

## The roles and functions of church leaders

### 1 Timothy 3:1-13

<sup>1</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup> Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. <sup>5</sup> (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. <sup>7</sup> He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

<sup>8</sup> In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>9</sup> They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

<sup>11</sup> In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

<sup>12</sup> A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. <sup>13</sup> Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

### Titus 1:5-9

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. <sup>6</sup> An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>8</sup> Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. <sup>9</sup> He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

#### 1) The need to appoint elders

- Leadership is a necessity in life.
  - Families are dysfunctional when there's a lack of leadership
  - Businesses need strong leaders to make a profit
  - Nations stand or fall by the quality of their leaders
  - Churches need leaders to lead the church into God's purposes for it
- Everything rises and falls on leadership (Dr John Maxwell)
- Leadership can be desired
  - 1 Timothy 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.
- However, leaders are appointed
  - Titus 1:5 The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.
- Paul appointed elders in all the churches that he planted
  - Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

## 2) Overseers, elders, and deacons

- We've seen that overseers, elders, and deacons are mentioned. Is there a difference between them?
- Elders (Greek: presbuteros which literally means senior) and overseers (Greek: episkopos which means bishop; to watch over as in a superintendent)
  - Elders and overseers are used interchangeably and aren't two separate offices in the church.
- They have spiritual oversight over the church, but are under-shepherds to the Great Shepherd of our souls
  - 1 Peter 5:1-4 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup> not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.
  - Acts 20:17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders  
Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.
- Functions of elders
  - Shepherds of God's flock under their care
  - Watch over them willingly
  - Eager to serve, not doing it for personal gain
  - Not lording it over the flock, but being examples to them
  - Responsible for correct theology and interpretation of the scriptures
    - Acts 15:5-6 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses."  
The apostles and elders met to consider this question.
  - Responsible for teaching the scriptures
    - Titus 1:9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.
    - 1 Timothy 5:17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.
  - Pray for the sick
    - James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.
- When an elder is accused of wrongdoing
  - 1 Timothy 5:19 Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.
- However, elders are not above reproof if they are sinning
  - But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning. 1 Timothy 5:20
- Deacons (Greek: diakoneō which means to be an attendant or to serve)
  - The function of deacons is to serve the church in practical ways
- Men, not women, should be overseers / elders as it's a matter of spiritual authority
  - 1 Timothy 2:12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man
- Men and women can be deacons
  - Romans 16:1 I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon, of the church in Cenchreae.