

# CONGREGATIONAL ORGANIZATION

The Role of Elders

I Peter 5:1-11



SUMMARY  
OF  
PREVIOUS  
LESSON

- God designed the church with *infinite* wisdom.
- He designed it to show his eternal power
- There are countless ways a to organize a congregation, but...
- There are only two *scriptural* ways for a congregation to be organized.

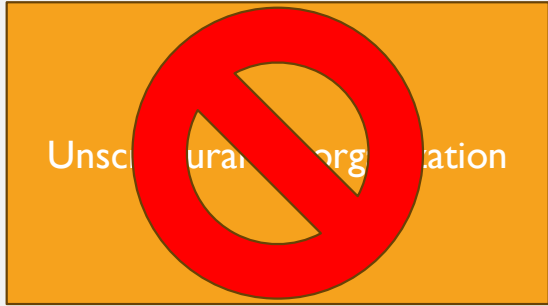
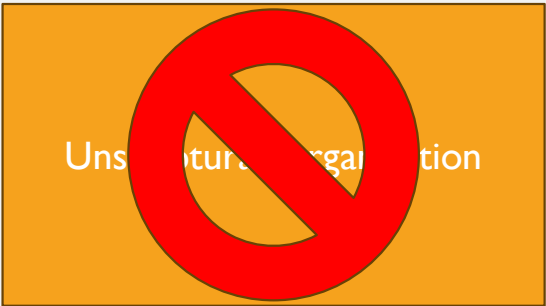




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# CHURCH ORGANIZATION



# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ELDERS?

I PETER 5:1-11

The **elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being **lords** over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

(1 Peter 5:1-4 NKJV)

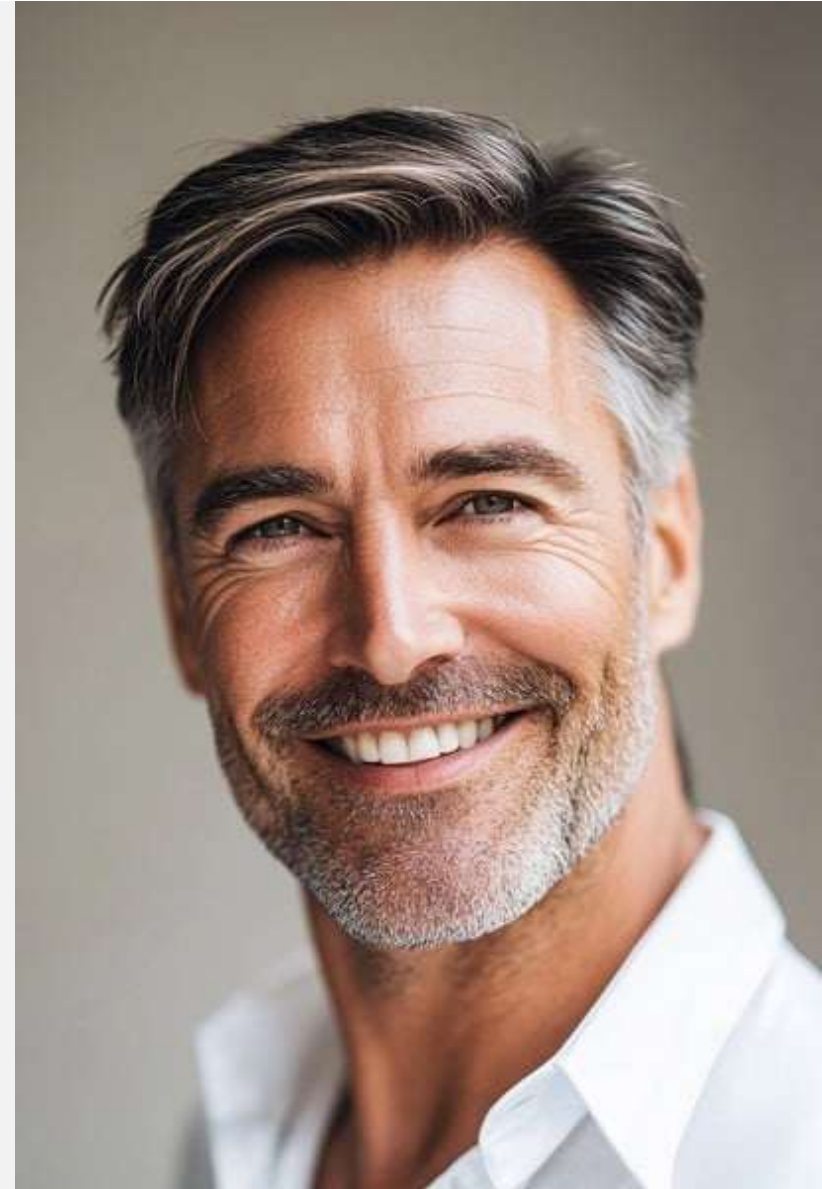


## TITLES OR DESCRIPTIONS

- Elders, presbyters – a reference to their age, experience
- Bishops, overseers – characteristic of their ministry
- Shepherds – by metonymy, the similitude of their work.
- Stewards – a general term that includes their role.

## WHAT IS AN **ELDER**?

- Define the **term**



## Elder

### A. Adjectives.

1. **presbuteros** (G4245), an adjective, the comparative degree of **presbus**, "an old man, an elder," is used
  - a) of age, whether of the "elder" of two persons, [Luk\\_15:25](#), or more, [Jhn\\_8:9](#), "the eldest", or of a person advanced in life, a senior, [Act\\_2:17](#); in [Heb\\_11:2](#), the "elders" are the forefathers in Israel so in [Mat\\_15:2](#); [Mrk\\_7:3](#), [Mrk\\_7:5](#) the feminine of the adjective is used of "elder" women in the churches, [1Ti\\_5:2](#), not in respect of position but in seniority of age;
  - b) of rank or positions of responsibility,
    - 1) among Gentiles, as in the Sept. of [Gen\\_50:7](#); [Num\\_22:7](#),
    - 2) in the Jewish nation, firstly, those who were the heads or leaders of the tribes and families, as of the seventy who assisted Moses, [Num\\_11:16](#); [Deu\\_27:1](#), and those assembled by Solomon; secondly, members of the Sanhedrin, consisting of the chief priests, "elders" and scribes, learned in Jewish law, e.g., [Mat\\_16:21](#); [Mat\\_26:47](#); thirdly, those who managed public affairs in the various cities, [Luk\\_7:3](#);
    - 3) in the Christian churches those who, being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches. To these the term "bishops," **episkopoi**, or "overseers," is applied (see [Act\\_20:17](#) with [Act\\_20:28](#), and [Tit\\_1:5](#) and [Tit\\_1:7](#)), the latter term indicating the nature of their work **presbuteroi** their maturity of spiritual experience. The divine arrangement seen throughout the NT was for a plurality of these to be appointed in each church, [Act\\_14:23](#); [Act\\_20:17](#); [Php\\_1:1](#); [1Ti\\_5:17](#); [Tit\\_1:5](#). The duty of "elders" is described by the verb **episkopeo**. They were appointed according as they had given evidence of fulfilling the divine qualifications, [Tit\\_1:6-9](#); cf. [1Ti\\_3:1-7](#) and [1Pe\\_5:2](#);
    - 4) the twenty-four "elders" enthroned in heaven around the throne of God, [Rev\\_4:4](#), [Rev\\_4:10](#); [Rev\\_5:5-14](#); [Rev\\_7:11](#), [Rev\\_7:13](#); [Rev\\_11:16](#); [Rev\\_14:3](#); [Rev\\_19:4](#). The number twenty-four is representative of earthly conditions. The word "elder" is nowhere applied to angels. See *OLD*.
2. **sumpresbuteros** (G4850), "a fellow-elder" (**sun**, "with"), is used in [1Pe\\_5:1](#).
3. **meizon** (G3187), "greater," the comparative degree of **meGas**, "great," is used of age, and translated "elder" in [Rom\\_9:12](#), with reference

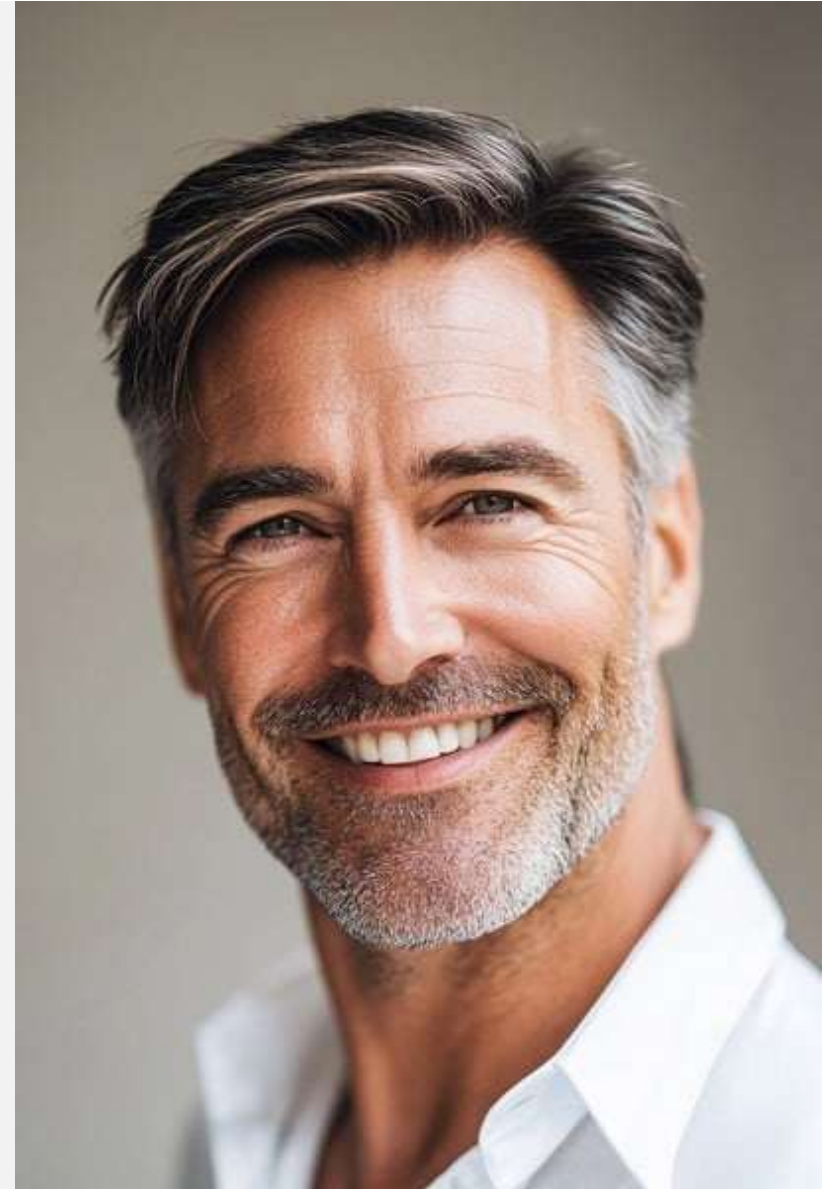
The Greek word *presbuteros* (elder) is where the Presbyterian church derives their name, before the development of the Presbyterian denominational bodies, Presbyterian congregations were overseen by local *presbyters*.

### B. Noun. **presbuter**

"elders" or bishops in a local church, [1Ti\\_4:14](#), "the presbytery." For their functions see A, No. 1, (3).

## WHAT IS AN **ELDER**?

- Define the term
- Explain the **significance**
- This is an adjective that *modifies the person*
- This is both an *absolute* and *relativistic* term
- It does not refer to an infant, juvenile or even *younger man\**.
- It refers to a *mature* man
- The qualifications suggest an age



# WHAT IS A BISHOP?

Define the Term



## Bishop

1. *episkopos* (G1985), lit., an overseer" (*epi*, "over," *skopeo*, "to look or watch"), whence Eng. "bishop," which has precisely the same meaning, is found in [Act\\_20:28](#); [Php\\_1:1](#); [1Ti\\_3:2](#); [Tit\\_1:7](#); [1Pe\\_2:25](#). See *OVERSEER*.

Note: *Presbuteros*, "an elder," is another term for the same person as bishop or overseer. See [Act\\_20:17](#) with [Act\\_20:28](#). The term "elder" indicates the mature spiritual experience and understanding of those so described; the term "bishop," or "overseer," indicates the character of the work undertaken. According to the divine will and appointment, as in the NT, there were to be "bishops" in every local church, [Act\\_14:23](#); [Act\\_20:17](#); [Php\\_1:1](#); [Tit\\_1:5](#); [Jas\\_5:14](#). Where the singular is used, the passage is describing what a "bishop" should be, [1Ti\\_3:2](#); [Tit\\_1:7](#). Christ Himself is spoken of as "the... Bishop of our souls," [1Pe\\_2:25](#). See *ELDER*.

2. *episkope* (G1984), besides its meaning, "visitation," e.g., [1Pe\\_2:12](#) (cf. the Sept. of [Exo\\_3:16](#); [Isa\\_10:3](#); [Jer\\_10:15](#)), is rendered "office," in [Act\\_1:20](#), RV (KJV, "bishoprick"); in [1Ti\\_3:1](#) "the office of a bishop," lit., "(if any one seeketh) overseership," there is no word representing office. Note: The corresponding verb is *episkopeo*, which, in reference to the work of an overseer, is found in [1Pe\\_5:2](#), RV, "exercising the oversight," for KJV "taking the oversight." see *OVERSIGHT*.

The Greek word *episkopos* (overseer) is where the Episcopal Church derive their name, when the Episcopal church was organized it was overseen by bishops, similar to the Anglican and Catholic churches.



## WHAT IS A BISHOP?

Define the Term

Explain the significance

This is a *verb* describing the work

This suggests the *significance of* the qualifications

He is a steward and he will manage the church.



## WHAT IS A SHEPHERD?

- Define the Term
- Describe the work of a shepherd
- This is a *noun* envisioning the work
- This also suggests the *significance of the qualifications*
- He is a steward of and will shepherd the church.

## Pastor

[poimen](#) (G4166), "a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks" (not merely one who feeds them), is used metaphorically of Christian "pastors," [Eph\\_4:11](#). "Pastors" guide as well as feed the flock, cf. [Act\\_20:28](#), which with [Act\\_20:17](#), indicates that this was the service committed to elders (overseers or bishops); so also in [1Pe\\_5:1](#), [1Pe\\_5:2](#), "tend the flock...exercising the oversight," RV; this involves tender care and vigilant superintendence. *See SHEPHERD.*



## WHAT IS A SHEPHERD?

- Define the Term
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## WHAT IS A STEWARD?



- Define the Term
- Describe the work of a steward
- This is a *noun* envisioning the work
- This also suggests the *significance of the qualifications*
- He is a manage the house of God.

## Steward

### A. Nouns.

1. **oikonomos** (G3623) primarily denoted "the manager of a household or estate" (**oikos**, "a house," **nemo**, "to arrange"), "a steward" (such were usually slaves or freedmen), [Luk\\_12:42](#); [Luk\\_16:1](#), [Luk\\_16:3](#), [Luk\\_16:8](#); [1Co\\_4:2](#); [Gal\\_4:2](#), RV (KJV, "governors"); in [Rom\\_16:23](#), the "treasurer (RV) of a city (*see CHAMBERLAIN, Note*); it is used metaphorically, in the wider sense, of a "steward" in general, (a) of preachers of the gospel and teachers of the Word of God, [1Co\\_4:1](#); (b) of elders or bishops in churches, [Tit\\_1:7](#); (c) of believers generally, [1Pe\\_4:10](#).
2. **epitropos** (G2012) is rendered "steward" in [Mat\\_20:8](#); [Luk\\_8:3](#): *see GUARDIAN*.
3. **oikonomia** (G3622) is rendered "stewardship" in [Luk\\_16:2](#), [Luk\\_16:3](#), [Luk\\_16:4](#), and in the RV in [1Co\\_9:17](#): *see DISPENSATION*.

### B. Verb.

**oikonomeo** (G3621), akin to A, Nos. 1 and 3, signifies "to be a house steward," [Luk\\_16:2](#). In the Sept., [Psa\\_112:5](#).

## WHAT IS A STEWARD?



- Define the Term
- Describe the work of a steward
- This is a *noun* envisioning the work
- This also suggests the *significance of the qualifications*
- He is a manage the house of God.

## THE SCARIEST PART

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: **for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account**, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.

(Hebrews 13:17 KJV)

## THE **GRAVITY** OF YOUR DECISION

1. Obey them
2. That have the rule over you
3. Submit yourselves to them
4. They watch for your souls
5. They must give account
6. If this is done with grief, it is unprofitable for you.

## CONCLUSION

- There is no *specific* term for the ones who oversee a congregation.
- The terms that are used are descriptions of the character of the person, and the work he will assume.
- These also emphasize the importance of selecting a *qualified* man.
- The appointment of these is one of great gravity.
- Next week, Lord willing, we will begin a study of the *qualifications* of elders.