



The Ministry

Including excerpts from the FireBible Article: Overseers and their Duties by Danny Duvall

It is not necessary to have a *FireBible* to study this lesson, but it will be very helpful if you do. [To purchase a *FireBible* click here.](#)

A divinely called and scripturally ordained ministry has been provided by God to help the church fulfill four central purposes in the world:

- Evangelizing of the world with the gospel of Jesus
- Worshipping and glorifying God
- Building a body of saints that strive to be more and more like His Son, Jesus Christ in the sight of others
- Meeting felt human needs through ministries of love and compassion.¹

¹ "The Ministry," The Assemblies of God, <https://ag.org/Beliefs/Statement-of-Fundamental-Truths#11> (Accessed August 25, 2017). Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. May not copy or download more than 500 consecutive verses of the ESV Bible or more than one half of any book of the ESV Bible.

The *Overseers and their Duties* article (found in the *FireBible*) 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 five times in the New Testament and means *guardian* or *bishop*. It is 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.
- b. They must meet the same biblical standards of all God-appointed spiritual leaders.
- c. Such individuals are usually recognized for their **character**, **spiritual wisdom** and **leadership abilities**.
- d. Overseers are often responsible for specific areas of ministry such as administration, pastoral care, preaching, teaching and/or other areas of service.

- e. These individuals are to be appointed by other Spirit-filled followers of Christ who pursue God's will through **prayer** and **fasting**.
- f. 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. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, **the husband of one wife**, sober-minded, **self-controlled**, respectable, **hospitable**, able to teach, ³ **not a drunkard**, not violent but gentle, **not quarrelsome**, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

- g. In this way, it is actually the **Holy Spirit** who prepares and appoints someone an overseer of the church.
- h. 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. A major duty of overseers is to spiritually feed the congregation and provide spiritual care by teaching **God's Word**.

- a. They must always keep in mind that the church is God's people (i.e., purchased, bought back, rescued from sin, saved), who have been redeemed to God with the 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 in the *FireBible*).

- 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) ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ 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. A pastor must keep constant watch in order to protect the sheep from spiritual predators.

- a. This means that pastors and church leaders must guard their congregations from spiritual enemies whose aim is to distract, deceive and destroy them spiritually.
- b. Paul knew that in the church's future Satan would insert false teachers—from inside and outside the church—to suggest beliefs and behaviors that contradict God's Word. These enemies would undermine and weaken the faith of some believers.

- c. Paul calls them “**savage wolves**,” meaning they are strong, difficult to handle and dangerous (see Acts 20:29, note; cf. Matthew 10:16).

Such individuals want to change the Bible’s teaching so they can 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.

- d. 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 and pastors of local congregations must keep in mind that Jesus has made them responsible for the healthy spiritual direction of all persons under their care (Acts 20:26-27; cf. Ezekiel 3:20-21).

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).

3. God will hold spiritual leaders **accountable** for refusing or neglecting to warn and protect their people from false teachers and doctrine (see 2 Timothy 1:14, note; Revelation 2:2, *Firebible* note).

4. 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 are also open to be corrected and disciplined if they cross moral or spiritual boundaries.
 - i. Purity in life and teaching is a necessity.
 - ii. This includes preaching and living by the absolute authority of God's Word.

5. 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 with inaccurate teachings and unbiblical principles.

- b. 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)

6. Churches must always share the Holy Spirit's passionate concern for spiritual purity (Acts 20:18-35).

- a. A 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.

- b. 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**.

GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS:

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

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From **Acts 20:29 (ESV)**

1. To whom does the metaphor “savage wolves” refer?
2. What are some motivations of these savage wolves?
3. What are 4 ways in which wolves harm God’s people?

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

From **Acts 20:31 (ESV)**

Review the *FireBible* article: *Overseers and Their Duties*.
Answer the following.³

Promoting the faith:

1. How can spiritual leaders avoid the danger of savage wolves?
2. What is one of the main duties of overseeing God's flock?
3. 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 Quentin McGhee, *Unlocking the Treasures of Your Fire Bible: Resources for Spiritual Understanding*, Springfield, MO, Life Publishers and Faith & Action Series, 2012, Page 235.

3. What central responsibility comes with the privilege of being a shepherd?
4. What happens to the church if its Bible schools, teachers, and ministers go astray in their responsibilities to correctly teach God's Word?
5. How do some people weaken the authority of the Bible?
6. What happens to the church when overseers neglect their duties?