

Qualifications for Church Leadership

1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13 (5)

1 TIMOTHY: DUTIES AND ORDER IN THE CHURCH, 1 Timothy 2:1-3:13 The Overseers of the Church, 1 Timothy 3:1-7

(1 Timothy 3:1-7) **Introduction:** the office of *bishop* is probably the same office as elder or presbyter or minister in the New Testament. All three words refer to the same person, to the minister of the gospel and of the church (see below Deeper Study #1, Elder—Titus 1:5-9 for more discussion).

- 1) What are the qualifications of the minister?
- 2) Who should be preaching the gospel and filling the pulpits of the Lord's church?
- 3) Who should be considering the ministry—what kind of person?

Before discussing the individual qualifications against which all pastors are to be measured, however, Paul gives some helpful insight into the call to spiritual leadership.

This opening verse suggests six facets related to the call to ministry:

- It is an
- 1) important calling,
 - 2) a limited calling,
 - 3) a compelling calling,
 - 4) a responsible calling,
 - 5) a worthy calling, and
 - 6) a demanding calling.

An Important Calling

1 Timothy 3:1a (NASB)

¹ **It is a trustworthy statement:** if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do*.

DEEPER STUDY # 1

(Titus 1:5-9) **Elder— Bishop:** note the term “elder” (*presbuteros*) and “bishop” (*episkopos*) are used interchangeably in this passage (Titus 1:5, 7). (See 1 Timothy 3:1-7 for more discussion.)

Titus 1:5 (NASB)

⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and **appoint elders** in every city as I directed you,

Titus 1:7 (NASB)

⁷ For the **overseer** [**bishop-KJV**] must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,

The elder or bishop was probably the same office as the pastor-teacher or minister of a church. The gift of pastor-teacher refers to only one gift which is given to the same person ([Ephesians 4:11](#)). The focus of the gift is to *pastor, oversee, and shepherd* believers in the local church.

[Ephesians 4:11 \(NASB\)](#)

¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as **pastors and teachers,**

William Barclay points out that **elder was more of a Jewish name and bishop was more of a Greek name**, each referring to the same office (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p.80-81).

The word *elder* was used to refer to the man, to his standing, to his years of faithfulness and service. The word *bishop* (*episkopos*—overseer) and the gift *pastor-teacher* were used to refer to the man's duties and his work of overseeing and supervising the church.

In comparison, a man today is often called **minister, pastor, preacher, or reverend**. Usually **reverend is used** to refer to the **man personally** and **minister, pastor, or preacher is used** to refer to the **man's functions**.

The pastoral gift is the gift that is directly ascribed to the Lord Jesus. He called Himself the Good Shepherd ([John 10:11, 14](#)). Others called Him the Great Shepherd of the sheep ([Hebrews 13:20](#)), the Shepherd of men's souls ([1 Peter 2:25](#)), and the Chief Shepherd ([1 Peter 5:4](#)). The pastoral gift is an ordained office; the elder is the basic office of the church.

1. Elders are called and set apart by the Holy Spirit ([Acts 20:28; Acts 13:2](#)).

[Acts 20:28 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁸ Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which **the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

[Acts 13:2 \(NASB\)](#)

² While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."**

2. Elders are ordained officers ([Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5](#)).

[Acts 14:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³ When they had **appointed elders** for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

[Titus 1:5 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and **appoint elders** in every city as I directed you,

3. Elders shepherd and oversee the flock of God ([Acts 20:28-29](#); [1 Peter 5:2-3](#)).

[Acts 20:28-29 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁸ "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

²⁹ "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

[1 Peter 5:2-3 \(NASB\)](#)

² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

4. Elders are to guard and preach the Word ([Titus 1:9](#)).

[Titus 1:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹ **holding fast** the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that *he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute* those who contradict.

5. Elders have a healing ministry through prayers and the anointing with oil ([James 5:14](#)).

[James 5:14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴ **Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him**, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

6. Elders took a leading part in the decisions of the Jerusalem Council. They are identified along with the apostles as the chief authorities of the church ([Acts 15:2](#); [Acts 16:4](#)).

[Acts 15:2 \(NASB\)](#)

² And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.*

[Acts 16:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴ Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees **which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders** who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

7. Elders are the ones to whom Paul reports when returning from his third missionary journey, and they are the ones who advise him how to combat the Judaizers ([Acts 21:18-25](#)).

[Acts 21:18-25 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸ And the following day Paul went in with us to James, **and all the elders were present.**

¹⁹ After he had greeted them, he *began* to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

²⁰ And when they heard it they *began* glorifying God; and they said to him, "You

see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;

²¹ and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

²² "What, then, is *to be done*? They will certainly hear that you have come.

²³ "**Therefore do this that we tell you.** We have four men who are under a vow;

²⁴ take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.

²⁵ "But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."

8. Elders are the ones to whom Paul delivers the offering that had been taken for the Jerusalem Church during the great famine ([Acts 11:30](#)).

[Acts 11:30 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁰ And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul **to the elders.**