

Peter and His Epistles

Lesson # 15: Elders 1 Pet. 5:1-7

I. Introduction

Peter now turns his focus to the organization of these churches scattered around Asia Minor.

He divides his attention:

- A. An appeal to the leaders (vs. 1-4)
- B. An appeal to the flock (vs. 5-7)

II. The position of authority in a local church

- A. There are 5 main terms used to describe this position:

Elder, eldership, overseer, shepherd, steward

FIVE TERMS DESCRIBING THE OFFICE OF AN ELDER			
<i>Term</i>	<i>Greek word</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Emphasis</i>
Elder or presbyter	Presbureros	An older man or senior	Experience
Overseer or bishop	Episcopos	A guardian or superintendent	Oversight
Shepherd or pastor	Poimen	Metaphoric term (tending flocks)	Protection
Steward	Oikonomo	Metaphoric term (treasurer)	Trustworthy
Eldership	Presbuterion	Group of older men/elders	Plurality & equality

(www.bible.ca)

- B. Elder

- 1. This term has its roots in the Old Testament

- a. The 70 tribal leaders that helped Moses Num. 11:16, Deut. 27:1
- b. Served as governors over tribes Deut. 16:18, 19:12
- c. Were leaders over cities 1 Sam. 11:3, 16:4
- d. "Elders of Israel" (1 Sam. 4:3), "Elders of the land" (1 Kings 20:7), "Elders of Judah" (2 Kings 23:1)

- 2. In the New Testament: Greek term is "presbureros" (70 times in New Testament). Literally means to be of mature age: "bearded", "grey-bearded."

- a. Note the three situations in the book of Acts regarding the elders of the church in Jerusalem. Acts 11:30, Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22 & 23, Acts 21:8
- b. Paul uses the term three times as a title for church leaders:
1 Tim. 5:17-19, Titus 1:5
- c. Paul notes that he and Barnabas appointed elders (Acts 14:21); he notes that the Holy Spirit chooses the overseers (Acts 20:28) and he affirms an elder's right to be honored and cared for (1 Tim. 5:17, 18).
- d. The term elder is used 12 times in the book of Revelation
- e. James encourages the elders to have a prayer ministry among the people: James 5:13-15
- f. Peter calls himself an elder (1 Pet. 5:1-4) and instructs the other elders on how to exercise their authority.
 - 1) Don't force people to do things
 - 2) Do not "lord it over" the flock (Mark 10:42-44)
 - 3) Don't be motivated by financial gain or praise
 - 4) Love your work. Do it eagerly.
 - 5) Do your work humbly (follow the example of Christ)

C. Overseer

It is a position of authority, it refers to the person in charge.

D. Shepherd

A term that describes the relationship between the leader and the people in the church.

E. Steward

Someone who can be trusted with great treasures.

F. All these refer to the same office!

ALL TERMS REFER TO SAME SINGLE OFFICE				
	Elder or Presbyter (Presbureros)	Overseer or bishop (Épiscopos)	Shepherd or pastor (Poimen)	Steward (Oikonomo)
Acts 20:17,28	✓	✓	✓	
Titus 1:5,7	✓	✓		✓
1 Pet. 5:1,2	✓		✓	

III. Qualifications of an elder (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9)

The two lists of qualifications are strikingly similar. Notice the parallels and differences.	
1 Timothy 3	Titus 1
Above reproach (v.2)	Above reproach (v.6)
The husband of one wife (v.2)	The husband of one wife (v.6)
Temperate (v.2)	Self-controlled
Prudent (v.2)	Sensible
Respectable (v.2)	
Hospitable (v.2)	Hospitable (v.8)
Able to teach (v.2)	Able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (v.9)
Not addicted to wine (v.3)	Not addicted to wine (v.7)
Not pugnacious (v.3)	Not pugnacious (v.7)
Gentle (v.3)	
Peaceable (v.3)	
Free from the love of money (v.3)	Not fond of sordid gain (v.7)
Ruling his household well (v.4)	Above reproach as God's steward (v.7)

IV. So what?

Consider 1 Thes. 5:12-13: "Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other."

The word "appreciate" means to "know intimately"

We need to know, respect, pray for, support and love the shepherds God has placed over us.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your general impression of the elders at your church? Do they seem to meet the biblical qualifications for that office?
2. In light of 1 Thes. 5:12-13 what could you do to deepen your appreciation for your church leaders?