

## Elder Training Series

### Session 01 - Introduction To The Ministry Position of 'Elder' (NIV based)

READ: 1 Timothy 3:1 - **"Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task."**

SECTION POINT: God wants persons to lead churches and ministries.

- - God considers that leading a ministry is a "noble", "good, valuable, or virtuous" task or work. (Strong's #2570)
  - - God wants people to lead ministries.
  - - God wants people to desire to lead ministries, but of course taking away someone else's ministry leadership is not acceptable.
  - - Therefore, wanting to lead a ministry would involve either waiting for a ministry leadership position to become open, or appropriately starting one's own ministry but without causing a divisive split.
  - - When initiated and conducted appropriately, God approves of people starting and leading ministries, presumably because this directly contributes to the building of His Kingdom.
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READ: from 1 Peter 5:1-2 - **"To the elders among you...", "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers..."**

SECTION POINT: God considers that the terms 'Elder', 'Overseer', and 'Pastor' interchangeably refer to essentially the same functions of leading churches and ministries.

#### Definitions Of 'Elder' / 'Overseer' / 'Pastor':

- - - - an "elder" (Titus 1:5) = "older; a senior; member of a Christian "presbyter"", a man who teaches and rules over a congregation (Strong's #4245 with *AHD* 'presbyter'); elders "direct the affairs of the church" (1 Timothy 5:17);
  - - - - an "overseer" (1 Timothy 3:2) = "a superintendent, in other words a Christian officer in charge of a church (literally or figuratively)" (Strong's #1985); "entrusted with God's work" (Titus 1:7);
  - - - - a "pastor" (Ephesians 4:11) = "a shepherd (literally or figuratively)" (Strong's #4166).
- - 'Pastors' likewise fall into the category of 'elder' or 'overseer', because their functioning and duties coincide with that of 'elders' and 'overseers' - all three of these titles are interchangeably used in 1 Peter 5:1-2 and are cited as having the function of "being shepherds of God's flock that is under [their] care" (v.2).
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READ: 1 Timothy 3:2a - **"Now the overseer must be..."** and Titus 1:6a - **"An elder must be..."**

SECTION POINT: God instructs that persons who lead churches and ministries **must be specifically qualified** according to His requirements as listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7,8-13, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

- - By God's design, elders or overseers and pastors are "appointed" to that authority position, to administer and fulfill the functions of that office of authority in a church, or congregation, or ministry. (Titus 1:5)
  - - Thereby, elders or overseers and pastors are designated by God as being required to meet the qualifications as specified in the Scriptures, particularly in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.
  - - A common shortcoming among believers in God's Kingdom is that "the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few". (Matthew 9:37)
  - - For building His Kingdom, God is in continuous need of more dedicated workers who become qualified and then willing to do ministry work and lead ministries.
  - - To "set [one's] heart on being an overseer" means the person is committed to becoming qualified, trained, and equipped to oversee a ministry. (1 Timothy 3:1)
  - - An "overseer" is a supervisor of a ministry, which necessitates that the person has or develops skills to do that ministry work well.
  - - If supervising a ministry involves training other people in doing that ministry work, then the overseer must have advanced training, hands-on experience, and corresponding exceptional Holy Spirit-empowered giftedness to do that ministry work with excellence.
  - - This process of qualification is what God uses to prepare and "send out workers into his harvest field". (Matthew 9:38)
  - - For the higher levels of overseeing or supervision such as pastor, elder, overseer, or deacon, unqualified leaders are not approved nor authorized by God to lead in that ministry position, which is evidenced by the long list of specific qualification requirements in the key passages of 1 Timothy 3:1-7,8-13, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4, and that are prefaced by the imperative phrase "**Now the overseer must be...**" and "**An elder must be...**" (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6).
  - - "So, then, now, or accordingly", here in each of these key passages is the list of the necessary qualifications for being an elder / overseer / pastor of a ministry. (1 Timothy 3:2; Strong's #3767)
  - - Notice that these listings are not an optional recommendation for qualifications; they are a listing of required, "necessary, and binding" qualifications that the elder / overseer / pastor "must" have or be. (Strong's #1163)
  - - God does not leave room for nor intend that any of these qualifications be fudged, compromised, minimized, or ignored; a person who is or wants to be an elder / overseer / pastor must meet all of these listed qualifications satisfactorily, otherwise it is not God's will for that person to be or to become an elder / overseer / pastor at that time.
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READ: 1 Timothy 5:17a - "**The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor...**" and "...[they] **will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.**" - 1 Peter 5:4b

SECTION POINT: God appreciates and will reward those persons who perform well the duties of an elder / overseer / pastor.

- - God substantially values the performing well of the duties of an elder / overseer / pastor, as evidenced by the statements that: it is a "noble task" in 1 Timothy 3:1; it is "worthy of double honor" in 1 Timothy 5:17a; and that person "will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" in 1 Peter 5:4b.
  - - Herein, God is pronouncing that persons who perform well the duties of an elder / overseer / pastor will be distinctly recognized in heaven by God and specifically eternally rewarded for performing well the functions of elder / overseer / pastor.
  - - However, God will use a higher standard to make that determination, as implied in James 3:1, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly".
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BIG IDEA: God values and wants that qualified persons be an elder, overseer, or pastor in the leading of churches or ministries.

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#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Upon what basis do most church people normally select elders, pastors, ministers, or directors to oversee ministries?
    - - - - Is the selection process based primarily on the popularity of the person?
    - - - - Or on how nice the person's sermons or lessons sound?
    - - - - Or how good of a speaker the person is?
    - - - - Or how good looking or well dressed the person is?
    - - - - Or how nice the person is?
    - - - - Or on the friendship the person has with a power person in the church?
    - - - - Or on someone that is known within the church or ministry, rather than a more qualified new person from the outside?
    - - - - Or on the availability of the person?
    - - - - Or on a lack of anyone adequately qualified?
    - - - - Or on how cheap the pay is?
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#### APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATION:

- What are your motivations for being considered for an elder, overseer, or pastor position in this church or ministry?
  - - - - Deep down inside, are you desiring to be highly regarded by the people in this church or ministry as their irreplaceable leader?
  - - - - Are you desiring to be the center of attention in this church or ministry?
  - - - - Are you desiring to be in control in this church or ministry?

- - - - Are you desiring to be the ultimate authority and expert on all matters in this church or ministry? Perhaps the religious guru regionally or jet-setting guru globally?
  - - - - Are you desiring to mainly just issue orders to other people, who will immediately and obediently do all the work?
  - - - - Are you desiring to be financially well-compensated? Perhaps enjoying numerous perks and a lavish lifestyle?
  - - It would be wise to take some time now to honestly evaluate your motivations for being considered for an elder, overseer, or pastor position in this church or ministry.
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File name: eldertraining-session01.\_\_\_\_ (.htm, .rtf, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

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