

12—Special Study: “Elders in Every Church”

Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4

1. In the Jerusalem church, the apostles were all centrally located for a time. However, over time, they would begin to be dispersed to other areas. In the absence of apostles, what did Paul and Barnabas begin to do which would help the stability of local churches (see Acts 14:23)? What does Paul say will be the condition of a congregation in the absence of an eldership as he writes to Titus (Titus 1:5)?

2. Three words are used in the Scriptures to describe the same office. What does each word suggest about the person who would serve as an elder and about the work done?

- EPISKOPOS (bishop, overseer)—found in Acts 20:28; Titus 1:7; Philippians 1:1—
- POIMEN or POIMANO (shepherd)—found in Matthew 2:6; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2—
- “elder”—found in Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5—

3. The eldership is both a “*position*” and a “*work*” (see 1 Timothy 3:1). Can someone be put into this role without their own “*desire*” (3:1)? Furthermore, what does the word “*must be*” indicate as Paul begins his list of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:2? Is “be” a present tense verb?

4. There are two basic lists of qualifications in Paul’s writings (1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:5-9). Jot down each qualification under one of the category headings below. Are these one-time qualifications or should an elder exhibit these qualities for life? Explain.

<u>CHARACTER</u>	<u>REPUTATION</u>	<u>FAMILY</u>	<u>EXPERIENCE</u>	<u>HABITS</u>	<u>ABILITY</u>

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5. According to Acts 20:28, who should the elder consider first (cp. James 1:22-25; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 13:5)? What is the danger of an elder who does not consider his own attitude and actions?

6. Who, secondly, is the elder to “*take heed*” of (Acts 20:28)? Does this “*flock*” refer to Christians throughout the entire universal church or the local congregation—prove it from Scripture (see also 1 Peter 5:2)? What will help an elder do this work?

7. What components are involved in the elder’s work of feeding or tending the flock (see Acts 20:28-35; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:9)? Contrast the multi-faceted work of a shepherd with the work of the eldership as you answer this question. Can a shepherd tend his flock from afar (e-shepherd)?

8. What was the Jewish understanding of the “*watchmen’s*” job (Ezekiel 3:16-21; 33:7-9)? What do “*those who rule over you*” watch for (see Hebrews 13:17)?

9. Titus 1:9-11 refers to the teaching work of an elder. What do these verses suggest about the experience, ability and character of the man who will serve as an elder?

10. Read 1 Peter 5:1-4. What are some of the restrictions that are to guide the elder in his work?

11. Read the following passages and jot down the elder’s work (s) as identified by the passage.

- Acts 20:28-30, 35—
- 1 Timothy 5:17—
- Titus 1:11—
- Acts 15:6—
- 1 Thessalonians 5:12—
- Hebrews 13:17—
- James 5:14—