

An Overview of an Elder

(1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:3-9)

A Biblical Overview of an Elder: Elder, Overseer, Bishop, Pastor – All these words are used interchangeably throughout scripture. The best description is “Overseer” or “Shepherd”. The mere fact that someone has these qualities does not automatically make him a candidate for the Office of Elder.

1 Timothy states that if a man desires or has a heart for this position it is a good thing. Such a man - with this desire and these qualifications - is already giving of himself to serve the body of Christ, before he is ever called an Elder! Another indication of his readiness is that he already has an influence in peoples’ lives as a leader or shepherd. Notice, the scripture talks of having a desire - indicating he does not strive for this position. Elders are then appointed based on these observations. (*Acts 20:17-31, 1 Peter 5:1-5, Titus 1:5, Acts 14:21-23, Numbers 11:16-17*).

Elders must lead in his own house first (1 Timothy 3:4). He must shepherd and serve as an overseer of the flock, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:2-4). An Elder will establish and keep order in the church (Titus 1:5). He must be able to teach and preach sound Biblical doctrine or truth from God’s Word (Titus 1:9). He must sustain a spiritually healthy church (Titus 2:1-15). Elders are to rule and rule well (Hebrews 13:7, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 5:17), give Godly counsel (Numbers 11:16-17), instruct (1 Timothy 4:6), and to structure and provide decisions for the church (Acts 15). Scripture indicates he must be blameless, above reproach, a one-woman man, and able to manage his household well. He must be temperate, sober-minded, hospitable, gentle, not a drunkard, not violent or quarrelsome, not greedy, not covetous and not a new convert. He must be qualified in the Word of God, able to teach the Word and give good Biblical counsel (1 Timothy 3: 1-7, Titus 1:3-9).

Practical Functions of the Governing Elder: Elders oversee/shepherd our church attenders, church members and our church staff. They give financial oversight, serve communion, teach God’s Word, give Godly counsel, set direction for the body, keep order, settle disputes, and carry out church discipline. They exhort, edify, encourage, lead, protect, direct and represent the body according to the Word.

An Overview of a Deacon/Deaconess

(1 Timothy 3:8-13)

A Biblical Overview of a Deacon/Deaconess: Deacons were first mentioned in Acts 6 and appointed in order to take some of the load off the Apostles and Elders. This would allow them to continue to teach and preach the Word of God effectively. It shows a different focus and priority for the two offices. It seems as though preaching the Word was in direct obedience to the command Jesus gave them but meeting the needs of people could not be neglected. We must find a way to do both, thus the purpose of Deacons. These men and women are to be filled with the Holy Spirit and of good report; and have a heart and passion to serve the body.

- Not doubled tongue
- Not a drunkard
- Not greedy for money
- Faithful
- One wife man
- One husband woman
- Order in home
- Trustworthy
- Tested
- Reverent

The word servant is the same word used for Deacon, which refers to a woman named Phoebe as well as Pricilla and Aquila as helpers in the church (Romans 16:1-2). And again, like an Elder, a Deacon should already be showing leadership qualities and have a desire to serve, without the title.

Practical Functions of the Deacon/Deaconess: These men and women are primarily to serve or be service orientated. This includes (1) the collection and counting of general offerings; (2) caring for others through the collection and disbursement of our benevolence fund to those in need; (3) taking care of building needs and concerns; and (4) assist in ministry events primarily by setting up and tearing down. They might also be called upon to visit church attenders and participate in other service areas to the community or body. Deacons serve for a three-year term.

