



Local Church Leaders  
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## I. Introduction

II. God has established two offices in the church (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1). (The office of apostle, in the technical sense, has ceased to operate.)

### A. Elders/Overseers (Bishops)/Pastors

1. Elders - spiritual maturity (presbyteros) (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Tit. 1:5; Jms. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1).
2. Overseers (Bishops) - spiritual oversight (episkopos) (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim. 3:1; 5:17; Tit. 1:5, 7).
3. Pastor - (under)shepherd (poimen) (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:1).
4. Function
  - teach/minister the Word (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Tit. 1:9).
  - govern the church well (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 3:4-5; 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:2).

### B. Deacons/Deaconesses (Acts 6:1-6; Rom. 16:1; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13)

1. The word “deacon” comes from the Greek word diakonos. It usually has the general meaning “servant” in a broad range of contexts: servants (Jn. 2:5, 9), Christ (Rom. 15:8), Paul (2 Cor. 3:6), Timothy (1 Thess. 3:2), disciples (Matt. 20:26), etc.
2. The Greek noun that describes what a diakonos does is diakonia and the meanings are just as broad: Martha (Lk. 10:40), apostleship (Acts 1:17, 25), widows (Acts 6:1), raising of money for the poor saints (Acts 11:29; 12:25; Rom. 15:31; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12, 13), Paul (Acts 20:24; 21:19; Rom. 11:13; 2 Cor. 4:1), Gospel (2 Cor. 5:18), etc.
3. The verb form is diakoneo, which has the general meaning “to serve”: Jesus (Matt. 20:28), a good leader (Lk. 22:26), etc.
4. The verb form of this word refers to the kind of serving that involves practical acts of supplying material needs and literally table-service: angels (Matt. 4:11), Peter’s mother-in law (Matt. 8:15), Martha (Lk. 10:40; Jn. 12:2), Paul (Rom. 15:25; 2 Cor. 8:19), etc.

5. The basic meaning of this word is that of service so a person serving in this official capacity is a servant (all, however are called to be servants). The focus is practical, active helping with respect to the basic necessities of life.

6. The probable origin of the office is found in Acts 6:1-4. This office exists to assist the leadership of the church by relieving the elders of distractions and pressures that would divert them from the ministry of the Word and prayer and the general, visionary oversight of the church.

### III. What does this mean?

- A. There is to be a division of responsibility.
- B. There is to be a plurality of leadership.
- C. There is a concern for spiritual qualifications.
- D. Leaders are to be chosen/affirmed by the people they serve. This addresses an internal call of God and gifting by God, and an external recognition/acknowledgement of this by the people.

### IV. What should we remember?

- A. Leaders are responsible to God for how they lead/serve the people (1 Pet. 5:1-4).
- B. People are responsible to God for how they follow/serve the leaders (Heb. 13:17).
- C. This is in the context of congregational structure, which means that Christ is the lone head of this church (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18-20), and all members are equal under Him. This means there is great freedom, but also great responsibility.