

## Major Event: The Church

### Lesson 4: Structure of the Church

**Central Text:** 1 Timothy 3:1-13

#### Suggested Subjects for Teacher to Cover:

**Elder** (πρεσβύτερος, presbuteros) - Spiritually qualified men who were appointed to have spiritual care of the churches.

**Overseer** (ἐπίσκοπος, episkopos) - One who overlooks, a ruler, an overseer.

Titus indicates that the elder (presbuteros) and the overseer (episkopos) are the same person (Titus 1:5-9):

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint **elders** (presbuteros) in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For (γὰρ - gar) the **overseer** (episkopos) must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 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.

Peter instructed the elders (presbuteros) to exercise oversight over the believers in the church (1 Peter 5:1-2):

Therefore, I exhort the **elders** 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** the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight** (episkopeo) not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

The elder also has the function of "shepherding" or "pasturing" (ποιμαίνω, poimaino - where we get the term "pastor").

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."

Church elders are first mentioned as appointed by Paul and Barnabas to various churches (Acts 14:23).

When they had appointed **elders** (presbuteros) for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Elders are to guard the truth of the Bible:

Titus 1:5 - For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint **elders** (presbuteros) in every city as I directed you,...

Titus 1:9 - 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.**

A central function of the pastor is to be diligent in learning God's word and teaching God's word:

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

2 Timothy 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 - I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: **preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

The elder is not to lord his authority over the flock (1 Peter 5:1-5):

5:2 - The elder was to shepherd (pastor) the flock, while "exercising oversight". The elder is not to beat the sheep.

5:3 - The elder is not to "lord" his authority over the flock. The elder is to be an example to the flock.

5:5 - The young men were to be subject to the elders with humility.

#### Suggested Attributes and Characteristics of God:

Sovereignty- Christ is the Head of the body, the church.

Omnipotence- Nothing can overpower Christ's church.

#### Suggested Reading for Parents and Child at Home:

1 Timothy 3:1-13. Titus Chapter 1