



## The Ministry

*Adapted from FireBible Article: Overseers and their Duties by Danny Duvall*

A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by our Lord for the fourfold purpose of leading the Church in: Evangelization of the world; Worship of God; Building a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son; and Meeting human need with ministries of love and compassion.<sup>1</sup>

The *Overseers and their Duties* article gives a deeper understanding of this truth:

**Acts 14:23 (ESV)** And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Overseer (biblically defined):

- Used as a noun 5 times in the New Testament and means guardian or bishop. A function of leadership.
- Used as a verb in 1 Peter 5:2 and means to take care of. This was the New Testament model.

### **THE OVERSEERS:**

1. No church can function without **designated leaders**.
2. In churches today, we would use the term “pastor.”
  - a. Elders/Leaders can also be members of local congregations or ministry organizations who are not **full-time ministers** or do not have a professional ministry background.
3. They must meet the same biblical standards of all God-appointed spiritual leaders.
  - a. Such individuals are usually recognized for their **character**, **spiritual wisdom** and **leadership abilities**.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Ministry,” The Assemblies of God, <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Statement-of-Fundamental-Truths#11> (Accessed August 25, 2017).

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- b. Often, overseers are responsible for specific areas of ministry, such as administration, pastoral care, preaching, teaching and/or other areas of service.
- c. These individuals are to be appointed by other Spirit-filled followers of Christ who pursue God's will through **prayer** and **fasting**.
- d. Their decision must be based on the standards, principles and spiritual qualifications given by the Holy Spirit in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (ESV) and Titus 1:5-9 (ESV).

**1 Timothy 3:1–7 (ESV)** The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup>Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, **the husband of one wife**, sober-minded, **self-controlled**, respectable, **hospitable**, able to teach, <sup>3</sup>**not a drunkard**, not violent but gentle, **not quarrelsome**, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup>He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, <sup>5</sup>for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? <sup>6</sup>He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. <sup>7</sup>Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

- e. In this way, it is actually the **Holy Spirit** who prepares and appoints someone an overseer of the church.
- f. Paul's final address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:18-35 ESV) lays out the classic Biblical guideline on how to function as an overseer within a local church.

### **PROMOTING THE FAITH:**

1. One of the major duties of overseers is to feed or spiritually nourish the people in their congregation, for whom they are to administer spiritual care by teaching **God's Word**.
  - a. They must always keep in mind that the "flock" is God's people (i.e., purchased, bought back, rescued from sin, saved), who have been redeemed for himself with the precious blood of his Son, Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:9; Revelation 5:9). Jesus gave his life to pay the price for **people's offenses against God** so they could be restored to a **personal relationship with God**.

- b. In Acts 20:19-27, Paul describes how he served as a shepherd of the church in Ephesus. He took his responsibilities seriously by declaring the whole will of God, which included faithfully **warning**, encouraging and **teaching** the Ephesian Christians (Acts 20:27 ESV). As a result, he is able to say, ***“I am innocent of the blood of all men”*** (20:26; see note).
- c. In the same way, overseers and spiritual leaders today must declare to their congregations the full and balanced truth of God’s Word without **compromise** and in **proper context**. 2 Timothy 4:2-3 describes this.

**2 Timothy 4:2–3 (ESV)** <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

### **GUARDING THE FAITH:**

- 1. The true pastor must keep constant watch in order to protect the sheep from spiritual predators. This means that pastors and church leaders must guard their congregations from spiritual enemies whose aim is to distract, deceive and destroy them spiritually.
  - a. Paul knows that in the church’s future, Satan will raise up false teachers—some from within the church and others from the outside—who will work their way in among godly congregations and offer beliefs and behaviors that contradict God’s Word. These enemies of God will undermine and destroy the faith of some people in the church.
  - b. Paul calls them **“savage wolves,”** meaning that they are strong, difficult to handle and dangerous (see Acts 20:29, note; cf. Matthew 10:16). Such individuals will change the Bible’s teaching so that they may draw believers away from **Christ** and toward **themselves**. Paul’s urgent challenge (Acts 20:25-31) places a serious responsibility on all spiritual leaders to guard the church against false teaching. Church leaders must do this through diligent prayer for their people, as well as through solid biblical teaching and spiritual guidance.
  - c. The true church consists of only those who follow Christ with a true heart, relying on his help and strength and the Holy Spirit’s counsel and companionship to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and the Word of God.

- For this reason, church leaders must be willing to enforce **firm discipline**, **loving correction** (Ephesians 4:15 ESV), and **strong opposition** (2 Timothy 4:1-4; Titus 1:9-11) to all within the church who ***“distort the truth”*** (Acts 20:30) of God’s Word.
2. Church leaders, pastors of local congregations, and administrative officials must keep in mind that Jesus has made them responsible for the lives of all persons under their care (Acts 20:26-27; cf. Ezekiel 3:20-21).
    - a. If leaders fail to speak and carry out God’s whole purpose for the church (Acts 20:27)—especially regarding the spiritual condition of their own lives and that of their congregation (20:28)—they will not be ***“innocent of the blood of all men”*** (20:26, see note; cf. Ezekiel 34:1-10).
    - b. God will hold spiritual leaders **accountable** for those who are spiritually harmed or lost because of the leaders’ refusal or neglect to warn and protect their people from false teachers and doctrine (see 2 Timothy 1:14, note; Revelation 2:2, note).
  3. It is extremely important for a church to maintain discipline in relation to accurate Bible teaching and issues of moral integrity.
    - a. This means that those who are responsible for a church’s leadership and direction must be able to discipline others.
    - b. But they also must be willing to be confronted and disciplined if they cross moral or spiritual boundaries.
      - Purity in life and teaching is a necessity.
      - This includes preaching and living by the absolute authority of God’s Word.
  4. The main issue here is a leader’s **attitude** toward God’s inspired Word, which Paul calls the “word of his grace” (Acts 20:32).
    - a. False teachers, pastors and leaders will attempt to weaken the Bible’s authority by their inaccurate teachings and unbiblical principles.
      - By rejecting the **full authority** of God’s Word, they deny that the Bible is true and trustworthy in all that it teaches (Acts 20:28-31). These people, for the sake of the church, must be **confronted** and **disciplined**. If they fail to admit

their error, change their ways and submit to God, they must be removed from the church (2 John 1:9-11 ESV)

5. Churches must always share the Holy Spirit's passionate concern for spiritual purity (Acts 20:18-35). Any congregation that refuses to stand for the truth and does not correct those who undermine the authority of God's Word will eventually cease to exist as a church according to New Testament standards. Such a congregation is set on the path of **faithlessness** and rebellion against God. They have rejected the original revelation of Christ as given through his Word—the Bible. As a result, the church and its people will lose their **purpose**, **power** and **life**.

### **FURTHER STUDY:**

Read **Acts 20:28-31 (ESV)** and answer the following from the *FireBible* study notes:<sup>2</sup>

- From **Acts 20:29 (ESV)**
  - To whom does the metaphor “savage wolves” refer?
  - What are some desires that guide savage wolves?
  - What are 4 ways in which wolves destroy God's flock?
- From **Acts 20:31 (ESV)**
  - How can spiritual leaders avoid the danger of savage wolves?

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<sup>2</sup> Quentin McGhee, *Unlocking the Treasures of Your Fire Bible: Resources for Spiritual Understanding*, Springfield, MO, Life Publishers and Faith & Action Series, 2012, Page 235.

Read the *FireBible* article: *Overseers and Their Duties*. Answer the following:<sup>3</sup>

**Promoting the Faith:**

1. What is one of the main duties of overseeing God's flock?
  
2. What does 2 Timothy 4:2 say about being a shepherd of God's flock?

**Guarding the Faith:**

1. Why does Paul compare false teachers to savage wolves?
  
2. Why must church leaders correct those who distort the truth?
  
3. What responsibility does the privilege of being a shepherd bring?
  
4. What happens to the church if its Bible schools go astray?
  
5. How do some people weaken the authority of the Bible?
  
6. What happens to the church when overseers neglect their duties?

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<sup>3</sup> Quentin McGhee, *Unlocking the Treasures of Your Fire Bible: Resources for Spiritual Understanding*, Springfield, MO, Life Publishers and Faith & Action Series, 2012, Page 235.