

πρεσβυτέρου – elder

<sup>NAS</sup> **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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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)

<sup>NAS</sup> **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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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.

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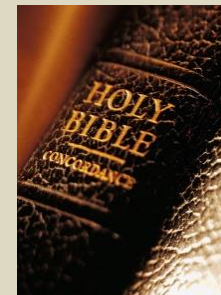
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# A Word Study of πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος

## 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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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.*

<sup>NAS</sup> **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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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

<sup>NAS</sup> **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, <sup>2</sup> 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; <sup>3</sup> 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 I \_\_\_\_\_, 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.*

<sup>NAS</sup> **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? \_\_\_\_\_*