

Passages that Relate to Elders

The actual word 'elder' (*presbyteros*) is used 66 times in the NT. It often refers to the elders that ruled the nation of Israel in the Sanhedrin (cf. Mk. 14:43), or just as in English, to people who are older (cf. Lk. 15:25). But several times, it refers to those who are given the responsibility of leading the church. The following passages mention elders (and overseers) directly:

Acts 11:29-30 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰This they did, sending their gift to the **elders** by Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed **elders** for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

Acts 15:1-3, 22. Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and **elders** about this question... ²² Then the apostles and **elders**, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 16:4. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and **elders** in Jerusalem for the people to obey.

Acts 20:17-18, 28-31. From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the **elders** of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia.... ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**. Be **shepherds** of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

Acts 21:17 When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers received us warmly. ¹⁸ The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the **elders** were present.

Phil. 1:1. To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the **overseers** and deacons:

1 Tim. 3:1-13 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an **overseer**, he desires a noble task. ² Now the **overseer** must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. ⁵ (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷ He must

also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

1 Tim. 4:14. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the **body of elders** laid their hands on you.

1 Tim. 5:17-20. The **elders** who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." ¹⁹ Do not entertain an accusation against an **elder** unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

Titus 1.5-9. The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint **elders** in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An **elder** must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an **overseer** is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

1 Pet. 5:1-4. To the **elders** among you, I appeal as a **fellow elder**, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² 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; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

James 5:13-16 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is any one of you sick? He should call the **elders** of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.