



Elders and the Church

Titus 1:5-9

Main Point: Elders are God's design for overseeing and pastoring his church.

Elders are a part of God's designed order for His church (5).

Here in Titus 1:5, God gives us a clear picture in practice and in instruction of his design for pastoral leadership in the church. God calls out men to be elders, who provide leadership and protection to the church. They are overseers who oversee and direct the church in the worship and work of God. They are pastors who tend and feed the flock of God. These are not separate positions. They are different biblical titles that capture the functions of the one office that the Lord established as elder/overseer/pastor. Here are a few examples that show the consistency of this throughout the New Testament:

- In Acts 14:23, they appointed “elders” in every church.
 - In Acts 20, Paul called together the “elders” of the church in Ephesus.
 - In Philippians 1, Paul addressed the “overseers” (elders) and deacons.
 - In James 5, sick believers are told to call on the “elders” for prayer.
 - In 1 Peter 5, Peter urges the elders to shepherd the flock of God...
1. What does the consistent picture of the appointment of elders in the early church say about the importance of elders in the church? Why?
 2. How does your church today continue to participate and fulfill God's design for elder leadership and the biblical distinction between elders and deacons?
 3. Many people are unsure about elders or overseers? They wonder if these are biblical or even acceptable titles for a pastor? Since these (elder/overseer) are the biblical terms for the office (In the New Testament, the word shepherd or “pastor” is used only once as a title.), what happened? Why would these other titles ever be questioned?

Elders lead in modeling the character of Christ (6-8).

Titus 1:6-8 demands that an elder must be “above reproach.” The definition for “above reproach” is revealed in the verses that follow in what must be characteristic and what must not be characteristic of the life of an elder. Taken in the whole of Scripture, it's clear that the list of things that must be and must not be characteristic of an elder's life should also be characteristic in the life of any believer. In other words, an elder should model a life that's been touched by God's grace and that is being conformed to the character of Christ. A quick examination of the list also quickly reveals that the core requirements for an elder aren't much different than any follower of Jesus. An elder models what God desires for all believers: A life that models the character of Jesus Christ.

1. Read verses 6-8. How do you see the character of Jesus Christ in these requirements?

2. Consider the elders at your church. Are they biblically qualified to lead based on these requirements in Titus 1:6-8? In what ways do you see the evidence of these characteristics in their lives? Pray for the Lord to continue to grow them in Christ.
3. How are these characteristics possible in a genuine and lasting way in anyone's life?

Elders lead in sharing the Words of Christ (9).

- *Holding firm to the Word.*
- *Giving instruction through the Word.*
- *Giving correction and protection through the Word.*

While the qualifications for elders found in Titus 1:6-8 aren't much different from the qualifications for deacons, the one requirement that sets elders apart is the responsibility and ability to teach. Titus 1:9 points to the essential characteristic for an elder when it comes to the Words of Christ, which is that an elder "must hold firm to the trustworthy word." Elders must show an understanding of and an unshakable confidence in the trustworthy Word of God. The reason for this requirement is two-fold, including (1) the ability to teach the Word in a sound and healthy way as well as (2) the responsibility to protect sound doctrine and to give sound correction through the Word.

1. Why is God's Word so important to the work of an elder? Why would a high view of God's Word be necessary to do the work of an elder?
2. What are the different ways that an elder gives instruction through the Word of God?
3. What does it mean to "rebuke?" What does this mean when it comes to the responsibility of an elder to deal with someone who is contradicting sound doctrine in what they say or do?
4. How does correcting error through the Word also help to protect the church?
5. Consider the elders at your church. Pray that the Lord would grow and protect their ministry of the Word to exemplify these verses.