

THE224 Christian Narrative 2 Redemption

Unit 5b The Leadership of the Community

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Hello and welcome to Session 5B, the leadership of the community. Our main teaching point today is that the leadership of the church is Christ-appointed. What we'll do in this session is take a look at some of the keywords related to the leadership positions found within the church. So, there are three keywords that are all used under the rubric of elder in the New Testament. We'll take a look at each one of these individually and recognize that all of them are often used under the English word elder. The first is the word *presbuteros*, translated presbyter or elder directly. You'll see that there's a number of passages that we can go to to look at this. Acts 15:2 offers us a good example. There the text says that "After Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and also some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this [particular] question." Relating to the Jews and Gentile question, here we see that Paul and Barnabas come up to Jerusalem to speak with the elders, different than the apostles, different than the original apostles of Jesus. These elders are leaders of the church.

The next phrase is *episkopos*, overseer, again elder or bishop. Acts 20:28 offers us a good example of this word. Here caution is given. "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." Here we have the word overseer used in reference to the leadership of the church. The final word is *poimen*. *Poimen* is actually translated pastor or shepherd. A good example of this comes from Ephesians 4:11. Here in our description, we're told that "he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds (the *poimen*) and teachers" different offices within the church, different gifts within the church. So here we have these three keywords: *presbuteros*, *episkopos*, and *poimen* (presbyter, overseer, shepherd) that all kind of function under this one rubric of the English word elder or leader in the church.

Let's now take a look at the duties of the elder. There are several key functions that the elder is supposed to take care of in the organization of the church. First is that they are to shepherd the flock. Acts 20:28. Again, we just read this, but "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." In essence, when we think of the pastoral scene, that of the shepherd and the sheep, we recognize that one of the roles of the elder is to take care of the flock of Christ and all of the duties that go in with that: discipline, restoration, care, protection, leading, guidance. All of those words can be contained within this concept of shepherding the flock.

Next, we see it is important that the elder be a teacher of the word. We look at 1 Timothy 3:2. "Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable," and then of course, "able to teach." An important one of the list of qualifications of the elder is their ability to function in this duty. 2 Timothy 2:2, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." Here Paul instructing Timothy about the importance of teaching and teaching others to teach. Ephesians 4:11-14 I think offers an excellent description of the importance of teaching. It says here, and we've read this verse before, "He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers." Why? "To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness

in deceitful schemes.” The importance of the elder teaching is that he brings up the body of Christ into maturity.

Next, and we look at 1 Timothy 5:17 for this, the elder and elders are supposed to direct the affairs of the church. It says here, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” The word that we want to focus in on in this particular moment is the word rule, to really take care of the organizational cares of the church. So shepherding the flock, teaching, directing the affairs of the church. Finally, guarding against error. Titus 1:9, “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.” There is a real sense that part of being a shepherd is guarding against the wolves. Part of teaching is looking for error. Part of directing the church is watching for dysfunction. There is a real importance that the elder care for both the positive and the negative aspect of leadership. Leading the flock, teaching the flock, directing the affairs of the flock, but then also rebuking those who contradict the truth, those who would harm the church, and those who would disorganize the organization of the church. So here we have the four duties of the elder or the leadership of the church: shepherding the flock, teaching, directing the affairs of the church, and guarding against error.

Now, we take a look at the qualifications of elders. There are two chunks of Scripture here primarily that we look at: 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Each one giving a rather detailed list of the qualifications of the elder. 1 Timothy 3:2-7, “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.” Now, Titus 1:6-9, “If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and be able to rebuke those who contradict it.”

So here we have twofold descriptions of the qualification of elders. And what we've been able to do is kind of condense this down into a list here that you see in front of you. First, they must be above reproach. In essence, they really have to have a sterling character. Second, they need to be the husband of one wife. Now, this is one wife at the current moment. So this does not necessarily preclude those who had a wife that has passed away or someone who is single at that point, but no more than one wife is the essence of this statement here. Temperate. Prudent, that is, wise. Respectable. Hospitable. Of course, able to teach. We looked at that a moment ago. Not addicted to wine, not a drunkard, not someone who loves alcohol. Not pugnacious. Not someone who's always looking for a fight. Gentle. Uncontentious. Not someone who loves money and has made money their god. Someone who manages his own household well. Someone who's not a new convert. And someone who has a good reputation, particularly with those outside the church community. These become the qualifications of the elder.

So we've looked at some of the keywords that are used to describe that of elder or overseer. We've looked at the duties of the elder, and we've looked at the qualifications of the elder. Now we'll turn our attention to two other roles that are found within the church and discuss them briefly as well. First, we have the word deacon. It's the Greek word *diakonos*, can translate deacon, or sometimes you'll see it as servant as well. Comes to us in Acts 6, 1 Timothy 3 as well. 1 Timothy 3:8-13 actually give us a list of the qualifications of the deacon, and so we'll take a moment to read that. "Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

So here we have this secondary word not related to overseer or elder, but also a leader in the church, someone who works within the church. So the question we have to ask is what are the duties of the deacon? There are two and they're interrelated, to be sure. First, they assist the elders in the functioning of the church organization. And particularly, the way that they do this is by freeing the elders to focus on the ministry of the word in prayer. If we were to take a look into the Acts 6 passage here, we have the first deacon is being brought. And this is the story of Stephen and others who were brought in. And one of the primary functions that they do is to care for a number of other issues that had popped up within the church that were taking away the apostles' time from ministry of the word for teaching in prayer. So they said, "We want to be able to focus them on teaching in prayer, so let us raise up these deacons," men who have a very similar list of qualifications as the elders. Not identical, but similar, in order for them to care for the other things. That way, the elders may focus on the ministry of the word of prayer.

So we take a look at the qualifications of the deacon. Worthy of respect. Sincere. Not indulging in much wine. Not a drunkard again. Not pursuing dishonest gain. Not a lover of money. Someone who can keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience, the mysteries of the faith with a clear conscience. Someone who has been tested and proved, someone who has already begun the work. For me, this is a huge one as we think about when we look within the congregations that we're a part of. For deacons, we want to look for people who are already doing the work of the deacon without the title rather than looking for people who are waiting for the title in order to do the work. Someone who is faithful to his wife. Again, someone who manages his children and household well. Very similar list to that of the elder. Again, we want to look at this. Their role is to support the elders. And so, a couple of things that we see missing. The ability to teach is not present. The challenge to rule is not present. These are two things that are absent from the qualifications of the deacon that are present in the qualifications of an elder.

Now, another word that we have is the word deaconess. Again, *diakonos*, which can be translated in either the masculine or the feminine. We can look to 1 Timothy 3. We can look to Romans 16:1. 16:1 of Romans is where we find Phoebe, a servant, a *diakonos*, a servant of the Lord. And so we see that there's a role not only for men but also for women in the context and the office of deacon, where the office of elders held more for the role of men. And again, we have this similar share here between deacon and deaconess, that their job is to assist the elders, particularly freeing the elders to focus on the ministry of the word in prayer. When we look through, we see a list again. Worthy of respect. Not

malicious talkers. Temperate. Trustworthy in everything. There really is a lot of overlap in deacon and deaconess.

So as it comes to leadership of the church, we have these three roles. We have the elder, whose primary job is to lead the church through the ministry of teaching in prayer. Key to them is both teaching and ruling. And then we have the deacon and the deaconess. They lead the church by supporting the elders. They do this in sharing the ministry of teaching at times and prayer, but also by caring for the needs outside the realms of these two areas within the church. And just because teaching is not listed as one of the qualifications for a deacon or deaconess doesn't mean that some can't teach. But their primary goal is to care for those things outside the realm of teaching and prayer in order to free up the elders to teach, pray, and lead the church. And so we come to the idea that the leadership of the church is Christ-appointed. It was his to assign, and so he defined it. He uses keywords to help us understand the role. Certainly we see servant leadership throughout all of the leadership that is appointed by Christ in his church, but we typically look at these two particular roles: that of deacon or deaconess and that of elder. The leadership of the church is Christ-appointed.