



What is an Elder?

In the New Testament Scriptures, the leaders of the local church are variously called elders, pastors, and overseers. The words are used interchangeably in Scripture (see Acts 20:25-32; 1 Peter 5:1-2) to show that the leadership of the church should be a single-layer structure of godly men, accountable to each other, the Scriptures, and, of course, ultimately to God. Together this "multitude of counselors" (Proverbs 24:6) shepherd the flock of God, spiritually and practically.

This means that elders are pastors and pastors are elders, though some are paid for their time given to the church and some are not (1 Timothy 5:17); some are freed up from external jobs, able to devote full-time work to the ministry, and some juggle full-time jobs with their shepherding responsibilities.

Some elder-pastors will serve in more prominent roles (such as the teaching ministry), while others will serve less in less visible areas. With a variety of gifts, each elder offers a unique contribution to his specific area of ministry. Regardless of each elder's role and prominence, the New Testament models a plurality of equal leaders.

"He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."

TITUS 1:9 (ESV)