

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



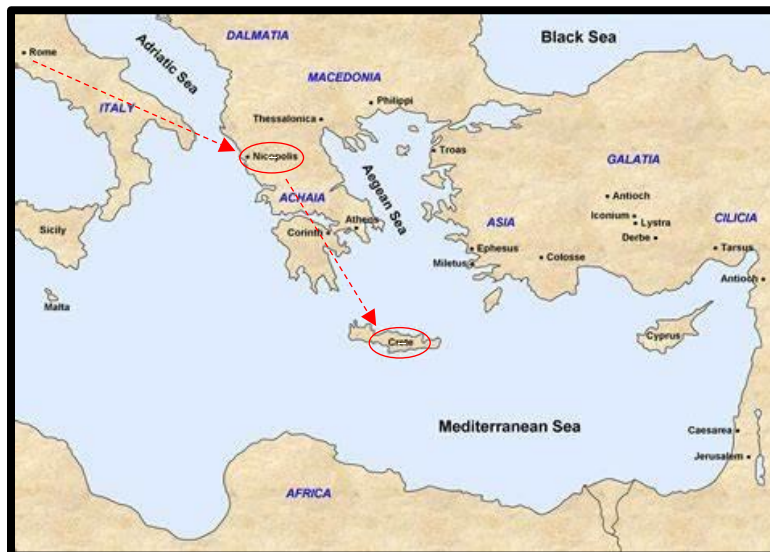
TITUS STUDY

“Tough Grace in a Difficult Place”

WHO RUNS THIS PLACE

Titus 1:5

“¹Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, ³but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior; ⁴To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. ⁵For 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.” – Titus 1:1-5 (NKJV)



We are beginning a new study this evening on the final of the three pastoral epistles, the book of Titus. There are three pastoral epistles in the Bible:

3 Pastoral Epistles in the Bible:

(1) **1 Timothy**

(2) **2 Timothy**

(3) **Titus**

These are called “Pastoral Epistle” because they are written to pastor for pastoral purposes. They are addressed to individuals with pastoral oversight of churches and discuss issues of Christian living, doctrine and leadership. Each one of these letter is unique in its own right, however the first two were written to the same person, Timothy, who was pastoring the church at Ephesus. The final pastoral letter was written to Titus who was pastoring or giving pastoral oversight to the churches on the island of Crete.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TITUS:

- (1) **Author:** **Apostle Paul** - Authorship by the Apostle Paul (Titus 1:1) is essentially uncontested.
- (2) **Date:** **A.D. 62-64** - Titus was written between A.D. 62–64, while Paul ministered to Macedonian churches between his first and second Roman imprisonments,
- (3) **Literary Type:** **Pastoral Letter** - Along with 1, 2 Timothy, these letters to Paul’s sons in the faith are traditionally called “The Pastoral Epistles.”
- (4) **Place of Origin:** **Nicopolis** – Paul wrote this letter most likely from Nicopolis in Macedonia (some have suggested that the letter might possibly have been written from Corinth. (cf Titus 3:12).
- (5) **Recipient:** **Titus** - This epistle is named for its recipient, Titus, who is mentioned by name 13 times in the New Testament. The title in the Greek New Testament literally reads “To Titus.” Titus, like Timothy, had become a beloved disciple and fellow worker in the gospel. Most likely, Titus served with Paul on both the second and third missionary journeys. Paul’s last mention of Titus (in 2 Timothy 4:10) reports that he had gone for ministry in Dalmatia—modern Yugoslavia. The letter probably was delivered by Zenas and Apollos. Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile, met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey. **Later, Titus ministered for a period of time with Paul on the Island of Crete and was left behind to continue and strengthen the work.** After Artemas or Tychicus arrived to direct the ministry there, Paul wanted Titus to join him in the city of Nicopolis, in the province of Achaia in Greece, and stay through the winter. Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians, where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (in 2 Corinthians 2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (in 2 Corinthians 8:23) The young elder was already familiar with Judaizers, false teachers in

the church, who among other things insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic law. Titus had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject.

- (6) **Setting: Crete** - Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, measuring 160 miles long by 35 miles at its widest, lying south of the Aegean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (see Acts 27:7-9, 12, 13, 21).+ He returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue the work, much as he left Timothy at Ephesus, while he went on to Macedonia. He most likely wrote to Titus in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.
- (7) **Occasion: Pastoral encouragement and counsel** - Like Paul's two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches where he ministered. Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches.
- (8) **Theological Themes:** In contrast to several of Paul's other letters, such as those to the churches in Rome and Galatia, the book of Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine. Paul had full confidence in Titus' theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry. Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction, strongly suggesting that Paul also had confidence in the doctrinal grounding of most church members there, despite the fact that the majority of them were new believers.

Theological/Doctrinal Themes Affirmed in Titus:

1. God's sovereign election of believers (Titus 1:1-2)
2. His saving grace (Titus 2:11, 3:5)
3. Christ's deity and second coming (Titus 2:13)
4. Christ's substitutionary atonement (Titus 2:14)
5. The regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)

God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior in Titus, and the saving plan is so emphasized in that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism. This preparation required godly leaders who not only would shepherd believers under their care, but also would equip those Christians for evangelizing their pagan neighbors, who had been characterized by one of their own famous natives as liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. In order to gain a hearing for the gospel among such people, the believers' primary preparation for evangelization was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers. How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony

Application Questions

1. Some say that it doesn't matter what form of church government you have, as long as it works. Your response?
2. If the church is not a democracy, what keeps elders, or deacons, or a committee from becoming a power unto themselves, accountable to no one?
3. Why is it important to distinguish between "voting" at a church meeting versus "seeking the mind of the Lord"? Discuss the implications of this difference.

Here is a question I want you to consider this evening... **Who runs the church?** Church polity (church government) refers to how a church's leadership is structured. While there are many variations and nuances found within individual churches (and these are too numerous to list), essentially all are variations of one of the following 3 types or forms of church governance or polity:

3 Forms of Church Polity(Government):

- (1) **Episcopal** - One type of church polity is episcopal. The word *episcopal* is from the Greek word *episkopos*, which is often translated in English as "bishop" or "overseer." This form of church government functions with a single leader, often called a bishop (maybe a pope/head [top] bishop). ~~The Roman Catholic Church may be the most well known of the episcopal type churches. The Pope is also the Bishop of Rome. Below him are other bishops who are in turn responsible for other bishops down to the parish priest. The Anglican Church, Episcopal Church, and Greek Orthodox Church all have this form of government.~~ One priest or bishop answers to another, who answers to another, until "at the top" there is one bishop (often called the archbishop) who has final authority. Many other churches have an episcopalian form of government, even though they may not officially recognize it. Some independent churches have one pastor who has ultimate authority in all decisions of the church (sometimes this is called the "strong pastor" form of government). Some multi-site churches may have single pastor at each location but one "head pastor" who is the final authority over all of the sites. Some churches may claim to have presbyterian (elder) or congregational rule but, in reality, have a single bishop or strong pastor who has final authority.
- (2) **Presbyterian** - Another type of church polity is the presbyterian form. The word *presbyterian* is from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which is usually translated "elder." In this form of government, authority rests not with a single individual but with the body of elders or presbyters. In denominational churches, the local board of elders answers to a higher board of elders, which is made up of select elders to represent each church. Ultimately, the final board of elders (sometimes called the general assembly) has authority on matters in that denomination. In independent or autonomous churches, final authority rests with the local board of elders. In some churches with elder rule, the elders are elected or ratified by the congregation. However, once the elders are ratified, the congregation does not have power to remove them or overturn their decisions.

(3) Congregational – The third type of church polity is the congregational form. In congregational churches, the final authority rests with the congregation. This polity takes various forms. In some churches, there are almost no designated leaders (or, as some might say, except the Holy Spirit), and the congregation is involved in virtually every decision that has to be made—from the color of the carpet to the support of missionaries. In other churches, the congregation elects the primary office holders (pastor, elder, deacons) who will then make decisions, only consulting the congregation on major issues such as incurring debt to build a new building or calling a new pastor. However, in congregational churches, if a majority of the congregation objects to any of the decisions or believes that a leader should be removed from office, they have the authority to take action. Most churches with congregational rule are also independent, as they believe strongly that final authority resides with the local congregation. (For instance, Baptist churches may be part of a denomination—Southern, American, etc., but the “denomination” has no authority over the decisions of those local churches. The strongest action that could be taken by the denomination is that the individual church would no longer be received in fellowship; likewise, any individual church can withdraw at any time. In this case, the denomination is more of a voluntary, cooperative fellowship.)

**The subject may be complicated by the fact that there are denominations known by each of these names and yet these names actually are each a form or style of church governance*

Every church is either independent with no higher authority outside of that local church, or it is part of a larger group or denomination with leaders who exert control from outside the church.

Test Your Knowledge of Church Government

Please an “E” beside the churches that you believe reflect an Episcopal form of government, an “P” beside those churches that you believe reflect a Presbyterian form of government, and a “C” beside the churches that you believe reflect a Congregational form of government

___ Roman Catholic E	___ Anglican Church E	___ Episcopal E
___ Greek Orthodox E	___ Independent Churches E	___ Multi-site Churches E
___ Evangelical Free C	___ Lutherans E	___ Methodists E
___ Presbyterian Church P	___ Assemblies of God P/C	___ Pentecostal C
___ Free Will Baptist C	___ Southern Baptist C/D	___ Church of God P/C
___ Reformed Calvinist C	___ Church of Christ C	___ Disciples of Christ C

As already noted, there are variations and nuances too numerous to be covered here, and there will always be exceptions to what is stated above. Even denominations that have episcopalian or presbyterian forms of government often have to adjust their positions due to congregational pressure and popular opinion. There are evangelical, Bible-believing churches that utilize each of the forms of church government mentioned above. The form of

church government is not a major doctrinal issue. The most important issue is that those who are in leadership positions must submit to the authority of Christ and obediently follow His lead as revealed in Scripture (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). Christ is the Head of the Church, and if any system, board, individual leader, or congregation begins to displace Christ and the Word with their own beliefs and desires, then that leadership is no longer legitimate.

I want to answer the question, “Who runs this church?” While this may be a review for some of you old timers, those who are relatively new in this church may not understand how we operate as a church. Many people wrongly assume that as the pastor, I run the church. That is rather comical to me, but some think that way. I have noticed that I do have people come to me from time to time and brings things to up to me, or even make suggestions to me about what they think we need to be doing expecting that I can have the authority to just do it... and sometimes these are people who have been around church all their life and they seem to think that the pastor runs the church.

Many people also wrongly assume that our church government is patterned after the U. S. government and operates as a democracy. The pastors and the deacons and other church leaders are the elected officers, similar to the President and Congress. At church business meetings, members can voice their opposition to whatever they don’t like and vote according to their preferences.

American Democracy is not Church Governance: While that system is fine for America, at the risk of sounding un-American or anti-Baptist, I must say that democracy is *not* the biblical way to view church government. As shocking as it may sound, God is not an American! He didn’t set up His church as a democracy, where the most powerful factions control the purse strings. We’re not free to impose our American ideas about government onto the church, unless we find those ideas in the Bible.

American Business Models is not Church Governance: Another model that has greatly influenced how American churches are governed is that of American business. Most Christians work in the business world and are used to various management and operational procedures. Most businesses have the chairman of the board at the top, with his board of directors beneath him and the stockholders as the voting members of the corporation. When that gets carried into the church, the pastor is viewed as the CEO, the elder or deacon board are the directors, and the congregation represents the stockholders, who have their annual, semi-annual or quarterly meeting to vote on how the business should operate. With that model, the answer to the question of who runs the church is, “The pastor does, along with the board of directors.” But, the stockholders have a say in things, and if the company isn’t going the way that they wish, they can vote those guys out of office!

While there may be a few similarities between the business and government models and the church, the biblical picture of church government is different.

- One major difference is that the church is not just an organization, but also **a living organism**.
- All living organisms are highly organized, so we would be mistaken to throw out careful organization.
- But as an organism, the body of Christ, is not merely an organization.
- Webster defines an **organization** as **“an administrative and functional structure.”**
- He defines an **organism** as **“an individual constituted to carry on the activities of life by means of organs separate in function but mutually dependent.”** That describes the church.
- We are a living unity, the one body of which Jesus Christ is the head.
- Each member is a vital part of that body, separate in function, but mutually dependent on one another and on Christ, the head.

“¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink ^[g]into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? ¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where would the body be? ²⁰ But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³ And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no ^[h]schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

-1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NKJV)

Thus the main idea of biblical church government is *to allow Jesus Christ truly to function as the living head of His body.* **None of us should be seeking or voicing our will about various matters in the church, unless we are very convinced that our will coincides with God’s will as revealed in His Word.** And, rather than any one man running the church, God’s way is that...

Christ runs His church through a plurality of godly leaders who shepherd His flock under His headship.

The situation behind our text was that Paul had left Titus in Crete for two reasons:

2 Reasons Paul Left Titus in Crete:

- (1) **To set in order things that are lacking** – Titus’s first responsibility was to “set in order what remains” or “set in order things that are lacking.” If you had metal in your mouth during those awkward teen years or have broken your leg, you understand what the verb phrase “set in order” means. It is the Greek word “epidortho,” from the root word “ortho,” which is where we derive our word “orthodontics” or “orthopedics.” Just as braces set teeth in order and a cast straightens a broken limb, so Titus was assigned to “make straight” the churches in Crete that had been fractured by theological debates and splintered by moral failure.
- (2) **To appoint elders in every city** – Notice that Paul did not recommend that Titus accomplish this daunting task by himself; he knew that setting things in order required a team. So Paul followed his first command with a second; “Appoint elders in every city as I direct you.” An elder was basically a leader, someone who would help Titus accomplish this task. Again, look down at verses 10-11, *“¹⁰For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.”* On an island 160 miles long containing several cities, Titus needed a crack team of spiritually qualified leader to fix deep fractures cause by gossipers, rebels, deceivers, and hypocrites (see Titus 1:10) Paul told Titus to “silence” them (see Titus 1:11). It was a tough assignment. Not only that, but Titus would be dealing cross-culturally with “those of the circumcision” – Jews – while Titus himself was a Greek. People must be dealt with carefully, not attacked. All this would take wisdom, tact, and planning. That is why Titus needed the help of a few qualified overseers... we all do!

Galatians 6:1-5, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵ For each one shall bear his own load.”-Galatians 6:1-5 (NKJV)

- ***What qualities do you see in Galatians 6:1-5 that are important when restoring one who has drifted or fallen away, like perhaps Titus might be dealing with in Crete? And why do you feel each one is important?***
- ***What must one (like Titus and the other ‘elders’) who are doing the restoring be careful of? Why?***

- *What do you see in this passage (Galatians 6:1-5) that might suggest that we too need a “crack team” in some ways when we are restoring others? Why do you feel this is important?*

Here it is in our passage in **verse 5**... Paul left Titus in Crete to **“set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city.”** There were a number of fledgling churches scattered across the island, but they were struggling against the pagan culture. And they were plagued with false teachers with selfish motives, who were upsetting whole families. Notice it down in **verses 10-11** Paul speaks of them, **“¹⁰ For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.”** The letter of Titus is aimed at correcting these problems.

We don't know much about Titus, but he must have been an unusually wise and solid and bold young man, who wasn't afraid to speak the truth and stand up for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and it's spread...

Some Evidences of Paul's Trust for Titus:

- (1) **Jerusalem** = Give evidence that **salvation** is by **grace** alone - Years before, Paul had taken him along to Jerusalem as a test case, to demonstrate to the apostles that Gentile converts did not need to be circumcised to be saved. Paul writes in **Galatians 2:1-3**, **“Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. ² And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. ³ Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.”** That would have been an awkward role to play!
- (2) **Corinth** = Address problems in a **troubled church** - Later, Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to deal with that rowdy bunch, and he had done well.
- (3) **Crete** = Confront **false teachers** and **strengthen** the church - Now, Paul trusted him to set in order (the Greek word is used of setting broken bones in place) matters in the various churches, to get them on solid footing. Calvin notes that this reveals Paul's humility, in that he was willing for a younger man to follow up his work and bring it to maturity. He was not trying to hog any glory for himself.

It is significant that a major part of Paul's prescription for fixing these various problems was to install godly leadership in the churches. Next week we will look at the qualifications for elders, but for now I just want to point out that churches need godly, mature leaders who can stand for the truth and refute error. **Churches will be strong or weak depending on the spiritual maturity and doctrinal soundness of the leaders.** This evening, I want to answer three questions:

3 Important Questions to Consider: *(based on Titus 1:5)*

- (1) What is an elder?
- (2) What should elders do?
- (3) How are elders chosen?

WHAT IS AN ELDER?

A Good Working Definition: In both the Old and New Testaments, the term "elder" indicates one of advanced or mature age (Heb. *zagen* [eqz]; Gk. *presbyteros* [presbuvtero']) *I think indicating wisdom and maturity, especially spiritually) who had a office of leadership within the people of God as pastor or overseer of the church.

What it is not Biblically: I think it is safe to say that Biblically there are certain things that "elders" are seen at today that are not pictured as in Scripture

- (1) **Elders are not lay-leaders in the church like servant-deacons** – The office of deacon in the Bible is a definite stated office, and the terms "*presbyteros*" (elder) and "*diakonos*" (deacon) are not equivalent. In Scripture elders are more equivalent to pastors, and deacons are servants of the church
- (2) **Elders are not a board of directors** – Many churches today have a form of church polity that has a "elder board" and follows a form of church governance spoken of earlier known as "Presbyterian Governance." There are even many Baptist church that have gone this direction which is really a departure from traditional Baptist polity that favors a more autonomous form of governance, what many call a hybrid polity between congregational and democratic form of governance.

What it is Biblically: There are several terms used interchangeably in the New Testament to refer to church leaders:

- (1) **Elders** - "*presbyteros*" This is the word in our text (and in many other texts). Obviously, they were a clearly defined, officially recognized group of men. Elders are to teach and exercise authority over a local church as a pastor. By the way, in the New Testament, the churches are always described by the city: the church in Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, etc. As we will see, there are always multiple elders per city (as in our text). Due to size, the church in a particular city may have had to meet in several locations (usually homes) on the Lord's Day, with an elder in charge of each location. But the church in each city was viewed as a unit. There were not yet the many divisions over minor (or major) doctrinal issues that exist today. I would like to see that early sense of church unity restored in our day, but frankly, I have no idea how to go about it. I do know how *not* to go about it, namely, holding "unity" services where we set aside major doctrinal truths in order to come together! But to come back to our subject, the word "elder" was adapted from the commonly used Jewish term for leadership. It referred to mature men, who by virtue of their wisdom and experience provided leadership in the various communities of Israel. Applied to church leaders, "elder" emphasizes the character of the man. He must be a spiritually mature man as reflected in consistent godly character. The Bible does not give any age requirement. When Paul told Timothy not to allow anyone to look down on his

youthfulness (1 Tim. 4:12), he was probably in his early twenties to mid-thirties. Also, the term may be somewhat relative to the particular church. A man may qualify as an elder in a church composed of relatively new believers, who would not qualify as an elder in a more mature church. The New Testament frequently refers to the elders of various churches. The church in Jerusalem had elders (Acts 11:29, 20; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4). Paul and Barnabas were quick to appoint elders in the churches that they founded on their first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). When Peter wrote to the believers scattered throughout the regions of modern Turkey, he addressed the elders among them as a fellow-elder (1 Pet. 1:1; 5:1). The Philippian church had both elders (called overseers) and deacons (Phil. 1:1). (I cannot address the topic of deacons today, but I did devote a message to that, on 1 Tim. 3:8-13.)

- (2) **Overseers** – “*episkopos*” Elder and overseer are used interchangeably to refer to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7). Overseer (Greek, *episkopos*) comes from the secular Greek culture, where it referred to those appointed by the emperor to lead captured or newly founded city-states (*Answering the Key Questions About Elders*, John MacArthur, Jr. [Word of Grace Communications], p. 9). It looks at the function of the elder, namely, to superintend, watch over, and guard the local church. Later in church history, the term came to refer to the singular bishop or overseer of a city, who was over all of the other pastors in that city. The Roman Catholic and Episcopal (or Anglican) churches have that system of church government. But in the New Testament, there is no difference between the elders and the overseers. The two words refer to the same group of men.
- (3) **Pastors** - The noun “pastor” (which means “shepherd”) occurs only once in the New Testament with reference to church leaders, where it is coupled with “teacher” (Eph. 4:11). More frequently, it is used as a verb. Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28; see v. 17), “*Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*” Note that the elders are called overseers and they are to do the work of shepherding the church. The same three ideas occur in 1 Peter 5:1-3, “*Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder, ... shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*” The elders are to shepherd the flock by exercising oversight. They have authority over those allotted to their charge, but they are not to lord it over them, but rather, to lead by example.
- (4) **Leaders** - This term is used in Hebrews 13:17 where the church is commanded, “*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them also do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*” (See, also, Heb. 13:7, 24; 1 Thess. 5:12; Luke 22:26.)

WHAT SHOULD ELDERS DO?

In a sentence, the elders should work together to exercise oversight and shepherd God's flock in a given local church.

2 Things Elders/Pastors Are to Do:

(1) Elders/pastors should shepherd God's flock - The picture of the shepherd and his flock gives us many of the functions of church leaders.

- The shepherd led his flock to rich pasture, where they were fed.
- The elder/pastor must feed God's Word to the church.
- Elders/pastors must know the Scriptures well enough to be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), so that they can "exhort in sound doctrine" and "refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9).
- Paul indicates (1 Tim. 5:17-18) that some elders devote themselves to the work of preaching and teaching and should be compensated financially so that they can carry out that work.
- Shepherding the flock also involves caring for the flock, binding up the wounds of the injured, nursing the sick back to health, and helping the young to grow in health and maturity.
- The pastors/elders are to pray for the physically ill (James 5:14) and for all the church (Acts 6:4).
- They are to disciple younger men, to train some to be future leaders (2 Tim. 2:2).
- They must gently exhort and encourage each one as a gentle mother or a tender father toward their children, imparting not only the gospel, but also their own lives (1 Thess. 2:7-12).

(2) Elders/pastors should give oversight to the flock - This refers to general superintendence of the life of the church.

- Elders/pastors must keep their fingers on the pulse of the church, making sure that it is spiritually healthy.
- This may involve guarding the flock from error, informing church policies, making decisions about the needs and direction/vision of the church, watching and encouraging God honoring stewardship concerning church finances, coming alongside church leadership to give guidance or help, working to resolve conflicts between members, and many other tasks.
- Pastor/elders do not necessarily and should not do all of the work that needs to be done, but they need to make sure that it gets done by delegating it to qualified workers, and equipping others to do the work in a God/Christ honoring way.

HOW ARE ELDERS CHOSEN?

I trust that by this point you are catching the difference between the world's ways of government and God's way for His church. The idea of the church voting a man into

leadership because he's a popular, likeable guy or because he is a successful businessman who is willing to "serve a term on the board," is not God's way!

In the New Testament, the apostles or their delegates (Timothy and Titus) appointed elders in the churches based on discerning (sometimes by prayer and fasting, Acts 14:23) which men met the biblical qualifications. We are not told whether they gave the churches an opportunity to recommend certain men or disapprove of others; but that is a reasonable assumption, in that it represents good leadership.

Rather than "voting" on who should be church leaders, it is better to say that the church should officially recognize men who meet the qualifications for elders, who agree to serve. We will look at those qualifications next week, but suffice it to say here that an elder must be a man of mature, godly character, summed up by the first item on the list, "above reproach." Also, it should be obvious that such mature, godly men are not sitting around doing nothing, then get put into office and start functioning as shepherds. Rather, they are shepherds by virtue of who they are, so they have been functioning as shepherds. It is their calling from the Lord, not just a task that they agree to do for a term of office.

CONCLUSION

Why is leadership so important? Christ said in Luke 6:40, *"A disciple is not greater than his teacher, but everyone when fully trained will be like his teacher."* Hosea 4:9 (NIV) says, *"And it will be: Like people, like priests."* Our leaders set the spiritual ceiling in our churches, as they essentially reproduce themselves. In considering this reality, Kent Hughes said: *"It is a sober fact that as goes the leadership, so goes the church. With some commonsense qualifications, it is an axiom that what we are as leaders in microcosm, the congregation will become in macrocosm as the years go by. Of course, there are always individual exceptions. But it is generally true that if the leadership is Word-centered, the church will be Word-centered. If the leadership is mission-minded, the church will be mission-minded. If the leadership is sincere, the people will be sincere. If the leadership is kind, the church will be kind. This is also true negatively—exponentially! Unloving, narrow, stingy leaders beget an unloving, narrow, stingy church."¹*

Next week we are going to look more in depth at the qualifications for pastor/elder, especially in a difficult place like Crete. But I want to close this way this evening. We were here not long ago, but Paul gave us similar qualification for a pastor/elder/bishop in his words to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. I want read this to you and then give you these qualifications for comparison to Paul's words to Timothy. Here is 1 Timothy 3:1-7... *¹This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. ²A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; ³not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; ⁴one who rules his own house well,*

*having his children in submission with all reverence*⁵ (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶ not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. ⁷ Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” -1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NKJV)

1. **Elders Must Desire and Pursue Service (v. 1)** - John MacArthur said, “Ambition for office corrupts, desire for service purifies.”⁶
2. **Elders Must Be Above Reproach (v. 2)** - John MacArthur gives several reasons: (1) First, they are the special targets of Satan, and he will assault them with more severe temptation than others. Those on the front lines of the spiritual battle will bear the brunt of satanic opposition. (2) Second, their fall has a greater potential for harm. Satan knows that when a shepherd falls, the effect on the sheep is devastating. (3) Third, leaders’ greater knowledge of the truth, and accountability to live it, brings greater chastening when they sin. (4) Fourth, elders’ sins are more hypocritical than others’ because they preach against the very sins they commit.²
3. **Elders Must Be Faithful to Their Wives (v. 2)** -
4. **Elders Must Be Temperate (v. 2)** - “Temperate” literally means “wineless” or “unmixed with wine.”¹¹ Metaphorically, it means to be “alert,’ ‘watchful,’ ‘vigilant,’ or ‘clearheaded.’
5. **Elders Must Be Self-controlled (v. 2)** - “Self-controlled” can be translated “sober-mindedness.” Warren Wiersbe described the elder’s sober-mindedness this way: He must have a serious attitude and be in earnest about his work. This does not mean he has no sense of humor, or that he is always solemn and somber. Rather it suggests that he knows the value of things and does not cheapen the ministry or the Gospel message by foolish behavior.¹³
6. **Elders Must Be Respectable (v. 2)** - “Respectable” can also be translated “orderly.”¹⁴ It is the opposite of chaotic. A spiritual leader must have an orderly, well-disciplined life.
7. **Elders Must Be Hospitable (v. 2)** - Every elder should be faithful in ministry even before being selected. “Hospitable” and “able to teach” describe that ministry. The word “hospitable” literally can be translated “lover of strangers.”
8. **Elders Must Be Able to Teach (v. 2)** - **This is the only non-character qualification in the list. Elders/pastors must be students and teachers of God’s Word.**
9. **Elders Must Not Be Drunkards (v. 3)** - Paul says that elders must not be given to drunkenness.
10. **Elders Must Not Be Violent (v. 3)** - “Not violent” can be literally translated “not a giver of blows.”¹⁸ The elder should not be known for physical violence either publicly or privately. He must be a man who trusts God to fight his battles.
11. **Elders Must Be Gentle (v. 3)** - The word “gentle” has the connotation of forbearance and patience when wronged. John MacArthur’s comments are helpful: Epieikēs (gentle) describes the person who is considerate, genial, forbearing, and gracious, who easily pardons human failure. Such a person remembers good, not evil. He does not keep a list

of all the wrongs done to him, or hold a grudge. Many men leave the ministry because they can't accept criticism. A leader, when wronged, must have no thought of retaliation.¹⁹ In ministry, the elders will constantly be criticized and attacked as they serve God faithfully. Therefore, they must be able to respond in a gentle manner—if not, they will aid in causing division and possibly church splits.

12. Elders Must Not Be Quarrelsome (v. 3) - Essentially, Paul says elders should not be "contentious." They are not arguers—always fighting over something. They must be able to disagree without being disagreeable.

13. Elders Must Not Be Lovers of Money (v. 3) - Ministry should not be chosen for career and financial aspirations; it should be chosen because of a desire to serve.

14. Elders Must Manage Their Households Well (v. 4-5) - Paul said, He must manage his own household well and keep his children in control without losing his dignity.

15. Elders Must Be Mature (v. 6) - Paul said he must not be a "recent convert." The phrase means "one newly planted," referring to a young Christian.²² The ministry of an elder requires experience, wisdom, and understanding.

16. Elders Must Have a Good Reputation among the Lost (v. 7) - Finally, Paul says, "he must be well thought of by those outside the faith, so that he may not fall into disgrace and be caught by the devil's trap." "Well thought of" literally can be translated "beautiful witness." He must have a beautiful witness among outsiders.