

Don't Neglect Your Calling (ACTS 20:17-33)

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Our church is going through the election of elders and ministry leaders. Which get appointed every three years. *In most evangelical churches today, you hear the word elders to refer to the leadership of the church.* It's clear to me that there are still people who don't understand the role or function of elders. We made a pamphlet to guide you and remind you of the biblical qualifications for elders. The Bible also tells us what they did, and we will be looking at a passage in which there are three words to help us understand the biblical functions of elders.

The church began at the preaching of the apostles and as time progressed you will also hear the word elders for those in the leadership of the church.

The church in Jerusalem had elders. From Syria (Antioch) Paul and Barnabas took an offering to the elders in Judea. **Acts 11:29-30**

When Paul began to plant churches, he would train and appoint elders and then go to the next location and do the same. **Acts 14:21-23**

In the church planting method, the preacher or evangelist would appoint the elders. Paul told Titus to appoint elders in the church in Crete and gave him a list of qualifications for such leaders. (***Titus 1:5-10***)

Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders to discuss a theological issue. **Acts 15:2**

Who were these elders and what did they exactly do?

Acts 20:17-33

Paul was traveling with his companions and they were on their way to Jerusalem. Paul wanted to arrive if possible by the day of Pentecost. When they reached Miletus, Paul sent for the elders of Ephesus, so Paul could give them his final instructions.

Paul sent for the elders of the church in Ephesus. (v.17) The word **elder** here is ***presbuteros*** (elder, older, experienced; wise because of his experience).

The Jewish community always had elders and they were the most experienced and wise who led the community in legal matters. (the elders of the city or at the gate: ***Prov.31:23 (The proverb 31 woman was married to an elder); Ruth 4:2, Lam.5:14***).

The other words to refer to elders are in verse 28

Be on your guard for yourselves and the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **(pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock) Overseers.** (**Episkopos**) (guardian, overseer, watchman, superintendent). Elders are overseers, guardians of the affairs of God's church. *They must first be guardians of their own lives.* **Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock.** Paul highlights the qualifications of these leaders when he wrote to **Timothy (1 Tim 3:1-15), Men worthy of respect, able to teach, of good testimony. One that rules his family well. Elders are to watch their lives as Christians;** what kind of testimony are they producing? **They must guard the church (v.29)** savage wolves will rise to attack the church from outside and from within. Therefore, be on guard, alert. It's the duty of elders to protect God's church from those wolves. Elders watch over the Christian doctrine; ministries, legal matters and so forth). **Titus 1:9** He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. Elders encourage and rebuke those who oppose sound teaching.

The other word to describe the function of these leaders. Shepherds.

(v.28) **Be shepherds (poimainein): shepherd, pastor, to tend for. (ESV To care for the church of God.)**

The overseer shepherds or care for the flock, the church of Christ; Shepherds guided the sheep to green pastures, and to water, they protected the flock from danger.

Ps.23 The LORD is my shepherd....

Acts 20:28 Be shepherds of God's church which he bought with his own blood. (They are to care for God's church. God will hold them responsible in how they care for the flock)

Jesus is called the Good Shepherd John 10:11-18 *There you read about the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. The shepherd leads them, they follow the shepherd's voice*

For three years Paul warned these leaders of the dangers that they would encounter as shepherds of the church of God. **(v.31) "Be alert remembering that for three years I did not cease night and day to admonish everyone with tears."**
ESV

Churches were led by leaders known as elders, guardians or overseers or pastors. These words tell us about their role in the church.

They taught, guided, oversaw the ministries of the congregation; battled against false teaching. In other words, the same role of a pastor today, is the role of an elder biblically speaking.

I would like to conclude with Peter's words to the elders. 1 Peter 5:1-4

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's suffering and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it 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 will never fade away. (NIV)