

## 5) One group of elders must not pastor more than one church.

1 Peter 5:2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you. . .

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. . .

## 6) All men who are elders must share equal responsibility and equal authority. The only difference between elders in the Bible is between human shepherds and Jesus, the Chief Shepherd.

One of the earliest departures from the Bible pattern for the organization of the church was to call one man "the bishop" in order to set him apart from (or set him over) the other elder(s). Later, elders added to God's word by overseeing more than one congregation, and some elders were granted an exalted status and authority until one man was appointed as "archbishop" over several churches. This escalated until one man - the Roman Catholic pope - was appointed as bishop of all churches. This type of heresy was predicted by Paul to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:30: "From among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. . ."

## 7) When a congregation does not have elders, something is lacking.

Titus 1:5 You should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you. . .

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Hopefully this lesson is a helpful start in the study of church leadership. In order for us to be the church that Jesus built, we must do all things as He instructs, including organizing the church the way the Holy Spirit directed.

Unfortunately, too many churches give the preacher the responsibilities of an elder and then add boards and councils which serve over several churches. All human inventions must be eliminated. If organizations and their leaders are unwilling to reform themselves, then sincere, God-seeking people must seek out like-minded people with whom to worship. Remember that "those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." [John 4:24]

God bless you in your search for truth.

# Who's Your Pastor?

## A basic lesson about church leadership

by InkMan@MyPreachingPen.com

Jesus Christ is the head of His body, the church (Colossians 1:18). He is also described as the "great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews 13:20), the "good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14), "the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25), and "the Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4).

Jesus also made arrangements for men of a certain disposition, reputation and position in life to share in the work of shepherding His church.

In the Greek language (in which the New Testament was originally written), three words refer to these men: <presbuteros>, <poimen>, <episkopos>. These words are presented below with their English equivalents and related words and some examples of their use in the Bible.

<u>Greek word</u>	<u>English equivalents</u>	<u>Related word</u>
presbuteros	elders; presbyters; presbytery.	Presbyterian church

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor. . .

1 Timothy 4:14 . . . the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

James 5:14 . . . call for the elders of the church. . . (See also Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4.)

<u>Greek word</u>	<u>English equivalents</u>
poimen	shepherd [as a noun or verb]; pastor

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. . .

1 Peter 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd [<poimen>] and Overseer [<episkopos>] of your souls.

<u>Greek word</u>	<u>English equivalents</u>	<u>Related word</u>
episkopos	bishop; overseer	Episcopalian church

Philippians 1:1 To all the saints . . . with the bishops and deacons. . .

1 Timothy 3:1-2 If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. . .

Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God. . .

## Special examples:

1) Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders [<presbuteros>] of the church. (18) And when they had come to him, he said to them . . . (28) "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [<episkopos>], to shepherd [<poimen>] the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. "

2) 1 Peter 5:1-4 The elders [plural of <presbuteros>] who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder . . . [<sunpresbuteros>] Shepherd [verb form of <poimen>] the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers [plural of <episkopos>], not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd [<archipoimen>] appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

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<sup>1</sup> Prefixes can be added to Greek words in the same way they are added to English words. A prefix simply modifies a word without changing its root meaning. One example is the word <sunpresbuteros> [1 Peter 5:1]. The prefix "sun-" indicates a joining or togetherness, so <sunpresbuteros> is translated as "also an elder" [King James Version], or "fellow elder" [New King James Version].

In English, "arch-" means "exalted" or "great," so "archangels" and "archbishops" are exalted angels and exalted bishops. Jesus is the "arch-shepherd" [<archipoimen>], or "Chief Shepherd" [1 Peter 5:4] or "great Shepherd" [Hebrews 13:20].

So we learn a very interesting lesson. In Acts 20, Paul called for the elders [<presbuteros>] whom the Holy Spirit had made overseers [plural of <episkopos>] and Paul told them to shepherd [verb form of <poimen>] the flock. In 1 Peter 5, the "elders" [plural of <presbuteros>] are told to "shepherd" [the verb form of <poimen>] the flock, serving as "overseers" [plural of <episkopos>].

**All three Greek words [<presbuteros>, <poimen>, <episkopos>] refer to the same men, the same work.**

This shouldn't surprise us. After all, a man who is a father can be called "head of the house," "provider," and "husband." In the same way, the three Greek words simply emphasize different aspects of caring for our souls - - <poimen> emphasizes the work of feeding the flock, <episkopos> emphasizes the oversight or supervision of the flock, and <presbuteros> emphasizes the fact that older men have been appointed to care for the flock.

This brings us to our first lesson about church leadership.

**1) Pastors, elders, bishops and overseers are the same.** The Bible uses all six English words (bishop, overseer, elder, presbyter, shepherd and pastor) interchangeably to refer to the same men, and so should we.

We can learn several other lessons from a study of the above passages.

**2) A pastor is different from a preacher.**

Ephesians 4:11 He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

**3) A bishop must be of a certain character and a certain position in life.**

He must be married, be a capable teacher, be godly and have a good reputation.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (1) This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. (2) A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach. . .

He must have faithful children, not be greedy or violent, etc.

Titus 1:5-9 (5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you-- (6) if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. (7) For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money . . .

**4) A congregation must have more than one pastor.** Every congregation that we read about as having elders had more than one elder.

Notice, especially, the following passages:

Acts 14:23 When they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed . . .

Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

Philippians 1:1 Paul. . . to all the saints in . . . Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.

When reference is made to "a bishop" (1 Timothy 3:1-2; 1 Timothy 5:19; Titus 1:7), the Scripture is talking generally about "a bishop" - that is, about any bishop. In those passages, Paul is not describing any particular man, nor does he mention a leader of any particular church.