

An office in the New Testament church of God that Jesus built  
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Organizations founded by men claim to follow God's word. It's one thing to claim to follow God's word, another to do it. Human doctrine has created human names and divisions in the religious world today. Anything pertaining to or proceeding from God is divine. Regulation or management is government. Divine government is any regulation or management pertaining to or proceeding from God and is found in the New Testament church of God that Jesus built. His apostolic church is above human judgement or experience. What God alone instituted only He can abolish. He may abolish it by His word or providentially rendering impossible what had once been instituted. Unless abolished every divine command, ordinance, statute, or appointment must stand forever. Scripture inspired, breathed of God; is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (II Timothy 3: 16-17 ASV). The word of God furnishes everything needed to please God.

The title of an office is often taken from some characteristic duty belonging to it. The title President is taken from the act of presiding; Secretary from the act of writing; Auditor from hearing reports. In such cases the information is often meagre. Newly created offices carry all of their previous significance as well as the modifications of the new office. Thus, the term President, which first meant to preside over an assembly and enforce order in its proceedings, when transferred to the chief officer of a college, and to the chief magistrate of the United States, carries its previous meaning as well as its newly acquired characteristics. The same appreciation applies to an office found in the New Testament church of God that Jesus built. That significance enables us to obtain a general idea of the official duties of the Elder, Bishop, Overseer or Shepherd.

The office of Elder, which is most frequently used by the apostles, and

which is still the most popular of these titles, obtained signification from the Jews before its adaptation into the New Testament church of God that Jesus built. Originally it designated the older men or heads of families in Israel, who exercised patriarchal government over their posterity; Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel (Exodus 4: 29 ASV). In the days of Christ it had become rulers of the Jewish synagogues, and one class composing the Sanhedrim; there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews (John 3: 1 ASV). The exact nature and limit of authority is not designated. Bishop brought a more clearly defined significance; it was title of Greek magistrates sent out to tributary cities to organize and govern them; Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons (Philippians 1: 1 ASV). Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which He purchased with his own blood (Acts 20: 28 ASV). An overseer was the officer appointed by Josiah to oversee the workmen engaged in repairing the temple; they have emptied out the money that was found in the house of Jehovah, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen (II Chronicles 34: 17 ASV). The title shepherd is the most significant; the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep (John 10: 11-13 ASV); David said unto Saul, Thy servant was keeping his father's sheep; and when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God (I Samuel 17: 34-36 ASV); For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your

souls (I Peter 2: 25 ASV); I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Watch ye (Acts 20: 29-31 ASV).

Two duties stated in general terms are made clear; first protect the fellowship against false teachings from abroad and second guard against schisms within the fellowship. Holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers. For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1: 9-11 ASV). Teaching and being an example is implied, in addition. Jesus teaches the same idea; When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers (John 10: 4-5 ASV). There is no driving, but constant leading. A Judean shepherd going before his flock and calling them with a voice they know and follow.

These admonitions cover duties of the office in general terms. The officer is to be an example to the flock, going before and calling the flock to follow after. To be worthy of imitation in faith is to be free from habits that should be avoided; I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20 33-35 ASV).

These specific behaviors, and more, the apostles made requisite of the office of Elder in the New Testament church of God that Jesus built (I Titus 1: 7 ASV & I Timothy 3: 2-7 ASV):

1. Blameless, as God's steward – the term is comparative, not absolute. There are degrees and some qualified may be more blameless than others. If a man possesses good repute among the fellowship and without, is known to have character of these traits, he is blameless. He must not be covetous.
2. Not self-willed – no man is fit to hold office jointly with other men, who is not content to often yield his own will to that of his peers.
3. Not soon angry – frequent trials will require patience.
4. No brawler or striker – he must not become ill tempered, discouraged, and fall into fighting.
5. Not greedy of filthy lucre – there is difference of opinion as to its meaning. Some render it greedy gain and some making money by base means. Greed for gain is prohibited.
6. Without reproach – accomplishing good in a community depends upon the representative men in fellowship.
7. Husband of one wife – if a man owns but one farm, it is clearly implied he owns no more than one. That the officer should be husband of one wife forbids more than one, it is clearly implied he has one living wife, there is no allusion to the number of deceased wives. A man is not husband to a deceased wife. It is most fitting a married man possesses advantages for such work that are impossible to an unmarried man, ruling well his house, having children with all gravity not accused of riot or unrulyness. If a man does not know how to rule his house he can not take care of the New Testament church of God that Jesus built.
8. Temperate – Declaring God's will and exercising moral sway over a community leaves no room for the human to play. He must be subject to God's declared will, not be given to free use of wine, even though he might never become intoxicated, teaching by example.
9. Sober minded – judicial function forbids levity.
10. Orderly – habits grow from and react upon man's character. Vigilance or watchfulness are enjoined because without it many things would escape notice.

11. Given to hospitality – a necessity to secure the affection of others needing sympathy.
12. Apt to teach – one might be capable of teaching some persons and utterly incapable of teaching others. A person capable of teaching children might be incapable of teaching adults. What is the standard then? It must be found in attainment of the fellowship and theirs alone. If he is capable of expounding the scripture in public or privately he is apt to teach.
13. Gentle – this speaks of a balance character. It is significant he not mis-adjust divine balance by making the most of which is made the least of in Scripture.
14. Not contentious – do not disturb the peace of the fellowship.
15. No lover of money – a covetous elder makes a covetous fellowship. Gain from a disreputable occupation; dealing in intoxicating liquors, rearing sport stock, renting property for improper uses, trading, and such; where a successful man must override regard for the welfare of community is prohibited.
16. One that ruleth well his own house - having his children in subjection with all gravity.
17. Not a novice – experienced in the life of Christ, not a new convert. Within what period after immersion a man ceases to be a new convert is not at all difficult for men of common sense to decide more definitely.
18. Must have good testimony from without – the elder and the flock are exposed to a snare. Those in a community of good repute, must know and consider the elder to have good moral character and the Scriptures must show in what he says and does. Many fellowships languish because the office is deficient in this qualification. It not only affects the elder and his fellowship, but all other fellowships.

Every fellowship requires this church office, and that the whole congregation is called to express approval. Paul, servant of God, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to Titus, my true child after a common faith;

I left thee in Crete, that thou should set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city (Titus 1: 1,4-5 ASV portioned). Luke mentions in Lyconia and Pisidia; when they had appointed elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed (Acts 14: 23 ASV portioned).

Elders should constantly remember they are examples to the flock, in all virtues and activities of life. In sacrificing their time to oversee and shepherd they should covet no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, and by their own hands minister to their necessities, showing support to the weak, and that it is more blessed to give than receive (Acts 20: 33-35 ASV portioned). Elders must exercise utmost care to prevent individual sheep from straying away from the flock. When one, as it sometimes will, eludes all vigilance and strays away, the Elder is to be prompt in going out to search for it and bring it back. Elders must deny privilege to every man whom they know to be a promoter of dissention and a teacher of false doctrine. A small wolf in sheeps clothing can scatter a large flock of sheep. With caution and prudence Elders guard against unjust judgments and watches the door which opens to the flock.

Is your fellowship the New Testament church of God that Jesus built? Look carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; because the days are evil. Understand the will of the Lord (Ephesians 5: 15-17 ASV).

We're humble men and women, ministering to people, representing no organization. No board is behind us. We trust the Holy Ghost and God for support. No charges are made for ministry or prayers. No salaries received. Individuals rely solely on God for his or her maintenance.