

πρεσβυτέρου – elder

^{NAS} **1 Timothy 5:19** Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

Since church leaders can be targets of false accusations, there must be at least two witnesses or no hearing is to take place – to protect the elders!

A Study of ἐπίσκοπος

Those who Presided over Churches

ἐπισκόποις – overseers

^{NAS} **Philippians 1:1** Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons...

Define the recipients of the letter:

Saints in Philippi: _____, including:

Overseers: _____

Deacons: _____

ἐπίσκοπον – guardian (Jesus – Guardian)

^{NAS} **1 Peter 2:25** For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Jesus is **the Guardian**, but elders also strive to protect the souls of the church members.

How? How did Jesus proceed? _____

ἐπισκόπους – overseers

^{NAS} **Acts 20:28** Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Who places overseers? _____

Is the church of God valuable? Y N

ἐπισκοπῆς – overseer, ἐπίσκοπον – overseer

^{NAS} **1 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.

² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. ⁴ He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity ⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); ⁶ and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. ⁷ And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Mark and discuss the key qualifications noted above. Notes: _____

The passages in this brochure are from the *New American Standard Bible, The Lockman Foundation, 1977.*

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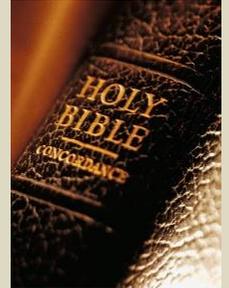
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A Word Study of πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος

NT Translations Include:

- ➔ Elder
- ➔ Bishop
- ➔ Overseer
- ➔ Presbyter
- ➔ Guardian



Introduction

Many churches today have members who are called "elders" and "deacons." This brochure is a study of the Greek NT usage of the words πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος," which are *sometimes* translated "elder." Even though the roles of elder and deacon overlap, this study will provide a better understanding of the primary *actions* of those who serve as elders.

See the brochure entitled: "A Word Study of Διάκονος," which is *sometimes* translated "deacon" to see how the two roles overlap and how they are distinct.

The Definitions of πρεσβύτερος

Elder – Age:

1. Where two persons are spoken of, *the elder* (Luke 15:25).
2. Universally, *advanced in life, an elder, a senior* (Acts 2:17).

Elder – Rank or office:

3. Among the Jews: *members of the Sanhedrin* (Matt. 16:21) and *those in separate cities managed public affairs and administered justice* (Luke 7:3).
4. Among Christians, *those who presided over the assemblies or churches* (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22f; 16:4; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17,19; Titus 1:5; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:1,5); with τῆς ἐκκλησίας added (Acts 20:17; James 5:14). That they did not differ at all from the (ἐπίσκοποι) *bishops or overseers* is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5,7) and that the duty of *presbyters* is described by the term ἐπισκοπεῖν (1 Pet. 5:1f); accordingly only two ecclesiastical officers, οἱ ἐπίσκοποι and οἱ διάκονοι, are distinguished in Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1, 8. The title ἐπίσκοπος denotes the function, πρεσβύτερος the dignity... (Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament)

Note: With Greek nouns, four cases are used to express *different functions*:

- Nominative = *subject* (ος, οι)
- Genitive = *possession* (ου, ων)
- Dative = *indirect object* (ω, οις)
- Accusative = *direct object* (ον, ους)

A Study of πρεσβύτερος Those who Presided over Churches

πρεσβυτέρους – elders

^{NAS} **Acts 14:23** And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Who appointed the elders? _____
Then they left them in the care of the Lord to preside over their individual churches.

^{NAS} **Acts 15:2** ...*the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

The issue: Was circumcision necessary?

πρεσβυτέρων – elders

^{NAS} **Acts 15:4** And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders...

Define each group of people:

The church: _____

The apostles: _____

The elders: _____

πρεσβύτεροι – elders

^{NAS} **Acts 15:6** And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

The apostles and church leaders studied, discussed, and resolved the issue.

πρεσβυτέροις – elders

^{NAS} **Acts 15:22** Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas...

Then the apostles, elders, and church members choose men to carry the letter which contained their decision.

πρεσβύτεροι – elders

^{NAS} **1 Timothy 5:17** Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

From the passage above, identify 3 things done by elders: _____

πρεσβυτέρους – elders

^{NAS} **1 Peter 5:1** Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your fellow elder* [συμπρεσβύτερος] and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Who is calling himself an elder? _____

What does a shepherd do for his sheep? He l _____, f _____, and p _____ them.

Elders willingly watch over the church members – according to God's W _____; and not greedy for m _____, but eager to s _____; not b _____ people around, but always setting a g _____ example.

^{NAS} **James 5:14** Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord...

Who contacts the elders? _____

What do the elders do? _____