



Slide #1

Throughout the New Testament, elders were ministering alongside the apostles, ensuring that local churches functioned properly.

Office of Elder
Part #1
Identification

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Slide #2

The corporate gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers are related in their leadership function. While connected, these four gifts are individuals distinguished from one another by their distinct gift(s) given by the Spirit. A study of the corporate gifts (foundational and structural) gives rise to an understanding of their responsibilities. Particularly the responsibilities of the structural gifts present insights to the identification of elders.

IDENTIFICATION OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP
Ephesians 4:11

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graph TD; A[APOSTLES] <--> E[EVANGELISTS (Heralds)]; A <--> P[PROPHETS]; A <--> PT[PASTOR-TEACHERS]; E <--> P; E <--> PT; P <--> PT;
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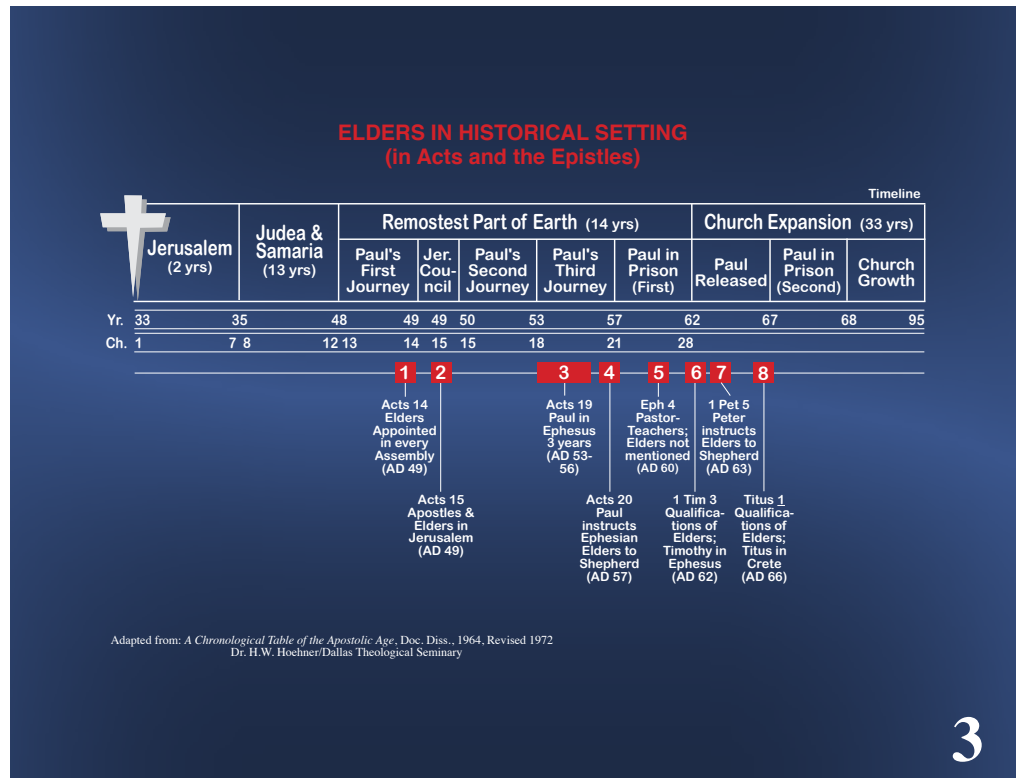
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Slide #3

The historical setting of elders in Acts and the Epistles indicates the connection between the apostles and the elders. In AD 49 as shown at Red #1, Paul began appointing elders (plural) in every church (singular) he established on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). Also in AD 49 at the time of the Jerusalem Council (Red #2), the apostles had already begun sharing leadership responsibilities with elders in the Jerusalem church (15:2,4,6,22-23). Red #3 covers a period of three years (AD 53-56) when Paul remained in Ephesus during his third missionary journey (20:31), even teaching in the school of Tyrannus for two of those years (19:9-10). It must be assumed Paul appointed elders in Ephesus during that stay and were the ones with whom he met with in Miletus on his return to Jerusalem at the end of the third missionary journey (AD 57). Acts 20:17 tells us, “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church” (Red #4). “When they had come to him” (v 18), he instructed them regarding their responsibility “to shepherd the church of God” (v 28).

Notice that when Paul writes the book of Ephesians during his first imprisonment (AD 60), he does not address elders even though they are obviously present (Red #5). He does address pastor/shepherd-teachers; the only place that pastor-teachers are addressed in the entire New Testament (Eph 4:11). The probable conclusion is that Paul equates elders with shepherd-teachers and that is how the readers would understand the letter to them. Further supporting this suggestion (Red #6) when Paul writes to Timothy in Ephesus (AD 62, 1 Tim 1:3), elders/overseers and their qualifications are addressed (3:1-7), not pastor-teachers. Also Peter, who had appointed elders earlier in Jerusalem, in AD 63 (Red #7) pins instructions to the elders as church leaders to “shepherd the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:1-2). Finally in AD 66 writing to Titus (Red #8), Paul again gives the criteria for those Titus will appoint as elders (Titus 1:5-9).

Implied from the historical context is that elders, whose responsibility is to shepherd the church, are the same as pastor/shepherd-teachers, the structural corporate gift.

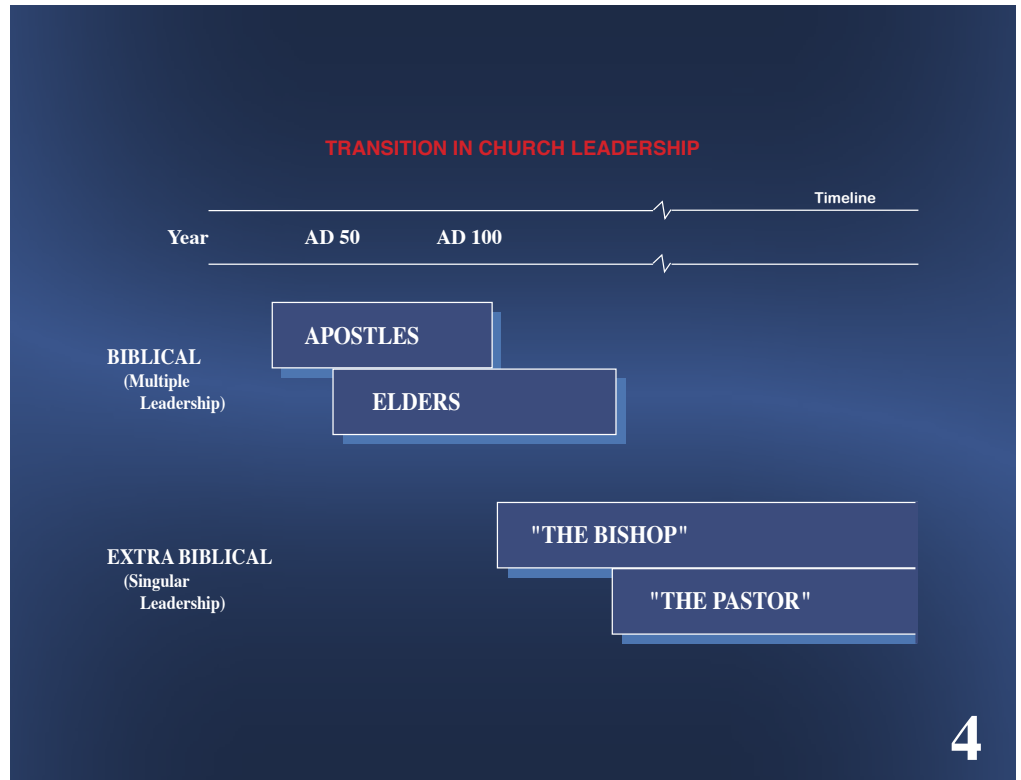


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Slide #4

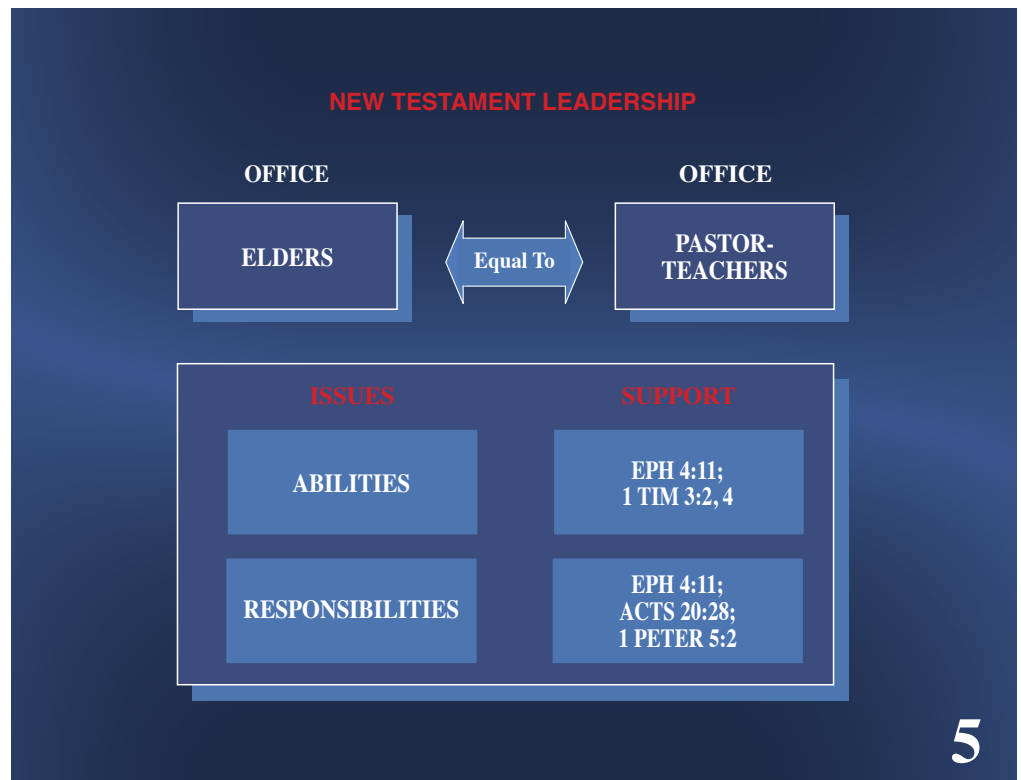
From the historical perspective just considered, the early church experienced a transition in leadership. As shown, leadership in the early church was multiple, in types and in quantity. From AD 33 until around AD 100, the apostles, the eyewitness, led the church and began to appoint elders in each church in an overseeing ministry. With the passing away of those foundational “eyewitnesses,” the elders or shepherd-teachers were then responsible for the “equipping of the saints,” ensuring the proper functioning and growth of the body.

In approximately AD 110, Ignatius advanced the idea that one bishop should lead each city church.¹ In addition, the term *pastor* was “not an established title” during the first century.² However both “the bishop” and “the pastor” became the recognized titles for those in positions of responsible as leaders in the church. Consequently, church leadership moved from multiple to singular in form and practice. It moved away from its biblical roots. To return to the original form, we need to closely understand and identify the office of elder, the abilities and responsibilities.



Slide #5

The evidence presented in Slide #3 and the leadership relationship between apostles and elders in Slide #4 suggests that elders are equated to the office of pastor-teachers. Additional evidence supports this line of reasoning. Elders’ abilities and responsibilities are the same as pastor-teachers. The abilities are addressed here in Part 1 of *Office of Elder*, while the responsibilities are covered in Part 3.



Slide #6

First Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 give the criteria for elder leadership in the church: knowledge, character, and ability. First, an elder cannot be a new convert since he must know and be able to “hold fast the faithful word.” Second, an elder must manifest certain character qualities. Twenty-one qualities should be reflected in behavior or actions. The third concerns the abilities that an elder must possess. He must be (1) able to lead and (2) able to teach. Most of the remaining slides will address these two required abilities of the elder.

CRITERIA FOR LEADERSHIP
(1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1)

KNOWLEDGE	QUALITY	ABILITY
Not a New Convert Holding Fast the Faithful Word	Above Reproach Husband of One Wife Temperate Prudent Respectable Hospitable Not Addicted to Wine Not Pugnacious Gentle Uncontentious Free from Love of Money Children Under Control Good Reputation with those Outside Blameless Not Self-Willed Not Quick-Tempered Not Fond of Sordid Gain Loving What is Good Just Devout Self-Controlled	Manages His own House Well Able to Teach

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Slide #7

The first ability of the elder is to be “able to lead” found in 1 Timothy 3:4.

ABILITY #1
Able to Lead

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Slide #8

First Timothy 3:4 teaches, “An overseer, then, must be...one who manages his own household well.” To properly understand the term *manage*, *rule* or *lead* in 1 Timothy 3:4 as an ability of a person, we need to consider every time Paul uses the term. A word study provides clarity. Notice Paul uses the term *lead* a total of eight times. Again, notice that the majority of the instances occur within Paul’s Pastoral Epistles (six times) to Timothy and Titus.

LEAD/RULE
(New Testament)

<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">ROMANS 12:8</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who <i>leads</i>, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">1 THESSALONIANS 5:12</p> <p style="margin: 0;">But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and <i>have charge over</i> you in the Lord and give you instruction,</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">1 TIMOTHY 3:4</p> <p style="margin: 0;">He must be one who <i>manages</i> his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">1 TIMOTHY 3:5</p> <p style="margin: 0;">(But if a man does not know how to <i>manage</i> his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)</p>	<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">1 TIMOTHY 3:12</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good <i>managers</i> of their children and their own households.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">1 TIMOTHY 5:17</p> <p style="margin: 0;">The elders who <i>rule</i> well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">TITUS 3:8</p> <p style="margin: 0;">This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful <i>to engage</i> in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">TITUS 3:14</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Our people must also learn <i>to engage</i> in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.</p>
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Slide #9

An analysis of the term *lead/rule* gives insight to its meaning. Five of these eight occurrences refer to those who lead the church (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12; 5:17). Once the term refers to a spiritual gift for service to be used within the church (Rom 12:8). The two remaining texts are found in Titus concern the ability to “maintain good works.”

First Timothy 3:4-5 address the elder “leading his own household well,” indicating an ability beyond the normal when Paul uses the adverb “well” to describe observable events. Further, the home is the proving ground, showing the ability to lead the family of God in a local assembly.

"LEAD/RULE" IN NEW TESTAMENT
(*proistemi*)

PASSAGE	IDENTITY	EXPLANATION
ROM 12:8	INDIVIDUAL	SPIRITUAL GIFT
1 THESS 5:12	LEADER	FUNCTIONING OF OFFICE
1 TIM 3:4	ELDER	ABILITY
1 TIM 3:5	ELDER	ABILITY
1 TIM 3:12	DEACON	ABILITY
1 TIM 5:17	ELDER	FUNCTIONING OF OFFICE
TITUS 3:8	INDIVIDUAL	MAINTAINING GOOD WORKS
TITUS 3:14	INDIVIDUAL	MAINTAINING GOOD WORKS

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Slide #10

The second ability of the elder is to be “able to teach” found in 1 Timothy 3:2.

ABILITY #2 Able to Teach

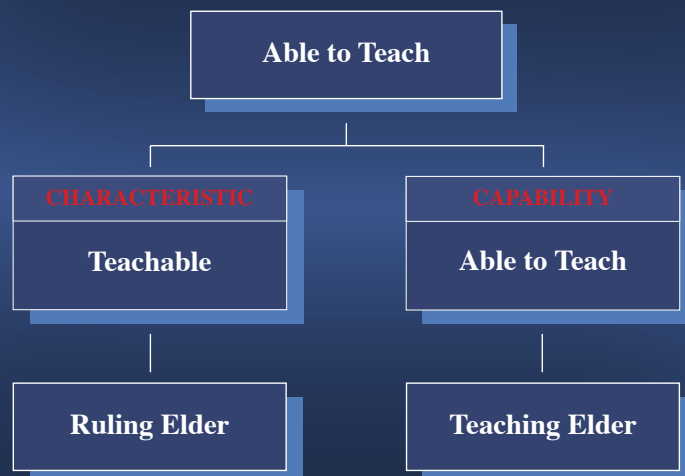
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Slide #11

First Timothy 3:2 states, “An overseer, then, must be...able to teach.” Even though a seeming straightforward statement, many question the actual meaning of the phrase *being able to teach*. Most take the phrase to refer to another character quality, “teachable” rather than “able to teach.” Obviously, coming from two different perspectives would dramatically impact one’s view of the elder’s office. The *character option* sees all elders in a local church to be responsible to lead the various church programs and activities, while out of that group of elders a gifted person fulfills the preaching responsibility. Consequently, you are left with a two types of elders: (1) all elders who rule and (2) one particular elder who preaches.³ On the other hand, the *ability option* believes that all elders are both to rule and to teach.

The solution to which view agrees with Scripture requires a study of Paul’s use of the term *teacher* in his Epistles.

QUALIFICATION OF ELDERS



11

Slide #12

As done above, to understand the term *able to teach* in 1 Timothy 3:2 as an ability of a person or as a character quality, meaning to be “teachable,” we need to consider every time Paul uses the term. Only by a word study can we come to a correct conclusion. Notice Paul uses the term *teacher*, or a derivative, eleven times. With the majority of the instances actually occurring within Paul’s letters to Timothy, clarity should be evident.

Slide #13

An analysis of the term *teacher* or a derivative brings perspective. Teacher (*didaskalos*) in Column#1 occurs seven times (Rom 2:20, 1 Cor 12:28, 29, Eph 4:11, 1 Tim 2:7, 2 Tim 1:11, and 2 Tim 4:3), with two references to a spiritual gift to individuals and three references to the corporate gifts to the church. *Teacher of the law* (*nomodidaskalos*) is used once (1 Tim 1:7, Column #2) and *teacher of good things* (*kalodidaskalos*) occurs once (Titus 2:3, Column #3). In each of these occurrences, the term appears in the noun form.

Of particular interest, Paul twice used the term *skilled in teaching* (*didaktikos*). In fact these are the only times this term is used in the New Testament and each time in the form of an adjective, explaining or clarifying what it modifies—once to identify skilled servants (2 Tim 2:24, Column #4) and again to indicate the criterion for being an elder (1 Tim 3:2): “An overseer must be... skilled in teaching.” Since nine of the eleven times these two terms are in the Pastoral Epistles (six times) or in the context of gifts (three times), word usage would support the position that the term *skilled in teaching* refers to a gift, an ability for service.

More importantly, this conclusion is supported by Paul’s word selection. Had Paul wanted to express that one is “teachable,” receptive to being to taught, he could have utilized the term *didaktos* (e.g., John 6:45, “being taught of God”).⁴ Rather, he employs the term *skilled in teaching* (*didaktikos*).⁵ Consequently, we can conclude that elders are to be teachers. They are to feed and protect their local body.

TEACHER
(Pauline Epistles)

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">ROMANS 2:20</p> <p>A corrector of the foolish, a <i>teacher</i> of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">1 CORINTHIANS 12:28</p> <p>And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third <i>teachers</i>, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">1 CORINTHIANS 12:29</p> <p>All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not <i>teachers</i>, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they?</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">EPHESIANS 4:11</p> <p>And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and <i>teachers</i></p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">1 TIMOTHY 1:7</p> <p>Wanting to be <i>teachers</i> of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">1 TIMOTHY 2:7</p> <p>For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a <i>teacher</i> of the Gentiles in faith and truth.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">1 TIMOTHY 3:2</p> <p>An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, <i>able to teach</i></p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">2 TIMOTHY 1:11</p> <p>For which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a <i>teacher</i>.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">2 TIMOTHY 2:24</p> <p>The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, <i>able to teach</i>, patient when wronged,</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">2 TIMOTHY 4:3</p> <p>For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves <i>teachers</i> in accordance to their own desires</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">TITUS 2:3</p> <p>Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, <i>teaching</i> what is good</p>
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PAUL'S USE OF "TEACHER"

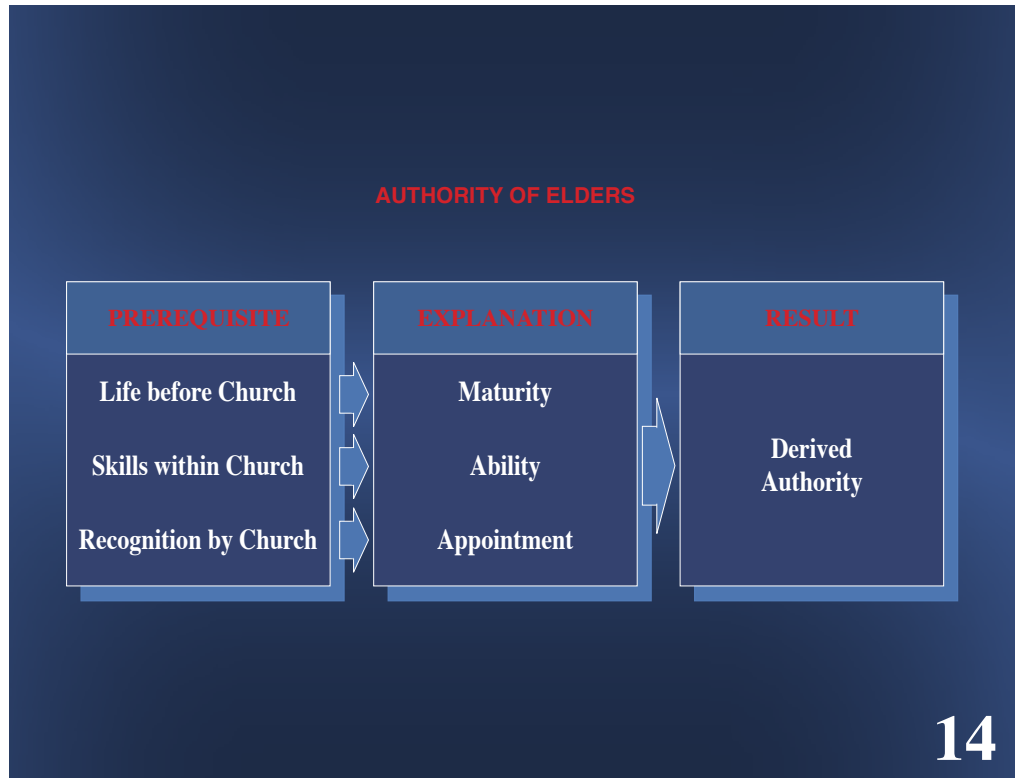
PASSAGE	WORD USED				CONTEXT
	1	2	3	4	
ROM 2:20	X				TEACHER OF THE IMMATURE
1 COR 12:28	X				GIFT FOR CHURCH
1 COR 12:29	X				GIFT FOR CHURCH
EPH 4:11	X				GIFT (OFFICE) FOR CHURCH
1 TIM 1:7		X			TEACHER OF THE LAW
1 TIM 2:7	X				GIFT (OFFICE) FOR CHURCH
1 TIM 3:2				X	SKILLED ELDER
2 TIM 1:11	X				GIFT (OFFICE) FOR CHURCH
2 TIM 2:24				X	SKILLED SERVANTS OF GOD
2 TIM 4:3	X				TEACHER ALIGNED WITH DESIRES
TITUS 2:3			X		TEACHERS OF GOOD THINGS

1 Teacher	<i>didaskalos</i>	noun
2 Teacher of the Law	<i>nomodidaskalos</i>	noun
3 Teacher of Good Things	<i>kalodidaskalos</i>	noun
4 Skilled in Teaching	<i>didaktikos</i>	adjective

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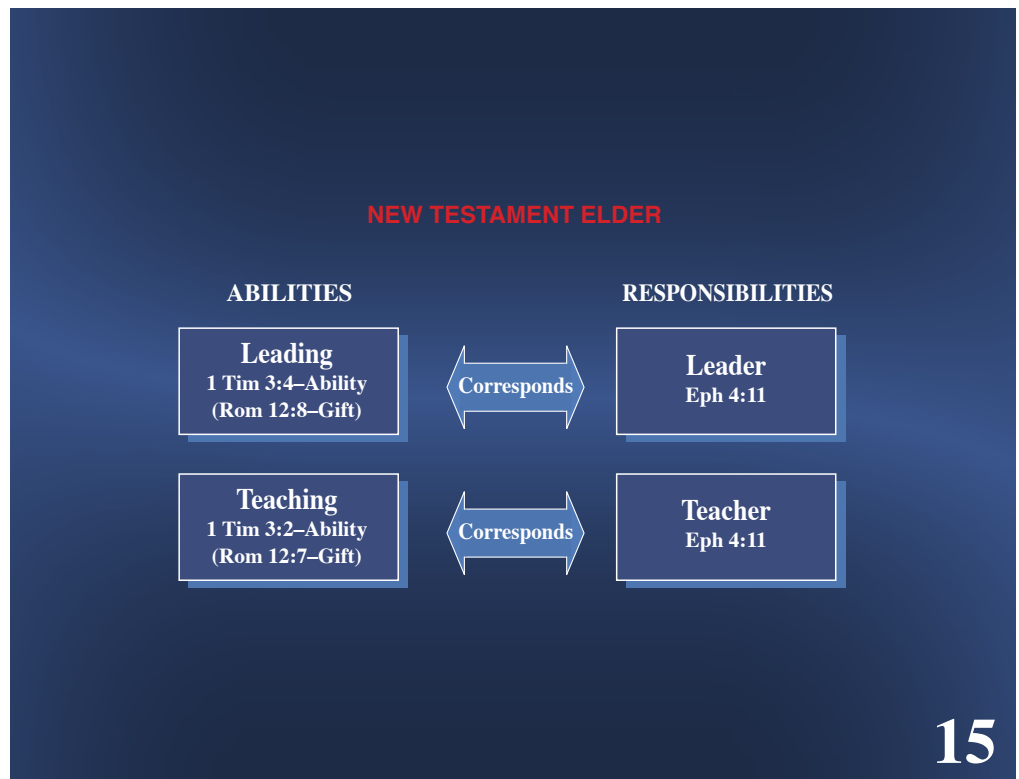
Slide #14

The elders are the leader-teachers in the church and must meet certain qualifications, the prerequisites for becoming an elder. Their lives *before* the church demonstrate their maturity in Christ. Their skills in ministry *within* the church are evidenced in loving service. And that recognition *by* the church leads to their appointment to the office of elder. The end result is authority derived, having met the biblical qualifications.



Slide #15

New Testament elders had the ability of lead and teach, gifting from the Spirit in order that they could carry out their responsibility in the church. One should notice the similarities between the responsibilities of the elders and the pastor-teachers. They are one-in-the-same, building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.





Endnotes:

1. In *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*, 6:1, Ignatius, a Church Father, addressed the necessity of a single bishop in each city, indicating a hierarchy with the bishop over the presbyters and deacons.
2. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 544.
Another source states, “In the list of offices in Eph. 4:11 we find... pastors and teachers. But pastor is by no means yet an official title. For in 1 Pet. 5:1 and in Acts 20:17 the leaders of local Christian communities are called *presbyteroi* [an elder].”
Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1971), 568.
3. LQ’s article, *Review of Biblical Eldership*, is a review of Alexander Strauch’s book *Biblical Eldership* in which he defends the two-type-elder view.
4. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. by Frederick William Danker, third edition, BDAG (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 240.
BDAG indicates the term *didaktos* is understood as “teachable.”
5. *Ibid.*
BDAG indicates the term *didaktikos* is understood as “skilled at teaching.”