



There are only two Church leadership roles defined in the bible. The first, only to be held by a man, is “bishop” which is also called overseer, pastor, or elder. This position must be a calling from God (the man should desire the position and does not need to be asked) and is the highest and most important position a man can hold. The bishop position, which is usually referred to as the “pastor”, is to shepherd the people of the local church by preaching and teaching as well as caring for their spiritual needs. The requirements of the position are set forth in **1st Timothy (3:1-7)** and **Titus (1:5-9)**. The second leadership position is “deacon” which can be held by a man or woman (deaconess). Individuals for this position may be chosen by men based on gifting and Church needs. The deacon position is a “ministering” role that leads ministries and necessary church functions. Requirements for this position are listed in **1st Timothy (3:8-13)**.

Overseer-Bishop-Pastor-Elder

- **Bishop/Overseer:** Comes from the Greek word “episkopos” and means literally, an overseeing office. This describes what a man in this position does...He oversees the congregation. This is the true title of the position.
- **Elder:** Comes from the Greek word “presbuteros” and means literally, an older man. This describes what a man in this position is...He is an older man.
- **Pastor:** Comes from the Greek word “poimainos” and means literally, to act as a shepherd tending sheep. This describes how a man in this position functions...He lovingly tends to the needs of the people like a shepherd to his flock. It should be noted this is a verb but most churches use it as a noun.

In Acts, Paul was addressing the elders of the Church at Miletus and he used all three Greek terms to describe the same position:

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

[Acts 20:28] 'Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (episkopos), to shepherd (poimaino) the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

When describing spiritual gifts and the leaders that God has appointed, Paul only uses the term “pastor” showing that this one position is equivalent to bishop, overseer, and elder.

[Ephesians 4:11-12] And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors (poimainos) and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

IMPORTANT:

[Hebrews 13:17] Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Requirements for an Overseer-Bishop-Pastor-Elder

***1st True qualification is that the man “aspires to” the position

	1st Timothy 3:1-7 [must be...]	Titus 1:5-9 [if any man is...]
1	Above reproach	Above reproach
2	The husband of one wife	The husband of one wife
3	Temperate	Self-Controlled
4	Prudent	Sensible
5	Respectable	Loving what is good
6	Hospitable	Hospitable
7	ABLE TO TEACH (This is the only functional “gift” that is required – everything else is moral or ethical)	Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (scripturally sound)
8	Not addicted to wine	Not addicted to wine
9	Not pugnacious	Not pugnacious
10	Gentle	Not quick Tempered
11	Peaceable	Not self-willed
12	Free from love of money	Not fond of sordid gain
13	One who manages his own household well	Above reproach as God’s steward
14	Keeps his children under control with all dignity	Having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion
15	Not a new Convert	Devout
16	Must have a good reputation with those outside the church	Just

The Choosing & Appointing

- 1) **The Office:** Every church should determine what the title for the office will be (Bishop, Overseer, Pastor, or Elder) and they should use only that one title. The most common choice is “Pastor”. Legal requirements for non-profit organizations (churches) dictate a board of directors made up of at least five members. Unfortunately, many churches call these directors “Elders” and loosely hold them to the Bishop requirements. They typically treat them as a functionally different group of men who are “lay leaders”. This is unscriptural and if the men are not teaching and shepherding they should simply be directors, administrators, or possibly be Deacons.
- 2) **A Need is Determined:** It’s wise to limit the number of people a pastor can shepherd. A common range is between 50 and 100 people per pastor.
- 3) **The Need is Made Known:** The current leadership must let the men of the congregation know that they are looking for a pastoral candidate. They should spend some time going through the requirements as well as stressing how important the position is. Once the need is made known, it should be followed by a period of prayer and waiting. If no one comes forward from within the congregation, the need will have to be posted to a larger group of pastoral candidates within the local region and beyond. This position is much too important for men to meet and choose who they think should be a candidate. **This must be a man’s desire and a calling from God.**

***[1st Timothy 3:1] It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

[1 Peter 5:1-3] Therefore, I exhort the elders (presbuteros) 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, shepherd (poimainos) the flock of God among you, exercising oversight (episkopos) not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Peter makes it very clear that a man must volunteer according to the will of God. If men try to choose candidates, they “muddy the water” putting the person under compulsion to take the position. This is done in far too many churches resulting in “good guys” being chosen by men rather than righteous men being called by God.

- 4) **God Calls a Man:** God will move a man (or men) and put the desire in his heart to come forward for review as a pastoral candidate. This man will have a great desire to not only oversee the people of the congregation but also to shepherd them with feeding and teaching from the word of God. **See Matthew (9:36-38) & Luke (10:2).**
- 5) **Review and Testing (Choosing):** Once a man comes forward, they must be reviewed for worthiness. The 16 requirements listed above from 1st Timothy and Titus must be used to determine the man’s qualifications. This includes interviewing the candidates’ family and friends both inside and outside the church. Please realize that these attributes don’t define a perfect man...simply a righteous and godly man and scripture makes it clear that the candidate “Must be” and “Is” all of these. The candidate should be given several opportunities to teach in front of the entire congregation to prove that they meet the “Able to Teach” requirement.
- 6) **Appointing:** Once it has been determined that the man is worthy of the office, they need to be “Appointed” to their office. This is a wonderful thing and the life of this man will be changed forever. The appointing of a pastor should always be accompanied by prayer, worship of God, and celebration.

Teaching

Teaching is a spiritual gift and it is absolutely required of a pastor. A pastor should have read the entire bible many times and be capable of addressing any questions put forth. Teaching from a pastoral perspective is to anyone at any time including large groups of men and women, children, and one-on-one. **See [1st Timothy 4:13-16].**

It’s advisable, but not required, that all pastors be paid because this is a life dedication and they may need support. Also, certain pastors may do a better job than others so they should be paid more.

[1st Timothy 5:17] The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.



Deacons

- The term “Deacon” comes from the Greek “diakoneo” which means to serve or minister.
- Qualifications for Deacons are defined in (**1st Timothy 3:8-13**).
- Deacons may be male or female. An example of a female is in **Romans (16:1)** where the word “servant” is diakoneo.
- This is extremely important position and ALL ministries that are supported within a church should be led by a “Deacon or Deaconess” with the appropriate spiritual gifts for that ministry.
- This position is not necessarily a “calling from God” so Deacons may be chosen by other leaders based on their zeal and/or “fruits”.