

Guest Speaker Troy Weigert

ENCORE Discussion

1. How large do you think the church was at this time?

2. In Acts 6, rapid church growth had caused a problem for the newly-formed church. What were the affects of this problem?
 - v. 1* —
 - v. 2* —
 - v. 7* —

3. Consider the radical nature of their solution to this problem. The apostles asked for a fundamental change in church function by the institution of a new office, that of deacon. A change of this nature would cause a rift in many ministries today. How did the early church avoid such pitfalls (see Acts 4:32-35)? Why were they successful?

4. Read Acts 6:3 and 4; is this passage teaching us that some tasks are “spiritual” and some are menial, or that some people do the little work that doesn’t really matter and some do the “real” work of prayer and preaching?

5. Some believe Acts 6 introduces the office of deacon; what evidence can you find to support this claim?

6. Some claim Acts 6 is introducing the office of elder; could this be the case (see v. 4)?

7. List the qualifications of those who were to serve in this ministry (v. 3; I Tim. 3:8-13). List a few reasons why it was important for these men to be devout and holy.

8. Do you think that the spiritual qualifications for deacons are something that all Christians should aspire to, or are they just for “special” people like deacons and pastors? Do *you* aspire to this level of walk with Christ? How are you doing specifically in these areas?

9. The church was experiencing a spiritual deficiency because the Apostles were doing administrative tasks that others could easily do. Consider your own life; how are *you* currently serving?

¹Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ²Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

⁴And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁵whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

⁶Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

⁷And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. ⁸Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. ⁹And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. ¹⁰Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” ¹¹And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. ¹²They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; ¹³for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.” ¹⁴And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

Guest Speaker Tom Cope

Read: Acts 7

Monday

Acts 7 — Why did Stephen get arrested by the Sanhedrin? What was he doing between the time of his appointment as deacon and the time of his arrest? What should we be doing with our lives today? Has God made any mistakes in your life?

Tuesday

v. 2-8 — This chapter is the longest speech in Acts, what is the significance of that? Since the charge against Stephen related to blasphemy of Moses and the Temple, why did he start with Abraham? Was Stephen defending himself? Do we ever get caught up in defending ourselves? What principles of godly living does Stephen picture?

Wednesday

v. 9-19 — According to the verses so far, what does Stephen say about the way God wanted the Jews to worship? What is the evidence Stephen delivers about the patriarchs? What type of reaction do we exhibit in our daily life when an event occurs that is not what we want, or God's directions seem to be going against our own preferences?

Thursday

v. 20-29 — Moses is revered by the Jewish nation in Stephen's time; was that always the case? What evidence do you have for your answer? Why did God allow a new Pharaoh that didn't know anything about Joseph to be king at that time? Why did Moses have to go to the desert at Midian? Is our timing the same as God's? Is our goal always the same as God's? How should we look at timing in our own life? Can you give any examples of where you thought God's timing was bad? How did the situation actually end up?

Friday

v. 30-44 — What point does Stephen seem to be making to the Sanhedrin? Do we get bogged down in the traditions of the church today? Did the culture of that day affect how the Jews thought about Christianity? Does culture affect the church today? How?

Saturday

v. 45-60 — What similarities are there between the examples Stephen uses (Abraham, Joseph, Moses, etc.)? Why did they rush upon him and bite him, and take him out and stone him? What effect do you think it had for Stephen to say he saw Christ at the right hand of God?

A Biblical Case for Deacons and Pastors in Exclusion of an Elder Board

Troy Weigert

The first Deacons:

Acts 6:2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve (diakoneo) tables.

Only two offices mentioned at Philippi:

Philip. 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops (episkopos) and deacons (diakonos)

No elders mentioned at Philippi. (except the bishops who are elders as well)

The Pastoral Epistle qualifications:

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

1 Tim. 3:8 Likewise deacons (diakonos) must be reverent.....etc.

1 Tim. 3:10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons (diakoneo),

In the Pastoral Epistles only the qualifications for bishop and deacon are given. This is striking and points to only two offices that of Pastor (pastor/bishop/elder) and that of deacon.

Two groups singled out in Acts:

Acts 15:4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders (presbuteros) ; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

Notice no pastors or bishops mentioned also notice the Jewish connection to the word elder throughout the NT.

Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders (presbuteros) which were at Jerusalem.

Pastors (elders) are specially called of God.

Ephesians 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors (poimen) and teachers, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, This verse describes those that God has given as His gift to the Church for its edification.

1 Tim. 4:14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. (Specially ordained or set apart.)

Pastor's rule

Hebrews 13:7 Remember them which have the rule (hegeomai) over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Notice those who teach the Word in the church also have the rule or oversight.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you (proistemi) in the Lord and admonish you, [13] and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Should we have unpaid elders?

1 Tim. 5:17-19 Let the elders (presbuteros) who rule well be counted worthy of double honor (time), especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. [18] For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." [19] Do not receive an accusation against an elder (presbuteros) except from two or three witnesses.

Notice that the context of 1 Tim. 5:17-19 is all about money "The laborer is worthy of his wages". Honor should not be interpreted to be simply honoring but taking the context it has to be pay. Further the Greek word translated honor means to pay money.

Galatians 6:6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

1 Cor. 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?

1 Cor. 9:14 Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

Are Pastor, Bishop and Elder the same office?

1 Peter 5:1-3 The elders (presbuteros) who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder (sumpresbuteros), and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: [2] Shepherd the flock (poimaino) of God which is among you, serving as overseers (episkopeo), not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; [3] nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;

Notice Peter addresses the elders and tells them to serve as Overseers or Bishops and Shepherds not the other way around. That means that all elders are to shepherd and oversee.

Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders (presbuteros) of the church.

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (episkopos), to shepherd (poimaino) the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

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 (presbuteros) in every city as I commanded you-- [6] if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. [7] For a bishop (episkopos) must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

The plurality of the word elders:

1 Peter 5:1 The elders (presbuteros) who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder (sumpresbuteros) and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Hard to refute a plurality of elders?

However look at the context and who the letters are addressed to:

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

James 1:1 James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad:

Plurality of churches necessitates a plurality of elders.

Note also the decidedly Jewish connotation when the word elder is used for the pastor or overseer office.

What about the Bishop?

Another real danger in separating the office of pastor from elder is the fact that you then have the office of Bishop to deal with. A separate *higher* bishop as an office is a false teaching that the church has wrestled with for many years. Do we need one “supreme” overseer of the church or an area of churches? That’s why the Catholic Church has a pope today. I do not believe it is possible to separate Pastor and Elder without further separating Bishop.

Calling our Elder “Pastor” is a fairly recent development.

Pastor is a more endearing term than elder. If you look back maybe even 50-60 years you will see most pastors being called Reverend; in reference to eldership. People probably stopped this practice because the word pastor seems nicer, and

so many pastors fell into sin and were unworthy of “reverence”

Key to Greek words:

diakonos, 1249 *dee-ak'-on-os*; probably from an obsolete **diako** (to run on errands; compare Greek 1377 (dioko)); an attendant, i.e. (genitive) a waiter (at table or in other menial duties); specially a Christian teacher and pastor (technically a *deacon* or *deaconess*) :- deacon, minister, servant.

diakoneo, 1247, from Greek 1249 (diakonos); to be an attendant, i.e. wait upon (menially or as a host, friend or [figurative] teacher); techn. to act as a Christian *deacon* :- (ad-) minister (unto), serve, use the office of a deacon.

episkopeo, 1983 from Greek 1909 (epi) and Greek 4648 (skopeo); to oversee; by implication to beware :- look diligently, take the oversight.

episkope, 1984, ; from Greek 1980 (episkeptomai); inspection (for relief); by implication *superintendence*; specially the Christian “*episcopate*” :- the office of a “bishop”, bishoprick, visitation.

episkopos, 1985; from Greek 1909 (epi) and Greek 4649 (skopos) (in the sense of Greek 1983 (episkopeo)); a *superintendent*, i.e. Christian officer in general charge of a (or the) church (literal or figurative) :- bishop, overseer.

hegeomai, 2233, middle of a (presumed) strengthened form of Greek 71 (ago); to lead, i.e. command (with official authority); figurative to deem, i.e. consider :- account, (be) chief, count, esteem, governor, judge, have the rule over, suppose, think.

poimaino, 4165, from Greek 4166 (poimen); to tend as a shepherd (or figurative *supervisor*) :- feed (cattle), rule.

poimen, 4166, ; of uncertain affinity; a shepherd (literal or figurative) :- shepherd, pastor.

presbuteros, 4245, comparative of **presbus** (*elderly*); *older*; as noun, a *senior*; specially an Israelite *Sanhedrist* (also figurative member of the celestial council) or Christian “*presbyter*” :- elder (-est), old.

proistemi, 4291, from Greek 4253 (pro) and Greek 2476 (histemi); to stand before, i.e. (in rank) to *preside*, or (by implication) to *practise* :- maintain, be over, rule.

sumpresbuteros, 4850, from Greek 4862 (sun) and Greek 4245 (presbuteros); a *co-presbyter* :- presbyter, also an elder.

time, 5092, from Greek 5099 (tino); a *value*, i.e. money paid, or (concretely and collective) *valuables*; by analogy *esteem* (especially of the highest degree), or the *dignity* itself :- honour, precious, price, some.