

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabible.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabible.org).

**Date:** June 28, 2009

**Title:** The Structure of the Local Church for the Mission of God- Part 2

**Text:** 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-11

**Theme:** God has placed in geographically defined assemblies the biblical structure of Elders and Deacons for the purpose of building up His body in the carrying out of His mission.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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**Theme:** God has placed in geographically defined assemblies the biblical structure of Elders and Deacons for the purpose of building up His body in the carrying out of His mission.

**Introduction:**

I would like to begin this study by noting the words from our Church Constitution.

**Section A. Introduction**

Waukesha Bible Church acknowledges the Lord Jesus as the Head of the Church, the Bible as the Word of God and the infallible guide for the church, and the Holy Spirit as its teacher. Under these guiding principles, this church shall be self-governing, not under the direction or jurisdiction of any other ecclesiastical body or federation.

This church shall be led by an Elder Council which will provide spiritual leadership and direction for the church as well as oversee all ministry of the church. The Church Membership shall have and provide input to church matters as described within this Constitution.

**Section B. Elder Council**

**The Membership of Waukesha Bible Church grants governing authority over spiritual and material matters to the Elder Council, subject to the provisions in this Constitution.** While retaining oversight responsibility, the Council may delegate authority and/or responsibility for any purpose.

2. Qualifications of Elders

**Elders must be born again men who demonstrate the qualities found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. They are to be wise and godly men in their home and in the church. They must through their character and competence as tested men,** have gained the confidence of those with whom they deal, both inside and outside the Body. They must have been members of this church for at least two years and have served in a Ministry Area within this church prior to becoming an Elder.

3. Responsibilities of the Elder Council

The **Elder Council shall be responsible for the spiritual growth and care of the congregation.** They shall also be responsible for oversight and coordination of Ministry Areas.

a. Shepherding Functions

- 1) Involvement in the spiritual care of the congregation.
- 2) Involvement in teaching and discipleship.
- 3) Visitation and pastoral care in conjunction with the pastoral staff.

b. Oversight Functions (*I am only noting four of several*)

- 1) Maintain contact and communication with the leadership in each Ministry Area.
- 2) Long range planning.
- 3) Ensure that administration of plans and policies are in accordance with church and ministry needs, directions, and priorities.
- 4) Oversee the ordination process and recommend candidates for ordination to the Church Membership.

Our constitution shows how our past Elders struggled to define the work of Shepherding with that of Oversight. I commend them for wrestling with these ideas and attempting to define them in a visible manner. It is in the spirit of our past Elders and their attempt to provide a biblical structure that we consider the following study.

## Outline:

In light of all this, let us begin to understand what is meant by Elder and Deacon. We will begin with the Elder. Please turn to Acts 20:17 and 28. The terms “Elder,” “overseer,” and “shepherd” are used of the same group. This is approximately the same time that Paul in Ephesians declares that God gives Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers to the church (Eph. 4:7-16). Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers are given to the church to equip the saints. This gifting to the church continues until the body of Christ is complete. This use of the words is consistent throughout the New Testament record. Let us consider four such passages to show the way these words are used in the NT (READ Acts 20:17, 28, 1 Timothy 3:1, 2, Titus 1:5, 6, and 1 Peter 5:1, 2).

Peter, although an Apostle also refers to himself as an Elder obligated to shepherd the flock. As the canonical Book of Acts ends and we pick up Paul’s letters it becomes apparent that there are two distinct offices given to the local church.

From our past literature on Elders:

God's Word makes it very clear that Elders are to model a certain standard that God expects from all within the body. Likewise, deacons are to model exemplary character qualities.

Paul, in 1 Tim. 3:1-12, Titus 1:5-10 does not say...look for a man with the gift of pastor/teacher, or the gift of administration, or the gift of helps, or the gift of exhortation. In fact there is little reference to any specific gifts or abilities. Rather, of the qualifications listed, all but one have to do with a man's reputation, ethics, morality, temperament, habits and maturity. In other words, **what kind of man is he?** The fundamental quality God is looking for in an Elder or Deacon is that he reflects the servant spirit of Jesus Christ (Matt. 20:25-28)

Many churches get in trouble by devising their own standards for church leaders: Is he a nice guy? Does he agree with my ideas most of the time? What's his position on a certain issue? Is he a good manager? Is he a successful business man? Is he likeable? Has he never irritated me? As admirable as these qualities may be, God does not use any of them as criteria for a New Testament Elder or Deacon.

- I. The Pastoral Letters of Paul clearly identify two specific offices within the local church that of Bishop and Deacon/Deaconess.

At this point I would like to consider the words used in 1 Timothy and Titus to describe those whom God sets apart for the role of Bishop.

- A. The sincerity of their life (1 Tim. 3:1-15).

For the sake of brevity, I will treat those character traits that are spoken of for Elders, then Elders and Deacons, and finally Deacons. There are some character traits that are in some

Greek manuscripts but are absent from others. I will simply include them all. I will also group some qualities together. I do not believe, however, this will harm the intent of our study.

They must be . . .

1. above /beyond reproach
2. discreet
3. sensible
4. marked by good behavior, a good testimony, just, devout
5. hospitable, love good people
6. able to teach
7. gentle
8. of a sound mind
9. faithful to their spouse
10. overseeing their homes
11. dignity
12. hold fast to sound faith

They cannot be . . .

1. abrasive, contentious, angry
2. a new convert
3. self-willed
4. addicted to much wine
5. greedy of filthy gain, covetous
6. gossips, double tongued
7. malicious slanderers. The word "malicious slanderer" is **Diabolos**. It is used of the devil in 1 Tim. 3:7.

### **A Warning:**

The final area stressed that will assist the leaders in identifying "faithful men" is the threat from the outside on those who are called by God (vv. 6b, 7b). As a warning Paul notes two very real dangers the pastoral office faces. The first is an escalated sense of self-worth, a distorted picture of who and what one really is. The second is a tarnished testimony creating a deflated picture of the pastoral office. One is pride and the other brings reproach.

Paul uses the words "snare of the devil." "It is often used for a 'net' or 'snare,' as well as a 'mousetrap.' Figuratively, it is used of a seductive woman. The Trojan horse is also called 'wooden pagis.' The devil is not just an accuser but an active opponent who is at work to capture and destroy people."<sup>1</sup> The devil is working to destroy God's pastors. Yet the pastoral office is held up as a prize to be obtained. It is a noble and worthy pursuit.

Notice the language in verse 10, "These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as Deacons if they are beyond reproach." Friend, the more I study this the more profound the selection of Elder and Deacon becomes. I find myself rebuked for being so casual in the

process of identifying those who might be Elder and/or Deacon. Although we cannot be careless in any area of the church, this area in particular deserves our utmost attention. Listen to the charge in Timothy by Paul (1 Tim. 5:22). How can we avoid a novice occupying the office?

**“Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily** and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin” (1 Tim. 5:22).

We must go about establishing an intentional way of identifying, equipping, sending, and supporting our Elders and Deacons. At this point I’m going to split the two offices by noting first the nature of the work of Elder and then the nature of the work of Deacon.

## 2. The nature of their labor

God has given the Local Church individuals who are to assist in administrating, servicing, and serving His body. Those who are so gifted are to occupy the office of leadership. Though many will receive the gift, not all will function in the office of “Pastor/Elder.” By looking at several words used throughout the New Testament to identify the one who occupies the office, his responsibilities will become evident.

### a. BISHOP (**Episkope, Episkopos, Episkopeo**)

The Greek word means to act as an overseer, or to take the oversight. This particular root word is used several times throughout the New Testament. **[READ 1 Tim. 3:1, 2; Titus 1:7]**

A Bishop is one who has oversight over a Local Church. The idea of “Oversight” means “to look diligently” and “to visit.” The one who is a Bishop looks over the flock of God. Such a word conveys intimacy, familiarity, closeness, understanding, relationship, and rapport. It is perhaps for this reason one of the qualifications of becoming a Bishop is that of hospitality and a lover of good people.

### b. ELDER (**Presbuteros**)

The word can refer to one who is **old of age** (John 8:9 [only occurrence in John’s Gospel], Acts 2:17, 1 Timothy 5:1, 2), one who is **a leader in the nation of Israel** (Matt 15:2, 16:2, 26:3, 47, 57, 59, 27:1, 3, 12, 20, 41, 28:12 [Mark and Luke use it similar to Matthew]), and one who is appointed **a leader in the Local Church** (Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 16:4, etc).

“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” (Acts 14:23).

“From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church” (Acts 20:17).

“And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present” (Acts 21:18).

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you” (Titus 1:5).

“Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14).

“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed” (1 Pet. 5:1)

“Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses” (1 Tim. 5:19).

“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed” (1 Pet. 5:1).

Acts clearly shows the leadership role that an Elder has in a Local Church context for settling doctrinal disputes and guiding the people of God by ruling and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17). Congregational rule does not appear to have a place in the governing of a Local Church fellowship. This does not mean Elders rule without compassion or rapport.

<sup>2</sup> “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and **not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;** <sup>3</sup> **nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock**” (1 Pet. 5:2, 3).

A body in rebellion against itself does not work properly. If the church is a body and family, then there must be mutual respect and interaction. Yet, the responsibility to lead rests on those who occupy the office of Pastor/Elder.

In light of this, we as a fellowship are “Presbyterian” in our church polity. We are not congregational. Elders are led by God to provide His people with the direction He would have them take. American ideology and self-centered sinfulness moves a people to expect a voice in every decision. The New Testament Church is not a democracy.

It is important to remember that in the absence of leadership, people will create their own. It is imperative for the health of the local body to have those in leadership positions to lead the flock of God.

### c. PASTORS (**Poimaino**)

Only in Ephesians 4:11 are Elders termed “Shepherds” (Latin **pastores**) in the New Testament. Their work is called “Shepherding.” The verb “to feed/shepherd (taken from the same root

word for 'Pastor/Shepherd')," is employed by Jesus to Peter (John 21:16), by Peter to other ministers (1 Pet. 5:2), and by Paul to the Elders (bishops) of Ephesus (Acts 20:28). Apart from a literal use, the word is never used of anyone except Jesus Christ or the office of Pastor.

It is only in the Local Church context that we have "Pastors." There is a distinct office or position for one who possesses the gift and who functions as a pastor or shepherd of a distinct, local, "flock" of believers. Since the noun "Pastor" is only used once to identify the office, of necessity we need to see where the verb is used with other identifying words.

The term "Pastor" (**Poimen, Poimaino**) is perhaps the most graphic word to describe the leaders placed by God to guide His people.

- Without the God-appointed shepherd, His people will go astray (Matt. 9:36, 26:31, 1 Pet. 2:25).

"Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because **they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd**" (Matt. 9:36).

"For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the **Shepherd** and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25).

- The shepherd is willing to lay down his life for the sheep (John 10:11).

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

- The shepherd stays with the sheep in the face of impending danger (John 10:12).

"He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them" (John 10:12).

- The shepherd is personal and intimate with the sheep (John 10:14).

"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me" (John 10:14).

- Shepherds are divinely appointed (Eph. 4:11).

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as **pastors** and teachers" (Eph. 4:11).

- Jesus Christ is the great shepherd and those He appoints are under shepherds (Heb. 13:20).

“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great **Shepherd** of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord” (Heb. 13:20).

The verb form taken from the same root word is consistently translated, “Feed.”

“He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of John, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘**Shepherd** My sheep’” (John 21:16).

“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” (Acts 20:28).

“Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who **tends a flock** and does not use the milk of the flock?” (1 Cor. 9:7).

<sup>2</sup> “**shepherd** the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup> nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2, 3).

“for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their **shepherd**, and will **guide** them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17).

It is also translated a handful of times by the word “Rule” (Matt. 2:6, Rev. 2:27, 12:5, 19:15).

The pastors of a fellowship are shepherds. They protect the flock of God through proper nourishment by feeding the people milk and solid food (Heb. 5:11-14). Through the teaching ministry, the people are equipped for the work of service and are no longer tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:12-16).

## CONCLUSION

There is no distinction in the New Testament between a “Bishop, Elder, or Pastor.” They are the same office. The different words used describe the activity and nothing else, though nothing less. The setting apart by God for the office of Elder and Deacon is a weighty separation. As an Elder or Deacon you must be a person of dignity. There is something that rings true in your life. In either office you must have the appropriate gifting.

### B. Deacons/Deaconess

Deacons must be of good character and have proved themselves through prior service. The ability to teach is not mentioned although deacons can teach.

It should become apparent that the New Testament does not speak of female Elders, but it does speak to female Deacons or Deaconesses. What I find equally impressive is the mentioning of the Deacon in the context of the local church. They are seldom mentioned but are prominent in the concluding comments of Paul's letters. They are not found in the same context of Elders, but are often left unsung and unnoticed. Yet it is safe to assume that in their absence, the local church suffers (Acts 6). For just a moment let us consider the immediate context of Acts 6 as it might relate to these two offices.

- The Apostles did not want to be distracted from prayer and the ministry of the Word.
- A significant problem within the local church needed attention. The problem was a potential distraction to the Apostles. They recognized the need to devote energy and time to prayer and ministry of the Word.
- Solution: Congregation recommended spiritually mature men - Apostles put recommended men in charge of the task. This is the family/body dynamic that exists between the congregation, Deacons and Elders. How notable these men were is seen by the following chapters with the lives and ministries of Stephen and Philip.
- Conclusion: Apostles (Elders?) are to devote time and energy to prayer and ministry of the Word. Other matters that must be dealt with are to be delegated to mature men and women.

Our English word "deacon" is from the Greek word diakoneô from diakonos (dia and konis, dust), to raise a dust in a hurry, to serve. I have seen many of our deacons serve in such a manner as to "kick up dust."

The Deacons are to enable. Just as the office of Elder is to enable the congregation to serve so also the Deacon is to enable the Elders to serve. The one equips and the other frees up. Like the office of Elder, those who occupy the office of Deacon must be people of integrity.

#### 1. The personality of their labor (Acts 6:1-7)

Although the office of Deacon is not referenced in Acts 6, I believe we see the initial idea present here and then perfected in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Deacons/Deaconesses are enablers. They free up the Elders so that they can focus on Word, Prayer, and Shepherding.

Notice the promise extended to those who serve well as a Deacon/Deaconess (v. 13).

"For those who have served well as Deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 3:13).

Now notice how these two offices contribute to the proper conduct inside of the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (v. 15).

Three elements appear to be present when one is to occupy the office of Pastor.

► First, he must meet the qualifications.

First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 list the qualifications for the pastoral office. The issue is not flawlessness, but faithfulness.

► Second, God has led through personal desire.

No one should occupy the office simply because there is a vocational appeal to the office. Those who occupy the office are those on whom God has placed His hand for a unique and demanding role. The pastoral vocation is as sacred as any vocation, though the weight of the office must be embraced as a God-given burden.

► Third, there must be peer approval.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul speaks of a succession of faith. This is no less true with the pastoral office. The pastoral office is entered through the mentoring process. Each Pastor is both mentor and protégé.

### **Shepherding the Sheep** (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Pray for God to rise up in our midst those who would have the integrity of life to fill the office of Elder.
2. Pray for a hedge of protection around those who occupy the office of Elder that God would protect them from the evil one and their families.

God has given the Local Church individuals who are to assist in administrating and service His body. Those who are so gifted are to occupy the office of leadership. Though many will receive the gift, not all will function in the office of "Pastor/Elder."

There are those within the Local Church who are to be identified by the term, "Pastor, Elder, and Bishop." Like many of my studies, I am first spoken to and then I speak. I find this study a challenge and a rebuke. As Elders, we have a responsibility to make sure those who occupy the offices of Elder and Deacon are people of integrity and can carry out the responsibility. We ourselves must heed the admonishment of Paul to "Be on guard for yourselves first . . ."

1. Elders, are we biblically qualified?
2. Deacons, are we biblically qualified?
3. Congregant, are you gladly following the lead of your Elders and Deacons?
4. Be careful who you put in the position of Elder because you have a responsibility toward them.
5. Be careful of wanting to be an Elder because you have a responsibility for the sheep.
6. Be careful who you put in the position of Deacon/Deaconess because you have a responsibility toward them.
7. Be careful of wanting to be a Deacon/Deaconess because you have a responsibility for the sheep.

The church should seek to repeat this pattern by planting churches locally, nationally, and globally.

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<sup>1</sup> TDNT, one-vol. ed., s.v. “pagis, padideuo,” 753.