

## Local Church Elders: A Continual Need for Faithful Men

### Selected Scriptures

#### 1. **The Elder's Description**

The New Testament uses several different words to describe those men who are to lead the local church. Each of these words highlights various things, but they all refer to the same person: an elder in a local church.

A. **Shepherd (ποιμήν)** - The Scriptures often refer to Jesus with as a shepherd (John 10:11, 14; cf. Matt. 9:36) and He is described as the Chief Shepherd of all of those who serve as shepherds in pastoring the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:1-4). This is where the title of "pastor" comes from (Eph. 4:11).

I. GOSPEL: Matt 9:36

II. The actions of a shepherd (ποιμαίνω) is variously translated as tending sheep (Luke 17:7), caring for someone or something (Jude 12), or ruling (Rev. 12:5).

B. **Elder (πρεσβύτερος)** - This can generally refer to an older man, but it is often used as an official title in the local church (Ti. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1; cf. Matt 15:2). An elder is described as doing the work of a shepherd (ποιμαίνω; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

C. **Overseer (ἐπίσκοπος)** - Some English translations render this word as "bishop" and is the basis for the name of the episcopal church denomination. It is also used to show Jesus as the "guardian" of the souls of believers (1 Pet. 2:25). Overseers are described as doing the work of shepherding (ποιμαίνω) believers (Acts 20:28).

#### 2. **The Elder's Qualification**

Elders and deacons are the two offices of service established in the New Testament, and there are specific requirements for each (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Ti. 1:5-9). Both offices require the man to have a mature faith that is evident to those around him and that his conduct and life testimony are above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2, 10; Ti. 1:6). Elders are distinguished from deacons in that they must also be able to teach others and to refute those who contradict the truth (Ti. 1:9).

#### 3. **The Elder's Commission**

Following the example of the apostles in the Jerusalem church, elders are to delegate many necessary tasks to other servants in the church in order to pay specific attention to the ministry of the Word of God and to prayer (Acts 6:1-4; 1 Tim. 4:13). Preaching and teaching from the Word of God is the primary way in which elders are to lead and guide the local church (cf. Acts 20:28; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). This

is why the ability both to teach truth and to refute error according to the Scriptures is a requirement for elders (Ti. 1:9).

#### 4. **The Elder's Operation**

An elder is to regard his office as one of humble service and that he is merely a temporary caretaker of a greater responsibility (Ti. 1:7; cf. 1 Tim. 3:1). He is to see his office as an opportunity to serve and guide others, and not as a position of power to lord over them (cf. 1 Pet. 5:1-4). A godly elder will exercise the duties and responsibilities that come with his office in voluntary eagerness, striving to be joyful even when the ministry is trying (cf. Heb. 13:17).