

TOPIC: ELDERSHIP

1. The term “elder” is used/misused by ministers and church folks alike. How should we understand the term in its proper sense?

We should base our proper understanding of the word “elder” on how it is used in Scripture, primarily the NT.

Presbuteros => a person of responsibility and authority in matters of socio-religious concerns, both in Jewish and Christian concerns.

This term is used 65 times in the NT and is translated elder. In Some passages this word is referring to as an older man or woman as in Luke 1:18 and Titus 2:2. However, the majority of the time it is referenced to leaders of assemblies either Jewish or the church.

In Titus 1:5 – 7, this word along with the word for Bishop (**episkopos**) are both used interchangeably as near synonyms.

In essence, in the NT the term Elder is referring to the position of leadership that a man would hold over a local congregation of believers. It should be viewed as interchangeable with and a near synonym to both Bishop and Pastor

- Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Louw and Nida
- New International Dictionary of the New Testament, Brown
- “Answering the Key Questions About Elders”, John MacArthur, Jr.
- “Who Makes the Decisions in Your Church”, Douglas McLachlan

2. The issue of the singularity/plurality of eldership is constantly discussed. What does the NT teach? Formulate a listing of principles/facts (with Scriptural support) in defense of your position.

I believe the norm in the NT church was a plurality of eldership/bishops/pastors. Since the word “elder”, has in our day acquired a connotation that represents elder-rule churches, I prefer to use the term “plurality of pastors”, although the appropriate NT word would be that of elder. (Pastor is only used 3 times, Elder is used 65)

1. Everywhere the term Elder is used to refer to the leadership office in a local church it is plural.
 - New International Dictionary of the New Testament, Brown
2. The NT is clear in that the elders were appointed, approved and ordained by the vote of the local congregations, not by other elders, generally after receiving counsel from other elders or the apostles.
 - Acts 13:1-3; 14:23,26,27

3. The NT is clear that in situations where plurality of leaders was common, one leader was considered primary.

- The mention of singular pastor in Rev. 2;3; James in the church at Jerusalem Acts 15:13

4. I believe that the argument that since “Bishop” in II Tim. 3 and Titus 1 is singular, while “deacon” in II Tim. 3 is plural, we are to conclude that the office of Bishop/Elder is to be singular is weak! If this argument is true, then we would have to also say that every church regardless of its size must have multiple deacons, which is obviously not always possible. Secondly, in the same passage in Titus 1, the plural of “Elder” is used, just two verses before the singular “Bishop”.

I believe this is making it clear that the norm was to have a plurality of pastors/elders/bishops, recommended by an apostle or other elder, approved by and ordained by the local congregation. However, every pastor/elder/bishop must meet the specific qualifications outlined in Titus 1 and II Timothy 3.

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- “Who Makes the Decisions in Your Church”, Douglas McLachlan
- The Pastoral Epistles, The New International Critical Commentary
- 1,2 Timothy Titus, The New American Commentary
- I-II Timothy and Titus, William Hendriksen
- I & II Timothy and Titus, The Christian Counselor’s Commentary
- Titus, John Clavin