



Elders (Biblical Survey & Overview)

1 Peter 5:1-11

1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- *Other scripture references concerning elders:*

- **Old Testament:** Exodus 13:16, 24:1-2, Leviticus 4:15, & Numbers 11:16-17.

From the beginning of Israelite history, the elders led the various clans and tribes. When the tribes came together to form the nation of Israel, the elders of the tribes naturally assumed important roles in governing the affairs of the nation. Moses was commanded to inform the "elders of Israel" of the Lord's intention to deliver Israel from Egypt and to take the elders with him to confront the pharaoh (Ex. 3:16,18). Similarly, seventy of the elders participated with Moses at the covenant meal at Sinai (Ex. 24:9-11). As the task of governing Israel grew in complexity, part of the burden was transferred from Moses to a council of seventy elders (Num 11:16-17).

- **The Synagogue:** Matthew 15:2 & Matthew 16:2

Although elders were less prominent in the post-exilic period (after Israel was banished to Babylon), the "council of elders" was an integral part of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. In the New Testament, frequent reference is made to the elders of the Jews, usually in conjunction with the chief priests or scribes.

- **New Testament Elders:** Acts 14:23, Acts 15:2-6, 1 Timothy 3:1, Titus 1:5

In the earliest Jewish Christian churches, at least the church in Jerusalem, the position of "elder" was almost certainly modeled after the O.T. pattern. Although there are few specific details about the function of elders in the Jerusalem church, they apparently served as a decision-making council. They are often mentioned in conjunction with the apostles, and some passages give the impression that the apostles and elders of Jerusalem considered themselves to be a decision-making council for the whole church (Acts 15; 21:17-26). All churches had elders or were working toward getting them. Acts 14:23 reports that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in churches on their missionary journey. Paul directs Titus to do the same in the Crete churches. (Titus 1:5). In the address to the Ephesian elders Paul referred to them as overseeing the church and serving as shepherds of the church (Acts 20:28). So, the



mission of the church was not established with a slew of conversions, but with the establishment of officers.

- Titus 1:6-9

- 1 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— 6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. 7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

- More examples of this in OT & NT:

***In the legal codes of Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch the elders helped to administer justice and oversee issues:

- Sitting as judges in the city gate (Deut. 22:15),
- Deciding cases around family life (Deut. 21:18-21, 22:13-21)
- Executing decisions (Deut. 19:11-13; 21:1-9).
- Judged on personal disputes—small claims courts (Ex 18)
- Relayed the Word from Moses to the people (Ex 24))
- Kept up with who and what was in their "flock" (Ex 18, 24)
- Military leaders (Numbers 31:14)
Through the periods of the Judges, Monarchy, Exile, and Return the elders were prominent in the political and judicial life of Israel.
- Demanded that Samuel appoint a king (1 Sam. 8)
- Helped David to get and retain the throne (2 Sam 3, 5, 17)
- Represented the people at the consecration of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8)
- Supervised construction of city-rebuild (Nehemiah)

Elders must Instruct the Flock:

IN TEACHING

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. Acts 5:42

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 1 Timothy 4:6

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim 1:13

But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Titus 2:1

BY EXAMPLE

...not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:3

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:16



Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity...
Titus 2:7

Elders must shepherd the flock:

PASTORAL CARE

So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 1 Peter 5:1-4

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. James 5:14

PASTORAL DISCIPLINE

And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. James 5:15-16

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.—Matthew 18:18

Elders must oversee the flock:

IT'S PRACTICE

As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. So, the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. Acts 16:4-5

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. Galatians 2:11

IT'S DOCTRINE

Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. 1 Timothy 4:15-16

OVERSIGHT

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17

After discussing how much division was in the church at Corinth, Paul says, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." 1 Corinthians 4:1



As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. Acts 16:4. Ephesians 2:20ff.

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Hebrews 13:7

NEW TESTAMENT ELDERS: MANNER

WITH AUTHORITY

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matthew 16:19. Acts 15, Eph. 2:20

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matthew 18:18

IN PLURALITY

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. Acts 20:17

The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. Acts 15:6

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 1 Tim 5:17. Each kind of elder has equal authority in ruling. This is one of the reasons why I'm a presbyterian, because of the plurality of power and protection for all parties. Those who have a different view of non-essential matters are given space so their voice is heard. This is also part of why it's hard to be a presbyterian :) Christianity practices true pluralism, because we have a God who died for His enemies. Jesus obviously gave a voice and even earthly power to opposing voices.

THROUGH PRAYER (Jesus would often go off an pray in solitude when their were many needs)

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Acts 6:4

Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. James 5:14

FROM WEAKNESS (leading with a limp, strong & weak, etc.) Very important!

So, I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you. 1 Pet 5:1-2

- So, in terms of elders at Redeemer, who are the types of people we ought to be looking for? From these passages we see that an elder is called out & recognized by the community of faith as a someone that is ***Humble, Biblical, & Relational***. Why? Because they are placed in positions that dramatically effect the institution that is the church, which dramatically effects peoples' lives. The reason these characteristics are vital for servant leadership is because the function of an elder within the church has authority and weightiness which can be used for great flourishing or great harm. Therefore the elder is placed in positions to judge, settle disputes, teach, and to demonstrate a life of faith through his life's example. Let's spend some time in prayer that God would reveal to us in this season of the life our church who might be an elder in Redeemer.