

BIBLE STUDY IN CHURCH GOVERNMENT  
BY  
Henry H. Ness

BISHOPS AND PASTORS

Bishop (Greek, "Episkopos") meaning "overseer" or "superintendent". I Tim. 3:2; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:7; I Peter 2:25.

Bishoprick (Greek, "Biskope") which means the office of a bishop. Acts 1:20; I Tim. 3:1.

Paster (Greek, "Poimen") meaning "shepherd", has also the same meaning as bishop, that is, "overseer," "superintendent," or "ruler". Eph. 4:11; I Peter 5:1-4; I Tim. 5:17; I Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:7; 17,24; Rom. 12:8. *Acts 6:1-4*

The distinction between "elders" as rulers and overseers, and pastors or bishops is that the "elders" act in their capacity as a body, whereas the bishop or the pastor acts in his capacity as an individual. The word "reverend", which is so commonly used in connection with pastors and bishops, is not exactly a biblical term, the use of this term being brought about because of the Bible's teaching concerning the respect, reverence and honor to be paid a minister of the Gospel. The word "reverence" is used in Eph. 5:33 in regard to the wife's reverence for her husband. A minister likewise should be revered or respected for the office he holds. I Tim. 5:17; I Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:7,17,24.

*reverence does not mean to worship, but to respect.*

The office of a pastor or bishop is limited to man. Nowhere in the scriptures do we find a woman pastor; on the contrary, women are forbidden to teach or "usurp" authority over man. The office of pastor is an office of authority. To "usurp" means "without right". The scriptures give no place for such. The woman who takes upon herself to hold the office of a pastor does so by "usurping" or "without (scriptural) right". I Cor. 14:34,38; I Tim. 2:11-14; I Cor. 11:3,7; Eph. 5:24,33; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:1-5. Christ never called a woman into the ministry of authority. They were all men. For the ministry of women see article on "The Ministry of Women in the Church".

*difference between pastor or minister. Time element doesn't matter. Every one should be a minister. Elders make you a pastor. pastor is a ruling elder.*

*Every one should be a minister. Time element doesn't matter. Elders make you a pastor.*

Elders (Greek, "Presbuteros") meaning order or body of elders in the capacity as "overseers". Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23; Acts 16:4; Acts 20:17,28; Acts 21:18; Titus 1:5; James 5:14.

Men chosen for this office were older men of experience and of spiritual maturity, hence the name "elders", or rather, "elderly".

*An elder should know Bible well to teach and "stop the mouth of gainsayers."*  
Elders in the Old Testament.  
*acts 6 says they must be filled with the Spirit.*

1. Joseph had elders in his household. Gen. 50:7; 41:38-43.
2. Elders of the city. Deut. 19:12; 21:3,6,19.
3. Elders of Israel. Ex. 3:16; 12:21; 17:5.
4. Elders of the people. Ex. 19:7; Ruth 4:4.
5. The chosen elders out from among the elders of Israel. Num. 11:24.
6. The elders as a body were heads and rulers of the people under

*only elders (men) may preach. All can lay on of hands and pray.*

- the supervision of Moses, God's chosen pastor or bishop. Israel had elders when they still were slaves to the Egyptians. Ex.3:16.
7. After the deliverance from Egypt, the first elders in the wilderness were suggested by Jethro, when Moses submitted to his advice and chose certain men of merit out of Israel. Ex.18:14-27; Deut. 1:12-17.
  8. Afterwards God appointed seventy elders, according to the choice of Moses, to be picked out from among the elders already in existence, and these received "of the spirit that was upon Moses" to put them to work in the sweetest harmony with him, when he needed their help. Num.11:11,16,25; Judges 21:16; I Sam.8:4; Ezra 10:7,8,14.
  9. Joseph of Arimethea was such a counselor or elder. Luke 23:51.

Elders in the New Testament.

*Deacons never chosen until there was a definite need.  
Deacons refer to boards.*

1. Christ was an elder. I Peter 2:25
2. The apostles were elders. I Peter 5:1; II John 1:1; III John 1:1
3. There will be elders in Heaven. Rev.4:4,10;5:8,14;7:11; 14:3. The eldership in the apostolic local churches was always plural. There is no instance of one elder in a local church. The functions of the elders are: To rule, I Tim. 3:4,5; I Tim. 5:17; To guard the body of revealed truth from perversion and error, Titus 1:5-11; To oversee the church as shepherds of the flock, Acts 20:17,28; John 21:16; Heb. 13:17; I Peter 5:2.

Elders are not to be chosen by the congregation, but appointed by the pastors or bishops. Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5. In Titus and I Timothy we find the scriptural qualifications for elders, as a guidance in such appointments.

As the elders of Israel worked in cooperation with and under the supervision of Moses, so the elders in the church should work in cooperation with, and under the supervision of the pastor.

No accusation should be received against an elder without two or three witnesses. I Tim. 5:10.

The elders should assist in praying for the sick. James 5:14.

The elders should counsel together with the pastor in all church matters. Acts 20:17,38; 11:30; 15:4-6,23; I Peter 5:1.

The office of an elder is limited to man. Women elders are never spoken of in the Bible.

The number of elders in a local church should be governed by its need.

DEACONS

Deacons (Greek "Diakonos") meaning "servant, waiter, or minister". Acts 6:1-7; I Tim. 3:8-13; Phil. 1:1. Deacon is the official title of one who has been chosen to serve the church in temporal affairs. Deacons are chosen by the congregation and approved by the pastors and elders. Acts 6:3-6. They should be ordained and set apart for service by the pastor. Nothing is said about deacons being "rulers in the church, but rather, servants of the church. The qualification of deacons is found in Acts 6:3 and I Tim. 3:8-13. Stephen and Philip, of the first chosen deacons, were later called into the ministry as evangelists. Acts 6:8-15; Acts 7; 8:5; 21:8. Philip's four daughters had the "gift of prophecy". The number of

deacons should be according to the need of the local church.

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

1. The women play an important part in the ministry within the church. However, their ministry is limited to the extent that they are not permitted to fill the office of elders, of pastor, or bishop, or any office of authority within the church. I Cor. 14:34-38; I Tim. 2:11-14; I Cor. 11:3,7-9; Eph. 5:22-24,33; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:1-5; I Peter 3:1-6.
2. The women have a right to become witnesses, evangelists, or missionaries for the purpose of evangelizing the unsaved. Where a nucleus is formed of new believers in Christ, the sister should call a brother minister to carry on as pastor, to teach and lead them into the deeper things of God.
3. They may teach the younger women and children and take any part in assisting in Sunday School work. Titus 2:3-5.
4. They may have any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpretation, etc., and exercise the same within the church. I Cor. 11:1-16; 14:31; Joel 2:28,29; Acts 21:9; Acts 2:18.
5. They may labor as helpers in the Gospel, that is, assisting generally in church work. Phil. 4:3. (including teaching when under the supervision of the Pastor or Elders).
6. The women assisted Christ and served Him with their substance. Luke 8:1-3.
7. The women assisted the apostles in the same way. They may serve as assistant to the pastor. I Cor. 9:5,6.
8. The elder women should be entreated as mothers. I Tim. 5:2. Pricilla was her husband's helper in the ministry. Rom. 16:3. Mary at the tomb, served Jesus as a messenger to the disciples. The woman at the well gave her testimony to the unbelievers. John 4:27-30,39. Phebe, our "sister", turned her home over to a missionary-home, and became a "deaconess" within the church in Cenchrea. She brought the letter of Paul from Corinth to Cenchrea, and he warned them to "receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints" and that the church in Cenchrea should assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of. Rom. 16:1,2; II John 1:1,13. Phebe means, "shining". The word "deaconess" is not used in the translation, but it is used in the same expression as "deacon" or servant, in I Tim. 3:8; Rom. 16:1; II John 1-4. Mary bestowed much labor as a helper. Rom. 16:6. Tryphena labored in the Lord. Rom. 16:12. Persis labored much in the Lord. Rom. 16:12. Julia received greetings. Rom. 16:15. All in all, the women may act in any capacity in the church, except, as already stated, in the office of authority, such as elders, pastors, or bishops. They may be deaconesses, which corresponds with the office of deacon, as helper in the church.