



ELDERS & DEACONS

Prepared for CBF
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Concepts regarding the Church?

Christ is the Head of the Body (of Christ) [Col 1:18], the Keystone/Cornerstone of the building in which we are the building blocks [Eph 2:20], the Chief Shepherd of the flock [1 Peter 5:4].

Elders in the Old Testament?

They were part of the culture of the Israelites before Moses - Moses was instructed by God to go and assemble the Elders [Ex 3:16], & Judges 8:4, 2 Kings 19:2, Ez 8:1 etc. The Hebrew word here means “bearded” - (not necessarily “oldest”). Expect to see these types of Elders in the NT too – and we do – “Elders” [Matt 15:2], “Chief Priests and Elders” [Matt 26:47] etc.

Elders in the New Testament – what do the words mean?

Presbuteros – translated **Elder** in KJ, and *Episkopos* – translated as **Bishop** or **Overseer** in KJ – but used interchangeably. Eg Acts 20:17&28, Tit 1:5-7.

Office or a gift?

It is an office – it is never mentioned amongst the gifts – unlike Apostles, prophets, teachers...etc.

The only other office identified in Scripture in the NT Church is that of Deacon.

Number?

Appears that there was a plurality (ie more than one) in each church. “called the elders of the Church” at Ephesus [Acts 20:17], “Appoint Elders in each church” [Tit 1:5], if you are ill - “call for the Elders” [James 5:15].

Hierarchy?

No evidence of any hierarchy – eg Peter writes as a “fellow elder” [1 Pet 5:1] and the Apostle John in his letters refers to himself as an Elder [2 John 1, 3 John 1].

How selected?

Acts 20:28 - “...Holy Spirit” has made you overseers. Appointed/ordained by the apostles [eg Acts 14:23] or the apostle’s delegate [Tit 1:5].

A man may desire the office [1 Tim 3:1].

Word used for “appointed” could mean – “to stretch out the hand”, “to appoint by show of hands”, or “appoint or elect without regard to the method”. Probably Apostles used “laying on of hands” in Acts 14:23.].

Although not appointing Elders, Act 13:2 might be the best indication – “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said *set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them...* so after they had fasted and prayed they laid hands on them and sent them off”.



Qualifications for Elders/overseers ?

(Thanks to NIV for doing the work already. Deacons are also included in this table.)

These are preceded in most instances by the word “MUST...”

Self-controlled	ELDER	1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:8
Hospitable	ELDER	1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:8
Able/apt to teach	ELDER	1 Tim 3:2, 5:17; Tit 1:9
Not violent but gentle	ELDER	1 Tim 3:3, Tit 1:7
Not quarrelsome	ELDER	1 Tim 3:3
Not a lover of money	ELDER	1 Tim 3:3
Not a recent convert	ELDER	1 Tim 3:6
Has a good reputation with outsiders	ELDER	1 Tim 3:7
Not overbearing	ELDER	Tit 1:7
Not quick tempered	ELDER	Tit 1:7:
Loves what is good	ELDER	Tit 1:8
Upright, holy	ELDER	Tit 1:8
Disciplined	ELDER	Tit 1:8
Above reproach (blameless)	ELDER DEACON	1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6 1 Tim 3:9
Husband of one wife	ELDER DEACON	1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:6 1 Tim 3:12
Temperate	ELDER DEACON	1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:7 1 Tim 3:8
Respectable	ELDER DEACON	1 Tim 3:2 1 Tim 3:8
Not given to drunkenness	ELDER DEACON	1 Tim 3:3, Tit 1:7 1 Tim 3:8
Manages his own family well	ELDER DEACON	1 Tim 3:4 1 Tim 3:12
Sees that his children obey him	ELDER DEACON	1 Tim 3:4-5, Tit 1:6 1 Tim 3:12

Does not pursue dishonest gain	ELDER DEACON	Tit 1:7 1 Tim 3:8
Holds to the deep truths of the faith	ELDER DEACON	Tit 1:9 1 Tim 3:9
Sincere	DEACON	1 Tim 3:8
Tested	DEACON	1 Tim 3:10

When you look at this list it is an overall view of a person's:-

- ◆ Personal life
- ◆ Domestic – ie home/family life
- ◆ Human relationships
- ◆ Financial affairs
- ◆ Spiritual maturity
- ◆ Teaching ability.

These qualities are quite different to the ones used in the world to find “leaders” – ie not necessarily looking for the most worldly popular, powerful, or rich person.

What do they do?

Elders are to oversee [Acts 20:28].

They are under-shepherds [1 Pet 5:1-4] who Shepherd/feed/tend in Christ's physical absence.

To feed/care for the Church [Acts 20:28, 1 Tim 3:5]

Pray-ers [James 5:14-15]?

What do we do?

Be prepared to submit to their oversight.[Heb 13:17]

Don't entertain accusations against them unless there are 2 or more witnesses [1Tim 5:19].

Honour them [1 Tim 5:17]

Pay for them [1 Tim 5:17-18]

DEACONS

Where do they appear in Scripture?

In the New Testament – Phil 1:1 & 1 Tim 3:8-13.

Some also suggest that the “seven” who were selected to wait on tables (Acts 6:1-6) were the first deacons (but they are not called deacons)

What does the word mean?

Greek word used is *Diakonos* – means ‘helper’, ‘servant’, ‘minister’

What do they do?

By inference from their title they assist the Elders in serving and overseeing the Body.

How selected?

We don't know. Some point to the ‘seven’ helpers in Acts 6 - 7 men full of the Holy Spirit chosen and presented to the Apostles. Many of their qualifications overlap with those of an Elder (see the above table).

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