

Elder: A Brief Word Study

1 Timothy 3:1 (NIV) ¹Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer [G1984], he desires a noble task. [Emphasis added]

YLT: If any one the oversight doth long for, a right work he desireth;

NIV: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

NLT: if someone wants to be an elder, he desires an honorable responsibility.

NASB: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

NKJV: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

Overseer: G1984 episkopē *ep-is-kop-ay'*

From G1980; *inspection* (for relief); by implication *superintendence*; specifically the Christian "episcopate":—the office of a "bishop", bishoprick, visitation. —Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

Thayer's Greek Definitions G1984: 1b) oversight; 1b1) overseership, office, charge, the office of an elder; 1b2) the overseer or presiding officers of a Christian church

Titus 1:5 - 7 (NASB) ⁵For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders [G4245] in every city as I directed you, ⁶namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. ⁷For the overseer [G1985] must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, [Emphasis added]

Elders, Titus 1:5: G4245 presbuteros *pres-boo'-ter-os* —Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

Thayer's Greek Definition G4245:

1) elder, of age

1a) the elder of two people

1b) advanced in life, an elder, a senior

1b1) forefathers

2) a term of rank or office

2a) among the Jews

2a1) members of the great council or Sanhedrin (because in early times the rulers of the people, judges, etc., were selected from elderly men)

2a2) of those who in separate cities managed public affairs and administered justice

2b) among the Christians, those who presided over the assemblies (or churches) The NT uses the term bishop, elders, and presbyters interchangeably.

Overseer, Titus 1:7, 1 Tim. 3:2: G1985 episkopos *ep-is'-kop-os*

From G1909 and G4649 (in the sense of G1983); a *superintendent*, that is, Christian officer in general charge of a (or the) church (literally or figuratively):—bishop, overseer.

—Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries

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1 Timothy 3:2 (NIV) ²Now the overseer [G1985] must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach [Emphasis added]

CONCLUSION: The terms elder, bishop and overseer when used in the biblical context of New Testament leadership are interchangeable. For details on biblical qualifications please read the Potential Leadership Questionnaire.