

OVERSEERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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JESUS IS AN OVERSEER

1 Peter 2:25 (ESV)

²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and **Overseer** of your souls.

☞ An Overseer performs work of soul-care (see Hebrews 13:17).

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

Philippians 1:1 (ESV)

**1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi,
with the **overseers** and deacons:**

☞ Overseers are not the same as Deacons in title *or* function! Both are distinct groups with differing (albeit similar) qualifications. Both overseers and deacons are appointed groups within the larger body of saints.

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QUALIFICATIONS, IDENTITY & PURPOSE

Titus 1:5–16 (ESV)

⁵This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷For an **overseer**, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

¹⁰For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹²One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

- ☞ An overseer must be "above reproach" (vv. 6,7) meaning "blameless," not accused/chargeable of wrongdoing.
- ☞ An overseer must have "faithful children" who cannot be accused of being intemperate, wasteful, or rebellious (v.6).
- ☞ An overseer is God's steward (v.7).
- ☞ An overseer must not be "arrogant," meaning "self-willed, stubborn" quick-tempered, a drunkard, violent or greedy for material gain (v.7).
- ☞ An overseer must be hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled (sensible, moderate), just (righteous), holy (devout, consecrated), and disciplined (exercising self-controlled) (v.8).
- ☞ **An overseer must obey the faithful teaching and be able to exhort others with sound instruction and rebuke (reprove) when others speak against it (to silence them) (vv. 9, 11, 13).**
- ☞ **Overseers protect the Church against insubordination (rebellion), empty (idle) talk, deceivers (v.10), false and selfish teaching (v.11), liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons (v.12) myths and misleading commandments (v.14) and hypocrites (v.16).**

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AN EXAMPLE & INSTRUCTIONS FOR OVERSEERS

Acts 20:17–38 (ESV)

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

²⁸ **Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”**

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

- ☞ An overseer’s conduct is consistent and observable as a servant of the Lord, humble and steadfast amidst trial (vv.18-21).
- ☞ An overseer is selfless and Spirit-led (v.24).
- ☞ **An overseer is made an overseer by the Holy Spirit (v.28).**
- ☞ **An overseer must pay attention to self and also to the flock to care for the church of God that belongs to Him (v.28).**
- ☞ **An overseer must protect the flock from outside attacks that make their way into the church in the form of perverted teachings meant to draw disciples away (v.30).**

SUMMARY QUESTIONS | OVERSEERS & OVERSIGHT

SUMMARY QUESTIONS | Answer the following questions to check your understanding of the teaching focus above.

1. (Circle Answers) **The Church belongs to _____ .**
 - A. God
 - B. The membership.
 - C. The pastor.

2. (Circle Answers) **God entrusts the management, stewardship and oversight of His church to *Deacons*.**
 - A. TRUE
 - B. FALSE

3. (Circle Answers) **The work of Oversight is optional in the Church.**
 - A. TRUE
 - B. FALSE

4. (Circle Answers) **Overseers and Deacons are viewed in God's Word as being _____.**
 - A. the same
 - B. different

5. (Circle Answers) **Qualifications for Overseers are merely suggestions. Meeting most of the qualifications is good enough for an aspiring candidate.**
 - A. TRUE
 - B. FALSE

6. (Circle Answers) **Who are Southside's Overseers?**
 - A. Pastor
 - B. Ministers
 - C. Deacons
 - D. Committees
 - E. Southside doesn't have Overseers!
 - F. I don't know!