

God does not allow for men to organize the local church in any way they chose to do so. He has specified how it is to be organized. Philippians 1:1 gives us the basic, full organization. Any organization bigger than the one specified in the New Testament is too big. In Philippians 1:1, we read that the local church should be composed of "Saints," "Overseers," and "Deacons." "Overseers," or "Bishops" are one and the same as "Elders, presbyters, pastors," and "Shepherds" (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2). In this lesson, we want to focus our attention on the elders and discuss things like their qualifications, their role, their limitations, and their responsibilities.

The Elders: Their Sum

Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1

1. Are elders always mentioned in a plurality in the passages above? Can you find a passage where we can read that a local church only has one elder? What conclusion can we draw from this? (Consider 2 John 9).
2. The "Pastor System" that exist among some denominations allows for a setting in which a single man rules over a local church. Does this align with the pattern given in the New Testament?
3. Think: What would be some dangers associated with a local church having only one elder as opposed to having a plurality of elders?

The Elders: Their Suitability

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9

1. In the Timothy passage, the men are referred to as "Bishop(s)," but in Titus they are referred to as "Elders." Considering that the qualifications in both passages are virtually the same, what conclusion can we draw?
2. Would it be acceptable for a woman to serve as an elder? Why or why not?
3. Must a man meet all of these qualifications before he can serve as an elder? Must a man continue to meet all of these qualifications while serving as an elder?
4. Study each qualification, compare the two lists. Can you think of some tough questions or situations that might arise in relation to some of the qualifications?

The Elders: Their Service

1 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17; Acts 20:28, 32; 1 Peter 5:1-3

1. From these passages, list at least seven responsibilities (duties) the elders have in relation to the flock (Local church).

- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
 - e. _____
 - f. _____
 - g. _____
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