading the Flock

Overseers supervise and manage the church (1 Peter 5:1-2)

Manage the finances of the church (Acts 11:29-30; 1 Timothy 5:17-18)

Caring for the Flock

Practical care of the flock’s many diverse needs (Acts 6:1-7)

Prayer for the ill (James 5:14)

Provide an example for the Flock

Model Christlikeness (1 Timothy 4:12-13; 1 Peter 5:3)

Shared leadership

Plurality of elders—collective, shared, or team leadership

How people are to respond to the elders:

Honor their elders; double honor includes pay (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

Obey and submit to their authority (Hebrews 13:17)

Commissioning of Elders, Deacons, & Deaconesses

Sunday, March 3, 2024

ELDERS

Doug Dolbow, Pastor Justin Harper, Stan Kulig, Eric Martin, Doug McVeigh,
Pastor Mark Wheeler

The elders serve as shepherds and overseers of the church. They work together to feed, lead, guard, care, and model Christlike character for the flock.

Pastor	Elders
Will you strive to meet the character qualities specified for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1?	We will.
Will you willingly shepherd the flock God has entrusted to your care?	We will.
Will you teach biblical truth and sound doctrine?	We will.
Will you help equip people for service?	We will.
Will you lead the church as overseers, supervising and managing the church well, ensuring that all things are done with integrity?	We will.
Will you guard the flock against false teachers?	We will.
Will you pray for the sick?	We will.
Will you serve as examples of Christlike character for the church?	We will.
Will you serve together as a team, sharing responsibility for leadership and oversight?	We will.
Will you work together to keep the church focused on achieving the purpose God has called us to?	We will.

DEACONS

Bob Anderson, Dan Darcy, Dennis Fenton, Joe Martin, Jim Nawrocki, Mark Stewart

While the elders have a fixed job description, the deacons have a flexible one. They follow the direction of the elders and serve alongside the deaconesses wherever needed to help meet the practical needs of the church. This allows the elders to focus on the ministries of teaching and prayer.

Pastor	Deacons
Will you strive to meet the character qualities specified for deacons in 1 Timothy 3?	We will.
Will you follow the direction of the elders and assist them wherever needed?	We will.
Will you help the elders in caring for the practical needs of the congregation?	We will.
Will you work with the deaconesses to help care for the needs of the congregation?	We will.
Will you work with the deaconesses to manage the benevolence fund with integrity and compassion?	We will.

DEACONESSES

Dianne Appleton, Lois Darcy, Rose Eldridge, Lisa Nawrocki, Carol Sumler

While the elders have a fixed job description, the deaconesses have a flexible one. They follow the direction of the elders and serve alongside the deacons wherever needed to help meet the practical needs of the church. This allows the elders to focus on the ministries of teaching and prayer.

Pastor

Deaconesses

Will you strive to meet the character qualities specified for deaconesses in 1 Timothy 3?	We will.
Will you follow the direction of the elders and assist them wherever needed?	We will.
Will you help the elders in caring for the practical needs of the congregation?	We will.
Will you work with the deacons to help care for the needs of the congregation?	We will.
Will you work with the deacons to manage the benevolence fund with integrity and compassion?	We will.

CONGREGATION

The congregation is responsible to respect their leaders and submit to their authority. They are to honor those who serve well.

Pastor

Congregation

Will you honor the deacons & deaconesses for their service and grant them good standing among you?	We will.
Will you obey the elders and joyfully submit to their leadership?	We will.
Will you treat the elders with honor and respect since they watch over your souls?	We will.
Will you pray that God grants your elders, deacons, & deaconesses a sense of joy as they serve Christ?	We will.