

## ELDERS

Elder is a term used throughout the Bible used to denote age, experience, authority, and certain specific leadership roles. In the Old Testament, the leaders associated with Moses in governing the nation were known as the elders of Israel. Later on, this term came to be applied to those who governed cities and tribes, as well. Eventually, the Sanhedrin arose which consisted of 71 elders having religious and political power. In the synagogues, and then also in the early church, the title continued and was used for those who governed in these areas.

Today, the elder is supposed to be in charge governing the local churches according to the pattern in Acts. Paul appointed them in every church on his first missionary trip.

Acts 14:23

*“And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”*

Another term meaning the same as elder, is overseer, as seen in both Titus 1:1-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7, where the qualifications for the elder (overseer) are clearly laid out.

1 Timothy 3:2-7

*“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money.*

*{He must be} one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?);*

*{and} not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.*

*And he must have a good reputation with those outside {the church,} so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”*

Paul, in his last conversation with the elders from Ephesus, outlines in general the awesome responsibilities of the elder, which are, basically, to take care of those the Lord laid down His life for!

Acts 20:28

*“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.”*

Peter also indicates this title applies to five-fold ministers, as he calls himself an elder in 1 Peter 5:1-4, which outlines the standards he feels an elder must maintain.