

1 Timothy 3 v1-13

“Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.” v1

In the context of the letter this is the second trustworthy saying. The first was “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” - 1v15

What is an overseer?

Someone who looks over something?



Over a wall perhaps?

1 Tim 3 v1-13 says little on this – but looking elsewhere:

“From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the **elders** of the church . . .

Keep watch over yourselves & 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.” Acts 20 v17, 28

“To the **elders** among you. I appeal as a fellow elder & a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be **shepherds** of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them (**or serving as overseers**) – not because you must but because you are willing . . .” 1 Peter 5 v1-2

Presbyter –elder: **spiritually mature** (originally ‘senior in age’) – bishop (AV)

Episkopos –overseer: **one who watches over**

Poimen -shepherd/pastor: **one who guides/protects the flock** (teaching is key)

The verses above show these 3 words are used interchangeably of the same person

How many elders should there be?

“Paul & Barnabus appointed **elders** for them in each church . .”

Acts 14 v23

“ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the **elders** of the church . .” James 5 v14.

Ideally more than one (a plurality)

What is their position in the church?

NT teaches there is a unity, involving a basic spiritual equality which characterises the local church.

All Christians in the church are spiritually gifted for the benefit of all

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” 1 Cor 12v7

“ See to it . . That none of you has a sinful unbelieving heart . . That turns away from the Living God. But encourage one another daily . .

“ Heb 3 v13

But within this equality there are distinctions in types of spiritual gifts sovereignly distributed (not in rank).

There is only one head of the church:

“And he (Jesus) is the head of the body, the church;” Col 1 v18

What is their work in the church?

1) Leading

“Have confidence in your **leaders** & submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.” Heb 13 v17

“The elders who direct the affairs of **(or rule)** the church well are worthy of double honour . . .” 1 Tim 5 v17 (Greek word means – *to stand before*)

2) Teaching

“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine & refute those who oppose it.” Titus 1 v9

3) Pastoral care

Be **shepherds (pastors)** of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must but because you are willing . . .” 1 Peter 5 v1-2

What is their authority in the church?

- 1) The authority of Jesus Christ is not located in any man or group of men but in his **Word**
- 2) The authority of Christ is present in the church as assembled (especially as that assembly is in accordance with his word) 1 Cor 5 v4

3) Two extremes to avoid:

Leaders make all the key decisions

The church acting as a democracy

The authority of Christ is present, not when a majority decision is taken, but when the assembled church has sought to discern the mind of Christ as revealed in his word

So as a church we strive for unanimity.

How are they appointed in the church?

1) called by God

“Christ himself gave . . the pastors & teachers to prepare people for works of service . .” Eph 4 v11

2) inner aspiration (from 1 Tim 3)

“Whoever **aspires** to be an overseer desires a noble task.” v1

3) conscientious screening by church against the qualifications given in 1 Tim 3 v2-7:

What qualities should Elders have? Compare 1 Tim 3 v2-7 & Titus 1 v6-9

General:

blameless/above reproach v2 (no just ground for overall criticism of his character)

Personal:

Faithful to his wife v2 (*lit 'a one wife husband'*)

Temperate/self controlled (free from excess in any area of life, sensible/orderly, not a lover of money)

Respectable v2

Family life:

He must manage his family well . .v4

(if he can't how can he manage God's family?)

Relationships:

Not given to drunkenness v3

Not violent but gentle v3

Not quarrelsome v3

Hospitable v2

Good reputation with outsiders v7

Faith:

Not a recent convert v6

Able to teach v2

What sort of person overall

?



Deacons (*gk diakonos – to serve*) 3 v8-10

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

Women deacons 3 v11

“In the same way the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate & trustworthy in everything

Serving well 3 v12

“Those who have served well gain an excellent standing & great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus”

“Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task” 1 Tim 3v1

One who is spiritually mature

One who watches over

One who guides & protects the flock

Not in charge, Jesus is.

Elders authority primarily in the Word

**Five areas of qualification: general (above reproach), personal,
family life, relationships & faith**

Deacons more serving than leading

Deacons have similar qualifications to Elders