

**Sermon Series:** Book of Titus

**Sermon title:** Putting Elders in Order

**Scripture reading:** Titus 1:5-9

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With all of the things going on in our city these days, leadership is without a doubt a hot topic.

Leadership is hard work! It's definitely much easier to NOT be a leader. That's why so many people don't want to lead. Much easier to not be the person who has the responsibility. Much easier to be the person who doesn't have to make hard decisions that affect many people's lives.

Last week was Father's Day. Every Dad in here knows how hard leadership is. Leaders have the constant responsibility to lead. The constant responsibility over others. It's hard work. We didn't ask to be Fathers, but nonetheless God has called us to it and by his grace he will give us all sufficiency at all times in all things so that we can abound in every good work.

Well, what about church leadership? What does the Bible say about who should lead churches? What does the Bible say about *how* churches should be led? It says a lot actually.

Today, we step away from the greeting of Paul and begin the meat of the letter. In fact, today we will see the reason why Paul is writing the letter in the first place. He makes it very easy for us.

We will begin by taking a look at **Titus 1:5**.

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.

So, on one of Paul's missionary journeys around the Mediterranean, probably on a journey after he was imprisoned in Rome (which is not in the Bible), he... went by this island called Crete with Titus and some people were born again.

Paul left Titus there in Crete while Paul went on to somewhere else. **And he left him there for 2 purposes according to this text.**

1. To put what remained into order.
2. Appoint Elders in every town.

There is a question we need to ask here of the text.

**What is it that needs to be put into order?** Is the answer, “appoint Elders in every town” or is it something else and Elders is a second thing that needs to be done?

As I have read this book over and over and studied the text, I believe that the rest of the letter are some of the things that need to be put into order and appointing Elders is one of those things.

So, today we will look at what Elders are and why churches need them. Next week we will take a look at the qualifications for Elders.

### **What are Elders?**

The word for Elder here is the word ‘presbuteros’. It is the Greek word from which we get the word Presbyterian. It is a word that means ‘older’ in a general sense all across the Bible. It doesn’t necessarily mean ‘old person’ but ‘older’. For example the Prodigal Son’s ‘older’ brother is referred to as this term.

The term is borrowed from Jewish culture and refers to the dignity of the person and not the function.

The other word in this passage to explain what an Elder is down in verse 7.

Here we have the word ‘Overseer’.

'Overseer' is used synonymously with the word Elder in several places in the Bible. Where Elder is a term that refers to the dignity of a person, Overseer refers to the function they do.

Overseer is the Greek word 'episkopos' and it literally means to look over. 'Epi' means over and 'skopos' means to look. We get the English word 'scope' from here.

These words Elder, Overseer and Pastor are used as the same thing in the Bible. Let me show you a few examples besides what we see here in Titus.

In Paul's letter to Timothy in **1st Timothy 3** he gives similar qualifications for Elders but in Timothy he uses the word 'Overseer'.

In **1st Peter 5**, Peter uses the terms Elder, Overseer and Shepherd (Pastor) in the same passage.

5 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.”

So, Elders are a group of men (the words in the passage are all ‘He’) who are to ‘Oversee’ to look over the church...to Shepherd the flock as Peter says. Elder, Overseer and Pastor are used synonymously.

But we have another phrase here in **verse 7**. It says, ‘An overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach.’

**God’s steward!** That is something to think about for a minute. It doesn’t say, ‘the church’s steward’ but it says, ‘God’s’ steward. That sounds a little uncomfortable. What does this mean?

First, an Elder or Overseer or Pastor is ‘**God’s**’ steward. This is not an office that you choose to do. It is something that you are called to by God. But interestingly enough Titus is to ‘appoint’ them. So, God calls and man affirms that calling.

In **Acts 20: 28**, Paul is speaking to the Elders of the church in Ephesus. He says to them, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, (they are shepherds)

in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

These Elders are overseers and pastors, chosen by the Holy Spirit...to care for the church of **God**. It's not their church but it's God's church. They are God's stewards!

### **What are Elders?**

**A group of men who are called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee a local church and teach them the word of God.**

### **What is an Elder, Overseer or Pastor NOT?**

- It's not a one man show. The Bible is astonishing clear that Elders are to lead churches. The Bible is also clear that Elders are plural. This idea of an alpha-male in the church is not in the Bible. It's not biblical and it's not good for the church or practical.

### **Why does a church need Elders?**

To answer that question we need to look a few passages.

Turn in your Bible to **Exodus 18:13-24**  
**[Read the passage]**

In this passage we have Moses's father-in-law give him some practical advice about leadership. Moses is doing everything. So, Jethro says to him, "What you are doing is not good. You're gonna wear yourself out. It's too heavy for you to do it alone."

He tells him to instead do it another way. Find some men! Find some men who will bear the burden with you and that way you can endure. And it'll be good for the people.

Moses listened. That was a good move.

I am listening to. I hear the word of God and the Bible says 'Get Elders'.

The Bible gives us some wisdom here as well in **Proverbs 11:14**. Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.

or **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! And if two lie down together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not easily broken.

So, having a **group of men who are called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee a local church and teach them the word of God** is not only Biblical but it's very practical and wise.

Titus is given a task by Paul. He is to put what remains into order. One of those things is to put Elders in order.

He is to see to it that each of the churches on the island of Crete, each church in every town,.... has a **group of men who are called by the Holy Spirit to shepherd and oversee a local church and teach them the word of God.**

Why? Because it is God's design for church leadership and because it is wise.

Next week will look at the actual qualifications of Elders that Paul gives to Titus. It's interesting to note that one of them has to do with shepherding our homes well. This is what the Puritan's referred to as the 'little church', meaning the home. They said that a man's first priority is to his 'little church' and that he had to shepherd his 'little church' well in order to shepherd the 'big church' well.



Dad, last week was Father's Day. And I didn't prepare a special Father's Day message for you or myself last week due to needing to pray for our city. But there is some application for us here.

If you are a Dad, you are already an Elder.

You're already an Overseer of souls.

You're already called to be God's steward of a household.

We are already shepherds of a flock.

We are to shepherd mama and we are to shepherd our little kids. It's not mama's job to shepherd the kids. It's our job to shepherd mama and the kids.

It's our home. It's our 'little church'.

Oh someday, Lord willing some of you men will be Elders and Shepherds of the Big Church, too.

But may God grant you the grace you need to shepherd your home.

God is able to make all grace abound to you that having all sufficiency in all things at all times you may abound in every good work.