

## Shepherdology: How to raise healthy productive sheep

### KEY PASSAGES THAT RELATE TO ELDERS:

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There are ten NT passages which represent the “mother lode” of biblical truth regarding local church leaders. Each of these passages go beyond an “incidental reference” to elders. It is important to know the reference and basic content of each of these ten passages. The key verse in each passage is underlined. It is also worth noting the various “titles” for elders that are used interchangeably in some of these verses.

A. Acts 20:28-35

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. I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Acts 20:28-35 is a key description of elders' RESPONSIBILITIES.

B. Eph 4:11-13

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; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.

Eph. 4:11-13 is another key description of the core RESPONSIBILITIES of elders.

C. 1 Thess. 5:12-13

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

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1 Thess. 5:11-12 is a key passage for understanding how the congregation should RESPOND to its leaders.

D. 1 Tim. 3:1-7

*It is a trustworthy statement: If a man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 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.*

1 Tim. 3:1-7 is one of two key passages that relate to the QUALIFICATIONS for an elder.

E. 1 Tim. 5:17-22

*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thus share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.*

1 Tim. 5:17-22 is another key passage for understanding how the congregation should RESPOND to its leaders. It also gives us some key insight into the RESPONSIBILITIES of elders and the PROCESS by which they are to be recognized.

F. Titus 1:5-10

*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer 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*

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*the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach.*

Titus 1:5-10 is the other key passages that relate to the QUALIFICATIONS for an elder.

### G. Heb. 13:7

*Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*

Heb. 13:7 emphasizes the RESPONSE of the sheep to their leaders.

### H. Heb. 13:17

*Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

Heb. 13:17 also emphasizes the RESPONSE of the sheep to their leaders.

### I. James 5:14-15

*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; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.*

James 5:14-15 is a key passage concerning one of the RESPONSIBILITIES of the elders.

### J. I Pet. 5:1-4

*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, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

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1 Pet. 5:1-4 is a key passage for understanding the MANNER in which elders undertake their duties.

**Key Principle: Obviously, understanding elders matters to God – it is a topic not to be ignored. God has not left us to invent an institution of our own preferred design – He has clearly laid out what it is necessary for local church leaders to be and do.**