

Elders & Deacons  
...and their wives

**By Frank Jamerson**

© 2021 Spiritbuilding Publishers

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, including photocopying and electronic reproduction, without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by  
Spiritbuilding Publishers  
9700 Ferry Road, Waynesville, OH 45068

(800) 282-4901

ELDERS, DEACONS, AND THEIR WIVES  
by Frank Jamerson

Scripture taken from the **New King James Version**.  
Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.  
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Printed in the USA by D & E Printing, Brownsburg, IN [dandepublishing.com](http://dandepublishing.com)

[spiritbuilding.com](http://spiritbuilding.com)

*Spiritual Equipment for the Contest of Life*

# Table of Contents

Lesson 1	Definitions.....	4
Lesson 2	Office and Authority.....	8
Lesson 3	Qualifications: Character and Reputation.....	12
Lesson 4	Qualifications: Domestic Relations.....	16
Lesson 5	Qualifications: Experience, Habits, Ability.....	19
Lesson 6	The Work of Elders (Part 1).....	23
Lesson 7	The Work of Elders (Part 2).....	26
Lesson 8	Congregational Responsibilities Toward Elders (Part 1).....	29
Lesson 9	Congregational Responsibilities Toward Elders (Part 2).....	33
Lesson 10	The Work of Deacons.....	37
Lesson 11	Deacons: Qualifications.....	40
Lesson 12	Wives of Church Officers.....	43
Lesson 13	Review and Comparative Analysis.....	46

# Shepherding the flock...

## Lesson 1

# Definitions

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. We need to study the qualifications and work of elders to prepare men to do this work, and to know when men are qualified to be appointed.
- B. The proper understanding of the qualifications and work of elders will show that not all good men are qualified. Many good Christians have neither the qualifications nor abilities to be overseers of the church.
- C. This first lesson will be devoted to an understanding of biblical Greek words that apply to elders. This knowledge is necessary if one is to understand the subject.

### DEFINITIONS:

- A. **Presbuteros:** elder or presbyter.
  - 1. Used of age:
    - a. Where two persons are spoken of - the elder, Luke 15:25.
    - b. Advanced in life, an elder, a senior, Acts 2:17; 1 Timothy 5:1.
    - c. Forefathers (Hebrews 11:2); received from the fathers, Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:3, 5.
  - 2. Used of rank or office:
    - a. "Among the Jews: members of the great council or Sanhedrin. In early times the rulers of the people, judges, etc., were selected from the elderly men, Matthew 16:21; 26:47, 57, 59; 27:3, 12, 20, 41; 28:12" (Thayer).
    - b. Sanhedrin: "In the N.T. the word sometimes, especially when used in the plural (Matthew 10:17; Mark 13:9), means simply 'court of justice,' i.e. any judicatory, Matthew 5:22. But in most cases it is used to designate the supreme Jewish Court of Justice in Jerusalem in which the process against our Lord was carried on..." (I.S.B.E.).
    - c. "Among Christians: those who presided over the assemblies or churches, Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 22; 16:4; 21:18; 1 Timothy 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; 2 John 1; 3 John 1; 1 Peter 5:1, 5" (Thayer).
  - 3. Elders must be men of mature age and experience.
- B. **Episkopos:** (bishop, overseer).
  - 1. "An overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent" (Thayer).

## Overseeing the work...

See Acts 20:28; Titus 1:7; Philippians 1:1.

2. *Episkopeo* (a verb) means “to look upon, oversee, look after, care for; spoken of the care of the church which rested upon the presbyters, 1 Peter 5:2” (Thayer).
3. The word *bishop* describes his function of watching for souls, cp. Ezekiel 3:17.

### C. **Poimen:** pastor, shepherd.

1. A herdsman - one who feeds the church.
  - a. “Properly: Matthew 9:36; 25:32; 26:31; Mark 6:34; 14:27; Luke 2:8, 15, 18, 20; John 10:2, 12; in the parable, he to whose care and control others have committed themselves, and whose precepts they follow, John 10:11, 14” (Thayer).
  - b. Metaphorically: the presiding officer, manager, director, of any assembly: so of Christ the Head of the church, (John 10:16; 1 Peter 2:25; Hebrews 13:20); of the overseer of the Christian assemblies (pastors), Ephesians 4:11” (Thayer).
2. *Poimaino* (a verb, thus expressing action) means “to feed, to tend a flock... Luke 17:7; 1 Corinthians 9:7...To rule, govern: Of rulers, (Matthew 2:6; Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15); of the overseers (pastors) of the church, John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2” (Thayer).

### CONCLUDING NOTE:

All three words are used to refer to the same office. See Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7, and 1 Peter 5:1, 2. Also *presbuteros* and *episkopos* may be used interchangeably: “That they did not differ at all from the (*episkopoi*) bishops or overseers...is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately, Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7... The title (*episkopos*) denotes the function, (*presbuteros*) the dignity...” (Thayer).

## Study Questions

1. **DEFINITIONS:** (In your own words define, giving more than just the various translations used by translators)
  - A. *presbuteros* -
  - B. *episkopos* -
  - C. *poimen* -
2. Which one of the above words is used to refer to *age*, and what age do you consider elderly?

## Shepherding the flock...

3. Give three ways the Bible uses this word (question #2) in referring to people?
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
4. To what does the word *Sanhedrin* usually refer?
5. When it is used relative to the Jews, to what does it refer?
6. Which of the above words best describes an office?
7. Give four English words that Thayer uses as synonyms for the word *episkopos*:
8. What does the word *poimaino* tell us about the work of elders?
9. Why do you think different terms are used for this work?
10. If you were an elder, which one of these words (presbuteros, episkopos, poimen) would you consider to be most reflective of...
  - A. what you would do? \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason: \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. what you would be?  
Reason: \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. the nature of your actions? \_\_\_\_\_  
Reason: \_\_\_\_\_

## Overseeing the work...

### *Translation of Words:*

Place a 1, 2, 3, etc. in the blanks.

- |                 |                |              |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1. presbuteros  | ___ evangelist | ___ pastor   |
| 2. episkopos    | ___ presbyter  | ___ minister |
| 3. poimen       | ___ shepherd   | ___ bishop   |
| 4. diakanos     | ___ elder      | ___ teacher  |
| 5. euangelistes | ___ overseer   |              |
| 6. didaskalos   |                |              |

### *True-False:*

- \_\_\_ The word elder in both Luke 15:25 and I Timothy 5:1 refers to one's age.
- \_\_\_ The word bishop denotes the function.
- \_\_\_ The words elder and presbyter denote dignity.
- \_\_\_ The words elders and overseers are never used interchangeably.
- \_\_\_ The words evangelist and pastor are translated from the same Greek word.
- \_\_\_ Some good older men do not qualify to be elders.
- \_\_\_ Men who presided over assemblies (churches) were referred to as elders.
- \_\_\_ It is not important to understand the meaning of various Greek words relative to the subject of elders.

### *Fill in the Blanks:*

- "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_," Acts 20:17.
- "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you \_\_\_\_\_, to \_\_\_\_\_ the church of God which He purchased with His own blood," Acts 20:28.
- "...appoint \_\_\_\_\_ in every city, as I commanded you," Titus 1:5.
- "For a \_\_\_\_\_ must be blameless as a \_\_\_\_\_ of God...," Titus 1:7.
- "The \_\_\_\_\_ who are among you, I exhort, I who am a fellow \_\_\_\_\_, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of God which is among you..." 1 Peter 5:1, 2.

# Shepherding the flock...

## Lesson 2

# Office and Authority

### INTRODUCTION:

If one is to understand the qualifications of elders, a biblical understanding of these two words (office and authority) is a must.

### BODY:

#### A. Is the *eldership* an office?

1. Some contend that elders are simply older men (and some include women) who take the lead. They say that men are not made elders by appointment.
  - a. *Office* has different meanings. Webster defines it as: “Special, proper, or assigned service, duty, or function.”
  - b. It is not an honorary title - but it is a special function (work) to which men are appointed.
    - (1) A person must meet the qualifications before he can be appointed to the office. Simply meeting qualifications does not make one a bishop.
      - (a) Acts 1:20-26 - two men qualified, one appointed.
      - (b) Acts 6:1-6 - many may have been qualified, seven appointed.
    - (2) The same principle applies to elders:
      - (a) Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church, Acts 14:23. They did not *make men older by appointment*, but they appointed those who met the qualifications to do the work.
      - (b) Titus was told to appoint *elders in every city*, Titus 1:5.
      - (c) If men simply *grow into the work*, the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are useless. Many older men with leadership ability may not meet the qualifications of an elder. Furthermore, why say that an elder must not be a *novice* if he is simply an older Christian who has *grown into leadership*?
2. All Christians have an *office* to perform (Romans 12:4, 5), but not all have the same *office*. Some have *oversight* and some are *overseen*. *Episcopo*, in 1 Timothy 3:1, is defined as an “office, charge, esp. office of an episcopos” (Abbott-Smith’s Greek Lexicon).

#### B. Do elders have authority? What is the extent of their rule?

1. There are different ideas on the rule of elders:
  - a. Some say that they rule only by example.



## Overseeing the work...

- b. Some say that they rule only in spiritual matters, but have no more say than anyone else in matters of judgment.
- c. Some believe that they have the rule over all the work of the church. (They are not lords, but they are responsible for the spiritual training of the flock as well as making decisions that involve purely judgment.)
2. There are three ways decisions may be reached:
  - a. The whole church could participate in a democratic decision. (One member - one vote!)
  - b. The men decide matters in business meetings. (In these meetings decisions may be reached by mutual agreement, or by the democratic process of voting.)
  - c. Elders may consider the desires of the congregation and make the decisions. (They cannot decide doctrine, but can *convict the gainsayer*, and they can make decisions in areas of judgment.)
3. The names given to the work indicate authority:
  - a. See definitions of the three words referring to elders.
  - b. Elders are over the flock, 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13.
  - c. The flock is to be in subjection to elders, Hebrews 13:17.
  - d. The word *rule* (*hegeomai* in Hebrews 13:17), means “to lead, i.e. (a) to go before; (b) to be a leader; to rule, command; to have authority over...” (Thayer).
  - e. Some contend: “If one Christian has authority over another, then they are not in subjection to Christ.”
    - (1) The truth is that those who rebel against God’s order of oversight are not in subjection to Christ.
    - (2) If a wife submits to the headship of her husband, is she thereby not in subjection to Christ? Ephesians 5:23.
    - (3) Paul’s authority did not contradict the authority of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10.
    - (4) The fact that elders are *examples* does not cancel their rule, 1 Peter 5:3. They are not *lords*, but should be examples of the right attitude in matters that pertain to both faith and judgment.

## Study Questions

(Review Lesson 1 before answering)

1. Prove that *presbyteros*, *episkopos*, and *poimen* all refer to the same office. (Use scriptures to document.)

## Shepherding the flock...

2. Using Scripture references, prove that they are not just older men.
  
3. Of the beliefs concerning the rule of elders, which one do you think is correct, or do you hold another view? (State that view and give reason for your answer.)
  
4. Of the beliefs concerning decision making on the part of elders, which one do you think is correct, or do you hold another view? (State that view and give reason for your answer.)
  
5. Prove that elders are over the flock.
  
6. Can elders be over the flock and not lord their authority over the flock?
  
7. When elders do what the Lord commands, does that constitute lording it over the flock?
  
8. Give some ways that you think an elder or the eldership might be a lord over the flock.
  
9. Prove that the flock is to be in subjection to the elders.
  
10. Do elders have any oversight of one's personal life? (Give reason for your answer.)

## Overseeing the work...

11. List three ways that a congregation may reach a decision:
  
12. Do elders have oversight in the realm of faith, or opinion, or both?  
(Give reasons for your answer.)

### *Read the Scripture and then Answer:*

1. Acts 1:20-26
  - a. How many were indicated as being qualified to become an apostle? Who were they?
  
  - b. How many were finally appointed?  
Who was he?
  
2. Acts 14:23
  - a. Paul and Barnabas appointed men to be what?
  
  - b. Did they just appoint them to be *old*?
  
3. Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3
  - a. How do these passages prove that men do not simply grow chronologically into becoming elders?
  
  - b. In your opinion, which of the qualifications best prove that just older men do not automatically become elders?
  
4. 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10
  - a. From whom did Paul get his authority?
  
  - b. For what purpose was he given authority?
  
  - c. When the Corinthians submitted to this authority, were they no longer subject to Christ?