

What Does It Mean to Be a Baptist? We Affirm Two Distinct Positions in the Local Assembly

We believe that the Bible teaches that there are two and only two appointed offices (or positions) in the local assembly of believers. We believe that the church is to follow God's design for leadership for His body, just as they are to follow in all other areas of life.

Two Offices:

Pastor -

Acts 20:17, 28 ¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the **elders** of the church... ²⁸ "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

- Elders - *πρεσβύτερος*, *presbuteros* - elder (of the Jewish religious leaders and of church leaders); elder (of two sons); eldest (Jn 8.9); old man or woman.
 - wisdom, seasoning, stability, experience
- Overseers – *ἐπίσκοπος*, *episkopos* - overseer, guardian; bishop
 - supervising, organizing
- Shepherd - *ποιμαίνω*, *poimaino* - tend like a shepherd; rule; keep sheep
ποιμήν, *poimen* - shepherd; pastor
 - feeding, caring, equipping, protecting

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: ² **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**, 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; ⁴ and when the **Chief Shepherd** appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

What About Elder Boards?

- Biblically, since elders=bishops=pastors, a biblical group of elders would just be multiple pastors in a church.

Pastoral Qualifications: 1 Timothy 3:1-7;

Titus 1:5-9 ⁵ 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 -- ⁶ if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. ⁷ 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, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Other places this office is referenced:

1 Timothy 5:19 ¹⁹ Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

Deacon -

Deacon - *διάκονος*, *diakonos* - servant; helper, minister; deacon;

Deacon Qualifications:

1 Timothy 3:8-13 ⁸ Likewise **deacons** *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. ¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as **deacons**, being *found* blameless. ¹¹ Likewise *their wives* *must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let **deacons** be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well. ¹³ For those who have served well as **deacons** obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Deacon Appointment and Responsibilities:

Acts 6:1-6 Now 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**. 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 tables**. ³ "Therefore, 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; ⁴ "**but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.**" ⁵ And 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, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

Where Else Does the Bible Tell Us Their Are Two Offices?

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the **bishops** and **deacons**:

What About Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists?

Ephesians 4:11-12 ¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

- **Apostles - Acts 1:21-22** ²¹ "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² "beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."
 - One qualification of an apostle is that they traveled with Jesus during His ministry on Earth
 - The purpose was to be a witness of His resurrection – i.e. they saw it happen.
 - There is no one alive today who can do this.
- **Prophets - 1 Corinthians 13:8-10** ⁸ Love never fails. But whether *there are prophecies*, they will fail; whether *there are tongues*, they will cease; whether *there is knowledge*, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is **perfect** has come, then that which is in part will be done away.
 - What do the three gifts listed here have in common?
 - What is that which is perfect?
 - The position of prophet was given by God to give revelation from God, until His perfect revelation was complete.
- **Evangelists - 2 Timothy 4:5** ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
 - What was Timothy's role in the church?
 - An evangelist is a pastor who focuses on bringing the gospel to the unsaved.

What about Trustees, Sunday School Superintendents and Other Such Offices?

- Trustees are a position often required by government for a church. Often times churches will appoint men to this position who are "financially" qualified, and appoint "spiritually" qualified men to the position of deacon.
- What then would be the qualification of men who should be handling the legal and financial matters in the church? Should they not be spiritually qualified?
- The same question with a Sunday School Superintendent...what should be his qualifications? Should he also be spiritually qualified?
- Biblically, only two positions are listed with qualifications: pastor and deacon. The pastor is to tend to the ministry of the word primarily. The deacon is to handle the other matters.
- The biblical model is to have deacons managing the duties many churches assign to trustees, SS superintendents, etc...