

Elders and Deacons

in the **New Testament**

- How does scripture describe elders and deacons?
- How do they function in the early church?
- Have those roles changed over time?
- Where do all the different terms come from?
- Does church office and governance really matter?

Elder
Deacon
Overseer
Bishop
Teacher
Pastor

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- Week 1 - Elders in scripture - history and function in the church
- Week 2 - deacons in the NT, beginnings and function in the church
- Week 3 - Early church and today - what's changed, what hasn't
- Week 4 - Responsibilities and Qualifications, letter to Timothy
- Week 5 - Review, discussion, moving ahead

Elders and Deacons
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Week 1

Elders in Scripture:

Background and
function in the NT
Church

History of the Term

- not new in the early NT church
- Num 22:4 - not exclusive to the nation of Israel
- Exodus 12:3 / 12:21 - elders as heads of families
- Lev 4:15 - mirroring a priestly role
- Num 11:16-17 - leaders of the community
- 1st contact with Moses

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Week 1

Elders in Scripture:

Background and
function in the NT
Church

Elders in the New Testament

- drawn from Jewish (historical) framework
- Chief Priests, teachers of the law, elders
- Chief priest = early church elder?
- interaction with Jesus - positive or negative

There is no office in the
New Testament church
that functions as the
chief priests of the Old
Testament, since there
is no need according to
1 Peter 2 and 1
Timothy 2:5

Elders and Deacons in the New Testament

Week 1

Elders in Scripture:

Background and
function in the NT
Church

Background

Jewish Roots (although
not exclusive to Israel)

Associated with priests
and teachers of the law

Not a continuation of
OT priestly role
(approach God on
behalf of people)

Function in the New Testament

Acts 20:17-31	general oversight, guidance
1 Timothy 5:17	direct affairs, preach and teach gospel
Heb 13:7, 17-19	teach scripture, authority, oversee
1 Peter 5:1-5	shepherd (protect), be example
Titus 1:9	encourage with the word of scripture

Elder (presbyteros)

Man of seasoned judgement

Used synonymously in NT (Titus 1:5-7)

Overseer (episkopos)

Leader of the church community

Pastor (poi men) used in connection with “teachers” (Eph 4:11).

The verb form (poimaino) means “to shepherd” or oversee, the same phrase used to describe the work of the elders.

Acts 20 - Paul calls together the **elders** of the church at Ephesus and reminds them that their task is to **pastor** the church of which they have been made **overseers**.



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Summary of Elders in Scripture: Background and Function in the New Testament

Background

Jewish Roots (although not exclusive to Israel)

Associated with priests and teachers of the law

Not a continuation of OT priestly role (approach God on behalf of people)

Function in the New Testament Church

General Oversight of the church, direction

teaching scripture, boundaries of doctrine

Encourage, support, protect, examples

