**THE ROLE OF A BISHOP**

**Leadership Role**

One of the main functions of bishops in the Pentecostal Church is to perform leadership duties. These duties might be administrative, including acting as a go-between for the church and the state government or other officials. Some bishops are responsible for helping specific congregations or regions develop their potential. As leaders, bishops are supposed to "Maintain a high ethical and moral values in all [their] dealings, personally and professionally" and "always be willing to learn," according to the International Council of Pentecostal Bishops.

The bishop serves as a superintendent to the church. To uphold the rules, and laws of the ministry, and the word of God. Bishop confirms, ordains ministers, administers a church or organization, preaches the word of God, performs visitations, does seminar, etc… The role of bishops within EOM is to provide oversight, supervision, direction and leadership for the believers.

What is the difference between a Bishop, elder, overseer, or pastor? In the earliest churches, their leaders were simply referred to as “elders.” For example, in [Acts 20:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2020.17) we read, “Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.” In [Philippians 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.1), Paul introduces his letter “to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.” Apparently, there were originally only two leadership positions in the church: elders (or bishops) and deacons. In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul speaks twice regarding the [qualifications of elders/bishops](https://www.gotquestions.org/qualifications-elders-deacons.html), those he considered the leaders of the local church (also notice that these elders generally served as teams rather than as single leaders). In [1 Timothy 3:1–7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%203.1%E2%80%937) we read

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer [bishop], he desires a noble task. 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.”

From this list, we conclude several things. First, the job of bishop is a noble task. Second, the job is a limited task (male pronouns and references are used throughout). Third, integrity is critical (above reproach, committed to his spouse, clear-thinking, self-controlled, well-respected, friendly, not influenced by alcoholic drinks, not violent or argumentative, not greedy, caring for his children, and having a good reputation among the unchurched). Fourth, he must have the ability to teach. (Deacons, whose requirements are listed in the next verses, are not required to have teaching ability.) [Titus 1:5–7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus%201.5%E2%80%937) shares a similar list for elders, but it adds the ability to rebuke false teaching. When Peter wrote to this group of church leaders, he called himself a “fellow elder” ([1 Peter 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%205.1)).

Elders, Bishops and Pastors: One Office or Three?

**Acts 20:17-30**

Acts 20:28-30: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers [bishops], to shepherd [feed] the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.'"

When Paul called the elders, he addressed them as bishops and told them to tend, shepherd, or pastor the flock! If elders and bishops are distinct offices, occupied by different men, this would be senseless; but if the offices are the same, then it is logical. If they were different offices, when Paul called elders, no bishops would have been there to speak to. He told these men, elders and bishops, to "poimaino," or shepherd the flock. The root word is the word for a shepherd who guides and cares for his flock. Thus, in this passage, elders are the same as bishops, or overseers, and these men are to act as pastors and tend the flock, or church of God. Ephesians 4:11 makes the only reference specifically to a group of men called pastors, and here one could easily conclude that he was referring to this important work of elders who oversee and tend the church. Not three offices, but one!

TITUS 1:5-7 & I TIMOTHY 3:1-2
Titus 1:5-7: "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you; if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money"

1 Timothy 3:1-2: "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach."

Titus is commanded to appoint a plurality of elders in every city,  and then Paul immediately lists the qualities that these bishops must have. Is it fair to draw a sharp distinction between the two given the natural flow from one verse to the other? Also, we see from 1 Timothy 3 that bishops are given similar and overlapping qualification. Only the attempt to later justify a distinction in offices that had already occurred historically could lead to an interpretation that these works are distinct.

I PETER
1 Peter 5:1-4: "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd [Feed] the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers [taking the oversight], not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."

This passage is much like Acts 20 in that all three words are used for the same office, and of the same men. Peter, an elder himself, exhorts other elders to carry out their duties as God directs. He tells them to feed, or shepherd, tend or pastor the flock which is among them. They are not to meddle in other flocks, but their own. Each church had its own "presbytery" (I Tim. 4:14: Phil. 1:1-2; Acts 14:23; Jas. 5:14).

In this feeding the flock the elders serve as overseers, or bishops.

The word "elders" is from the Greek presbuteros, which in turn is from the root presbos, or "old." Thus, elder refers to the spiritual maturity of the men who serve as overseers. They have a wife and children, and are not to be novices (1 Tim. 3:6). They are wise, seasoned, mature. Elder speaks to the character of the man.

"Bishop" or "overseer" is from the Greek episkopos. It is the word for superintendent, a manager. (Epi- over, and -skopeo, to look or watch.) It speaks to their responsibility and authority. The verb form of the word is used in 1 Peter 5:2, "exercise oversight." In 1 Timothy 3:1, the word is best rendered "overseership," since no word for "office" is actually present.

"Pastor" is from poimen, which as we have seen, is the word used for a shepherd, and thus of his word of feeding, guiding and tending the flock. The verb form is poimaino. In 1 Peter 5, all of these words and ideas are used of the same men. Peter himself is one of them, as a married man (Matthew 8:14ff).

This verse also teaches against the idea that there is another office above that of bishop, called an archbishop. Peter says that even he is simply a "fellow-elder," and that there is one "Chief Shepherd" or archipoimenos, Jesus Christ Himself. The Bible does not authorize the offices of Archbishops, Cardinals, Popes, etc. The only office over a bishop, elder or pastor is the Chief Shepherd Himself.

Conclusion: It is apparent that the organization and oversight of 1st century churches was much different than that found in most all denominations today. Let's be
careful when we read these verses not to "retro-fit" our current practices back onto the New Testament pattern, but rather change our practice and understanding to fit the New Testament.