

The Biblical Role and Selection of Elders at TCC

The Role of Elders at TCC

In the early church leadership was delegated to a group of godly men who were called alternately either elders, overseers (bishop) or pastors (shepherd).

English: Elder

Greek: Transliteration: presbuteros

English: Pastor

Greek: ποιμεν

Transliteration: poimen

English: Overseer

Greek: επισκοπος

Transliteration: episkopos

To the elders (presbuteros) among you, I appeal as a fellow elder (presbuteros), a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds (poimaino) of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers (episkopeo)-- 1 Peter 5:1-2

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders (presbuteros) of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia...28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (episkopos). Be shepherds (poimaino) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. -- Acts 20:17-18,28

Designation: Elder

Emphasis: Maturity

Focus: Character

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Designation: Pastor

Emphasis: Care-giving

Focus: Responsibilities

Designation: Overseer

Emphasis: Leadership

Focus: Responsibilities

Elder (πρεσβυτερος)

The word elder connotes the idea of maturity and wisdom. The man who serves as an elder should be someone who displays spiritual and psychological maturity. He should possess the wisdom which comes from years of applying Biblical truth to life.

Pastor or Shepherd (ποιμεν)

The Greek word used here, poimen, means literally Shepherd. The man who serves as an elder must be a shepherd to the church. The greatest example of a shepherd in the spiritual sense is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me -- John 10:11-14

God the Father who is portrayed by King David, who was once a shepherd himself, as his shepherd.

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters,*

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He restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;*

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. -- Psalm 23

Just so, an elder shepherds and manages his people by...

- Meeting their spiritual needs
- Making them feel secure and restful
- Caring for their spiritual thirst
- Building them up when they fail and are discouraged
- Leading them into the will of God
- Staying beside them in times of difficulty and danger
- Lovingly disciplining them when they go astray
- Providing spiritual food
- Providing healing for their hurts and wounds

Overseer (επισκοπος)

This particular term refers to the leadership/management aspect of church leadership. A church, like any organization, must be well-led and well managed if it is to accomplish its goals and fulfill its vision. It is the responsibility of the elders to articulate a clear vision for the church and then to motivate, equip and organize God's people to fulfill that vision.

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What requirements precede the appointment to eldership?

Elders are to have a God-given desire to serve-- a burden to love, care for, instruct and to lead God's people in the context of their local church.

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. -- 1 Timothy 3:1

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers -- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. -- 1 Peter 5:2-3

From 1 Timothy 3: He must be...

- above reproach
- faithful to the marriage covenant
- temperate
- prudent
- respectable
- hospitable
- able to teach
- not given to drunkenness
- not hot tempered
- gentle
- not quarrelsome
- not a lover of money
- manage his own household well
- see that his children obey him with proper respect
- not be a recent convert have a good reputation with those outside the church

The issue is not perfection, but direction. This set of characteristics describe the general direction of this person's life.

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What is the procedure for appointing elders at TCC?

At TCC, elders are appointed by the existing board of elders.

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. -- Acts 14:23

The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. -- Titus 1:5