

DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR
CHURCH LEADERSHIP

MIDWEEK SERIES SPRING 2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

What does the Bible Say About Church Leadership? Part I - The Old Testament	2
What does the Bible Say About Church Leadership? Part 2 - The New Testament.....	3
History of the Church and Baptists	5
What is the meaning of the Terminology for Elder/Overseer/Shepherd?	9
The Qualifications of an Elder, Part I.	11
What do Elders do?	15
Elder-Led versus Elder-Ruled	17
The Qualifications of an Elder, Part II	22
Who Runs the Church?	24
What is the difference between Elders and Deacons?	25
Is it necessary to move to an elder-led congregational structure?.....	27
How does the church raise qualified elders?	29
How Should we appoint elders at NWBC?.....	31
How do you remove Elders?	33
What is the congregation's role with elders?.....	35



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

What does the Bible say about elders? Part 1: The Old Testament

GOD HAS ESTABLISHED ORDER.

- I. In His magnificent creation (Genesis 1:1-5)
- II. And in the church
 - a. Christ as the head. (Ephesians 4:15-17; Colossians 1:18)
 - b. And elders/overseers/shepherds (pastors) are to order God's church. (Titus 1:5)
 - c. And be under shepherds to the chief shepherd who is Christ. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

ELDERS ARE CONSIDERED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE (Genesis 50:6-8)

ELDERS LEAD PEOPLE TO FOLLOW THE LORD.

(Exodus 3:15-19)

A WAY TO COMMUNICATE TO THE PEOPLE CLEARLY. (Exodus 12:21-23)

ELDERS ARE MEANT TO BEAR THE BURDEN OF COUNSELING AND DIRECTING GOD'S PEOPLE.

(Exodus 18:12-27)

THERE IS A NEED FOR PLURALITY OF ELDERS BECAUSE THERE IS A NEED TO SHARE THE BURDEN AND LOAD OF GOD'S PEOPLE. (Numbers 11:10-17; 2 Corinthians 11:24-29)

GOD'S DESIGN WAS FOR HIM TO BE THE KING OVER HIS PEOPLE.

The people of Israel also saw the other great kings of the earth and wanted a human leader that would rule over them. It was God's design to have prophets who would reveal God's Word to His people, and the people were to view God, Himself, as their King. 1 Samuel 8:4-7 says, "Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, 'Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.' But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.'

God wants to be the ruler of His people just as Christ is the ruler of the Church. God does not want one man to receive the authority that is due to Him alone. God did not want a king because he knew the people would look to the king instead of Himself for guidance and wisdom. God would



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What does the Bible say about Elders? Part 2: New Testament

THE PURPOSE OF ELDERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- I. God forms and fills the Church. (1 Peter 2:9-10)
 - How does Peter's language evoke the imagery and language of the Creation story in Genesis 1?
- II. God provides leaders for the Church. (Ephesians 4:7-16)
 - How does Paul connect Christ's gift of grace (4:7) with the roles of church leaders (4:11)?
 - According to 4:12-16, what are the responsibilities assigned to the church leaders?

THE FUNCTION OF ELDERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IN THE BIBLE IS FREQUENTLY REFERRED TO AS SHEPHERDING.

- God describes the relationship between Himself and His people as a shepherd with sheep.
 - Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:15-16; Micah 5:2-4
 - Matt. 9:35-36; John 10:1-16
- Elders in the New Testament are referred to as shepherds.
 - John 21:15-17; Ephesians 4:11
- Elders in the New Testament lead under the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

THE OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE OF ELDERS IS REFLECTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

- The early Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, used the Greek word *presbuteros* (πρεσβύτερος) for "elder." This is the same Greek word used in the New Testament, also called "elder." The word is used nearly twenty times in Acts and the epistles about this unique group of leaders responsible for overseeing the people of God.
- Five functions of elders in the Old Testament:
 - Elders represent God's people.
 - Elders lead others to follow God.
 - Elders communicate God's instructions.
 - Elders are responsible for counseling & directing others toward obedience to God.
 - God's people need multiple elders, so the burden does not fall on only one.

JESUS SHARED LEADERSHIP WITH HIS CHOSEN 12 DISCIPLES. These men led the church after Jesus ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:12-26). Those recognized as having interacted with Jesus personally were called apostles (Jesus' 12 disciples and Paul). The apostles played a significant role in shaping the early

"Elders **LEAD** the church
[1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1-2],

TEACH AND PREACH the Word
[1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9],

PROTECT the church from
false teachers
[Acts 20:17, 28-31],

EXHORT AND ADMONISH the
saints in sound doctrine
[1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:13-17;
Titus 1:9],

VISIT THE SICK AND PRAY
[James 5:14; Acts 6:4],

and **JUDGE DOCTRINAL ISSUES**
[Acts 15:6].

In biblical terminology,
elders **SHEPHERD, OVERSEE,**
LEAD, AND CARE for the local
church."

Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*

Christian church. Their teachings and letters, which form a substantial part of the New Testament, guide faith, doctrine, and organization within the Church.

- **ACTS 2:14-47** - Peter and the other apostles sermon address at Pentecost, apostles are teaching the church and carrying on what was passed down from Christ.
- **ACTS 6:1-7** - Apostles deal with a need in the church, identify a solution, and work with the assembly of disciples (the church/congregation) to select and appoint men to carry out the solution.
- **ACTS 11:27-30** - church in Jerusalem sends financial relief to churches in Judea by way of the elders.
- **ACTS 15** - Jerusalem Council where they settled a theological dispute over the need to keep the law of Moses and circumcision.

THE APOSTLES SHARED THE LEADERSHIP OF GOD'S CHURCH AND INSTRUCTED THE CHURCHES ON HOW TO APPOINT NEW LEADERS.

- As churches spread further away from Jerusalem and the counsel of the apostles, it became increasingly important to have godly men who could teach scripture and protect the church from false doctrines. (Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5,9-16)
- Leaders serve as examples to the church and reflect the leadership of Jesus Christ as the Head/Chief Shepherd. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9)

HOW DO ELDERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND NOW DIFFER FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT?

OLD TESTAMENT ELDERS WERE RESTRICTED TO TRUE ISRAELITES.

- In the Old Testament, elders were Jewish leaders of households/families, representing their people. Someone not from the nation of Israel could not serve as an elder.

EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT.

- In the Old Testament, only some received an outpouring of the Holy Spirit; this was often temporary. (Moses and the elders, Judges, the Kings, the Prophets)
- In the New Testament, each person saved by faith in Christ has received the Holy Spirit in full. (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 1:13-14)

IF EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS BEEN BORN AGAIN AND FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHY CAN'T WE ALL LEAD THE CHURCH? WHY DOES THE CHURCH NEED DESIGNATED LEADERS?

- The elders' primary role in the New Testament is teaching and directing the church to fulfill Christ's mission. (Eph. 4:11-14; Titus 1:9)
- Just as a household needs a husband to lead his family well to function, the primary responsibility of an elder is to help manage the church, the household of God. (1 Tim. 3:5)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How might the church effectively integrate God's leadership model in a society with growing skepticism towards authority and leadership?
- How does Paul's teaching in Ephesians 4 shape your perspective on the role of elders within the church? In light of this teaching, what responsibilities and aspirations do you believe elders should uphold?
- Though Jesus did not directly speak about elders, how did he appoint leaders for the church? How did these disciples appoint leaders after them?
- Reflect on the five functions of elders in the Old Testament and how they align with the responsibilities of church leaders today.



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

History of the Church and Baptists

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

OLD TESTAMENT (1 Samuel 8)

- Poor leadership causes God's people to look outside His design.
- Poor leadership causes God's people to reject His authority.

NEW TESTAMENT

- Three terms for church leaders: "presbuteros" (elder); "episkopos" (bishop or overseer).
- Titus 1:5-7 - both terms are used to refer to the same person.

The Early Church: Apostles to Constantine (33A.D.–313A.D.)

- The Birth of the Church: Acts 2
 - One church unified in one Spirit (vs 1-4)
 - Universal Church comprising all indwelt by the Spirit (vs 4-11)
 - Holy church comprised of those who are forgiven (vs 37-39)
 - Apostolic church grounded in the apostolic teaching (vs 42-47)
- By 3rd and 4th centuries more distance appeared between bishop and elder.

The Imperial Church: Constantine to Augustine (313A.D.–430A.D.)

- Constantine (306-337 A.D.); became sole ruler of the Roman world.
- Rise of Christendom: civil society composed mostly of Christians with one supreme ruler on earth a pontifex maximus (high priest of Roman religion).
- Churches built all over empire, especially basilicas in Rome on the traditional shrines of St Peter and St Paul in the Holy Land.
- Financed new copies of the Bible.
- Sunday established as a weekly holiday.

The Medieval Church: Augustine to Luther (430A.D.–1517A.D.)

- Rise of the Pope: Claimed authority of Peter (Matt 16:16-9; Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-9).
- Leo the Great (c. 400-461): the first "pope"; claimed authority over councils and emperors as successor of Peter.
- The Carolingian dynasty was beginning of the pope consecrating kings with priestly vestments, holy oil to bless their sword, scepter, ring, and crown. King promised to protect the pope and gave lands to the church.
- Pope had become the universal authority.

Reformation: Luther to Peace of Westphalia (1517-1648)

The Reformation was a 16th-century movement in Western Christianity that led to the splintering of the Catholic Church and the emergence of Protestantism. In summary, the Reformation paved the way for the emergence of Protestant clergy by challenging the traditional hierarchy, emphasizing direct access to scripture, promoting the priesthood of all believers, and establishing new ecclesiastical structures.

- Priesthood of All Believers: This meant individuals could have a direct relationship with God without an intermediary priest. This challenged the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church.
- New Ecclesiastical Structures: Protestantism led to new ecclesiastical structures and denominations. Churches were often organized around congregational governance, with ministers serving as spiritual leaders chosen by the congregation.
- Emphasis on Preaching: Protestant clergy strongly emphasized preaching and teaching the Word of God. Sermons became a central part of worship, and pastors played a crucial role in guiding their congregations.
- Marriage of Clergy: Unlike the Catholic Church, which required celibacy for clergy, many Protestant denominations allowed ministers to marry. This reflected a departure from traditional Catholic practices.
- Local Autonomy: Protestant churches often operated with a greater degree of local autonomy. Congregations had more influence in decision-making, and there was less centralized authority compared to the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church.

BAPTIST HISTORY OF CONFESSIONS

Baptists originated during the Reformation and have had a long history of using the term “elder.” It is helpful to look back at some of the original confessions and statements of faith to see how they described church leadership. The terminology in these five documents is very similar. They all state that the offices within the church are bishops or elders and deacons, except the New Hampshire Baptist Confession, which replaces elders with pastors.

LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH (1689) & PHILADELPHIA CONFESSION (1742)

A particular church, gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members; and the officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church, so called and gathered, for the peculiar administration of ordinances, and execution of power or duty, which he entrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the world, are bishops or elders, and deacons.

The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person, fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit, unto the office of bishop or elder in a church, is, that he be chosen thereunto by the common suffrage of the church itself; and solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with imposition of hands of the eldership of the church, if there be any before constituted therein; and of a deacon that he be chosen by the like suffrage, and set apart by prayer, and the like imposition of hands.

NEW HAMPSHIRE BAPTIST CONFESSION (1853)

We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers (1), associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel (2); observing the ordinances of Christ (3); governed by his laws (4), and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word (5); that its only scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons (6), whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

THE ABSTRACT OF PRINCIPLES (1858)

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is composed of all his true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to his commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular societies or churches; and to each of these churches he hath given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which he hath appointed. The regular officers of a Church are Bishops, or Elders, and Deacons.

BAPTIST FAITH & MESSAGE (1925)

A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ, governed by his laws, and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by his word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Its Scriptural officers are bishops or elders and deacons.

BAPTIST FAITH & MESSAGE (1963)

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. This church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages.

BAPTIST FAITH & MESSAGE (2000)

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

"WHY DO MANY SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCHES NOT HAVE A PLURALITY OF ELDERS?" ¹

- 1. Westward expansion.** In expanding Baptist churches into the West, the single pastor/church planter often served as a circuit-riding minister, handling the bulk of church duties with plural eldership fading. Presumably, qualified male leadership was scarce in the early days.
- 2. Rise of Landmarkism.** If you're unfamiliar with what landmarkism is, it might be helpful to research it. But landmarkism gave five points that make a New Testament church. One of them was democratic rule with no elder rule.
- 3. Rise of the "Campbelites"** (Now called the Church of Christ). The Church of Christ used the word "elder" almost exclusively. Baptists, to separate themselves from the Campbelite movement, threw out the term elder and chose the word pastor, even though it's only used one time in the New Testament as a noun.
- 4. Model of Corporate Structures.** In more recent years, churches tend to emulate corporate structures that mirror many successful companies. Considering this, many pastors resemble corporate CEOs, rather than the New Testament office of humble shepherd. Many modern churches reflect a single, CEO-type pastor, with a board of directors (often deacons), instead of having a God-appointed council of elders (servant leaders) and a supporting team of deacons (leading servants).

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What influence throughout history do you think culture has had on church polity?
- What examples in history were beneficial for church polity? What examples were not?
- How do we ensure that we are not seeking to become like "the nations around us" in church polity?

Consider for Further Reading:

- Chute, Anthony L., Finn, Nathan A., and Haykin, Michael A.G. *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015.
- Dever, Mark, and Leeman, Jonathan. *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015.
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *The Story of Christianity, Vol. I and II*. New York: Harper Collins, 2010.



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

What is the meaning of the terminology for Elder/Overseer/Shepherd?

REVIEW

I. Week 1 Old Testament

- We look to Christ as our King (1 Samuel 8:7, Colossians 1:18)

II. Week 2 New Testament

- God has established order in His church (Titus 1:5-6, 1 Timothy 3:14-15)

III. Week 3 Church History

- When Christ is not at the center of God's church there are problems, i.e. See (The imperial church 313 A.D.- 430 A.D., Medieval Church 430 A.D.- 1517 AD) and so a return to being about Christ began in the reformation and continually needs to be reevaluated by church governance and structure.

DEFINING THE TERMS

- When you think of the term Elder what is some of the first thoughts that come to mind?
- When you think of the term Pastor what are some of the first thoughts that come to your mind?
- When you think of overseer what are some thoughts that come to mind?

IN THE GREEK THESE THREE TERMS DESCRIBE ONE OFFICE OF ELDER.

- Elder (presbuteros)- Speaking of the maturity in the faith and characteristics of a person best described as wisdom (character).
- Overseer (episkopos)- describes the directing of affairs, and leadership aspects of a person who directs and also guardian of the souls (function).
- Shepherd (Poimen) - Describes care and nurturing of a flock taking care of the sick and guarding and protecting the flock.

THESE THREE TERMS ARE USED INTERCHANGEABLY TO DESCRIBE ONE OFFICE.

- **Acts 20:17** - "Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the **elders (presbuteros)** of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them"
- **Acts 20:28** - "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers (episkopos), to care (poimaino)** for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood."
- **1 Peter 5:1-3** - "So I exhort the **elders (presbuteros)** among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd (**poimaino**) the flock of God that is among you, exercising **oversight (episkopeo)**, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

- **Titus 1:5-9** - "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint **elders (Presbuteros)** in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer (**episkopos**), 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, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He 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."

FOUR REASONS ELDER/OVERSEER/SHEPHERD IS ONE OFFICE

- 1) The terms elder/overseer/shepherd are used interchangeably,
- 2) Elders are never given separate qualifications from an Overseer (1 Tim 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-8)
- 3) Elders and Overseers have the same function (lead/teach).
- 4) Elders and Overseers are never listed as a separate office (i.e. never elder, overseer, deacon).

SO WHY DO WE USE THE TERM PASTOR TODAY?

Only one use of the term Pastor or shepherd Poimen in the noun form in the Greek in the whole of the new testament.

The verb to shepherd is used multiple times to describe what an elder does but only used once in the noun form here.

Ephesians 4:11-12 "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."

I believe that since this text is speaking more of gifts it is talking about people gifted within the flock rather than qualified offices of elder/deacon.

But the call for leaders in the church is to shepherd the flock. And thus Pastor is a name that gives meaning to his function.

- All these terms to point us to Christ.

1 Peter 2:24-25 - "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

- Is there a chance that there are separate distinctions of elders?

1 Timothy 5:17-18 - "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

No I believe this has to do with the fact that there are some who devote most of their time to preaching and teaching and some who are able to teach but cannot devote their time to this as much as others.



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The qualifications of an elder: Part 1

I TIMOTHY 3:1-7

TITUS 1:5-9

QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER:

I. A passionate desire to serve: (3:1c)

- A. ASPIRES (*orego*): to reach out after or to pursue something; outward action.
- This person is actively preparing to serve
- B. DESIRE (*epithumeo*): pursue with passion, to long after; this is an internal compulsion to act
- Not forced or coerced by self or others (I Peter 5:1-5)
 - Service with the right motive (E.g. not seeking money) (I Corinthians 9:16-18)

"The man truly called to the ministry is marked by both an inward consuming passion and a disciplined outward pursuit. For him the ministry is not the best option, it is the only option. There is nothing else he could do with his life that would fulfill him. Accordingly, he works diligently to prepare himself to be qualified for service. While some may be called later in life, from that point on nothing else will do."¹ JOHN MACARTHUR

"Although it is possible some may desire this office from impure motives such as greed or pride, Paul wants to make clear that those who are chosen to serve want to serve. Those who desire to serve God as elders desire a good thing. But desire alone is never enough. This desire must be accompanied by moral character and spiritual capability." BENJAMIN L. MERKLE

II. Blameless, (3:2a)

- A. ABOVE REPROACH (*anepilambano*): literally, blameless; irreprehensible (not deserving of blame or strong criticism). From *lambano*, "to take," and "epi" upon. When the negative "a" is added, it means "One who cannot be laid hold upon".

"That is, a bishop [an elder] must be one of such a spotless character that no one can lay hold upon anything in his life which would be of such a nature as to cast reproach upon the cause of the Lord Jesus. He represents to the world at large such a Christian life that he furnishes no grounds of accusation. Expositors say: 'It is not enough for him to not be criminal; he must be one against whom it is impossible to bring any charge of wrong doing such as could stand impartial examination'"³ KENNETH S. WUEST

"Above Reproach" is the umbrella characteristic of an elder. It controls the whole of his life. Paul does not call for perfection, or no one could ever serve as an elder. But he does mean that pastors [elders] will be conscientious about the way they conduct their lives. They seek to make sure they have no dangling areas to dishonor Christ or distract from the gospel. They have no reason to constantly cover up or lie about their behavior. What you see in them at church will be the same at home, at work, in the community, and even when no one is watching. Elders lead by demonstrating Christian character, becoming an example for all the Church (Heb. 13:7)."⁴ PHIL A. NEWTON

"There is an inseparable link between the character of a church and the quality of its leadership. Leaders must set a godly example for the church to follow. Paul urged the Corinthians to 'be imitators of me' (I Cor. 4:16; cf. I Cor.11:1). To the Philippians he wrote, 'The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things' (Phil. 4:9). Choosing the right elders [is] to be done by measuring men against a divinely inspired checklist of qualifications. All the qualifications he [Paul] lists are spiritual virtues [and] character traits that mark godly teachers and leaders. All who serve as overseers or elders **must** measure up to these standards....."¹ [Emphasis mine] JOHN MACARTHUR

B. THE "ELDER" IS TO BE AN EXAMPLE/MODEL FOR THE CONGREGATION TO FOLLOW

- i. **Philippians 3:17**.... Paul said, "Brothers, join in following my example..."
- ii. **Corinthians 4:16**....Paul said, "I exalt you therefore, be imitators of me"
- iii. **I Corinthians 11:1**... Paul said, "Be imitators of me, just as I am of Christ"
- iv. **I Peter 5:3**..... Peter said, "Elders.....be examples to the flock
- v. **II Thessalonians 3:6-9**

III. **Maintains moral/sexual excellence, 3:2b**

- A. "THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE": from 'mias' (one), *gunaikos* (woman), and 'andra (man).....not anthropos (mankind), but rather from "aner" (a male individual).
- B. THE PREFERRED TRANSLATION: a man of one woman or a one woman kind of man
 - i. Marital status is not the focus of this phrase, but rather moral character and sexual behavior.

"The Greek text literally reads "a one-woman man." *Paul is not referring to a leader's marital status*, as the absence of the definite article in the original indicates. Rather the issue is his moral, sexual behavior. Many men married only once are not one-woman men. Many with one wife are unfaithful to that wife. While remaining married to one woman is commendable, it is no indication or guarantee of moral purity. **A one woman man is a man devoted in his heart and mind to the woman who is his wife. He loves, desires, and thinks only of her. He maintains sexual purity in both his thought life and conduct.**"⁵ [*Emphasis mine*] **JOHN MACARTHUR**

C. ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF "HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE":

- i. Disqualifies divorced men from spiritual leadership
- ii. Disqualifies men who remarry after the death of a spouse from spiritual leadership
- iii. Disqualifies bigamists and polygamists from spiritual leadership
- iv. Disqualifies single men from spiritual leadership

"All these interpretations, however, overlook the central point of these lists [of qualifications]. The question that should be asked is this, 'Can this person serve as an example to us in the area of marriage and family?' While some would object that this approach avoids or undermines the literal interpretation of Scripture, literally, the passage says nothing about divorce at all. Had Paul wanted to exclude divorced persons, he simply could have said, 'he must not be divorced.' "⁶ **JOHN S. HAMMETT**

IV. **Temperate, 3:2c**

- A. SOBER MINDED, ALERT, WATCHFUL, WIDE AWAKE, OR CLEAR HEADED, NOT RATTLED, VIGILANT (alertly watchful especially to detect and/or avoid danger)
 - i. **I Peter 5:8** (watchful for things that may harm the flock or himself)
 - ii. **Psalms 23** (protects the flock from enemy external predators; feeds the flock knowing the enemy is lurking around.
 - iii. **Acts 20:28-31** (protect the flock from internal dangers; false teaching, etc)
 - a. Some problems that needed attention in the church at Ephesus:
 - **I Timothy 1:3, 4** (false teaching)
 - **I Timothy 1:20** (failures among men in the flock)
 - **I Timothy 2:9-15** (immodesty and insubordination among women)
 - iv. **I Chronicles 12:32** (men who understood the times and knew what to do)

V. Prudent, 3:2d

A. WELL-DISCIPLINED in one's personal life and things of the ministry

"He must have a serious attitude and be earnest about his work. This does not mean he has no sense of humor, or that he is always solemn and somber. Rather it suggests that he knows the value of things and does not cheapen the ministry or gospel message by foolish behavior."⁷ **WARREN W. WIERSBE**

VI. Respectable, 3:2e

A. RESPECTABLE (KOSMIOS): an orderly life; not a chaotic life, of good behavior

"The ministry is no place for the man whose life is a continual confusion of unaccomplished plans and unorganized activity."⁸ **HOMER A. KENT, JR.**

VII. Hospitable, 3:2f

A. GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY (philoxenos): a compound word, *philos*, "to like, love or be fond of something" and *xenos*, "a stranger or a foreigner"; literally, 'a lover of strangers'. Being hospitable to strangers.

i. **Romans 12:13**.... "Contribute to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality."

ii. **Hebrews 13:2**... "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it."

iii. **III John 5-8** ... assisting needy believers.....especially strangers

"The compound word means, "one who is fond of offering hospitality." But the hospitality spoken of here is not the kind which says, 'come over for dinner and let us have a good time. Some day you will return the favor and I will enjoy your hospitality.' The hospitality spoken of here found its occasion in the fact that in the days of the great Roman persecutions, Christians were banished and persecuted, and rendered homeless. Or, in the case of traveling preachers and teachers, ministering from church to church, these servants of God were to be received and cared for by the bishop [elder]. Or, because in the early centuries, the local churches had no church edifice in which to worship, the church met in the home of an individual. The bishop [elder] should be glad to thus open his home for this purpose."⁹ **KENNETH S. WUEST**

"Elders are not elevated to a place where they are unavailable. They are approachable."¹⁰ **JOHN MACARTHUR**

HOW DO YOU THINK THIS VIRTUE CAN BE DISPLAYED IN TODAY'S CULTURE?

VIII. Apt to teach, 3:2g

A. ABLE TO TEACH (didaktikos): only used here and in **II Timothy 2:24**

"Here is the only qualification that relates to his [the elder's] giftedness and function. An elder must be a highly skilled teacher, who works hard in his studies and proclamation. This is the one qualification that sets him apart from deacons. Since the primary duty of the overseer [elder] is to preach and teach the word of God, being gifted for that is crucial."¹⁰

IBID

B. PREACHING AND TEACHING IS A PRIMARY TASK AND RESPONSIBILITY OF AN ELDER:

i. I Timothy 4:6-16 (key verses: 6, 11, 13, 16); I Timothy 5:17; II Timothy 2:15, 24; Titus 2:1; Ephesians 4:11-14; II Timothy 4:1-2

C. CHARACTERISTICS OF A SKILLED TEACHER: (John MacArthur)¹¹

i. Gifted (I Timothy 4:13, 14; II Timothy 1:6-11)

ii. Doctrinally sound (I Timothy 4:6; I Timothy 6:1-3; II Timothy 4:2-3a; Titus 1:7-9; Titus 2:1)

iii. Humility and gentleness (II Timothy 2:24-25)

iv. Godly (actively pursuing holiness and righteousness) (I Timothy 4:7; I Timothy 6:11; I Timothy 4:12, 13)

v. Diligent student of the Word of God (II Timothy 2:15)

vi. Avoids and recognizes false doctrine (I Timothy 4:7; I Timothy 6:20, 21; II Timothy 2:16)

vii. Courageous (I Timothy 1:18-20; II Timothy 4:7 (FINISH WELL!))

- IX. **Not addicted to wine or other artificial stimulants**
- X. **Not pugnacious**
- XI. **Gentle**
- XII. **Not contentious**
- XIII. **Free from the love of money**
- XIV. **Manages his household well**
- XV. **Not a new believer/convert**
- XVI. **Has a good reputation in the community**

¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; I Timothy; Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, pg. 91, 92

² Benjamin L. Merkle, 40 Questions About Elders and Deacons; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, pg. 111

³ Wuest's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament; Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, Volume 2; pg. 52

⁴ Phil A. Newton, 40 Questions About Pastoral Ministry, Kregel Publishing; Grand Rapids, MI, pg. 39

⁵ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; I Timothy; Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, pg. 104, 105

⁶ Biblical Foundations For Baptist Churches, A Contemporary Ecclesiology, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI pg. 196

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary; ChariotVictor Publishing, Colorado Springs, CO, pg. 220

⁸ Homer A. Kent, Jr., The Pastoral Epistles; BHM Books, Winona Lake, Ind., (1982) pg. 127

⁹ Wuest's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament; Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, Volume 2; pg. 55

¹⁰ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; I Timothy; Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, pg. 108

¹¹ The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; I Timothy; Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL, pg. 109,110



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

What Do Elders Do?

LEAD (OVERSEER, EPISKOPOS)

- A. **TEACH THE WORD OF GOD** (1 Timothy 3:1-2) - "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach...**"
- Feed Christ's Sheep (John 21:15-19)
 - Teach in a way that points to Christ (Matthew 23:8-12)
 - Teach sound doctrine (Titus 1:9)
 - Raise up new teachers of the Word of God (2 Timothy 2:2)
 - Devoted to teaching the Word of God. (1 Timothy 4:13; Acts 6:4; 2 Timothy 4:1-2)

B. **LEADS LIKE CHRIST, A SERVANT** (Matthew 20:25-28)

"But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. **But whoever would be great among you must be your servant**, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:25-28 (ESV)

- Leadership is not domineering but like the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-5)
- C. **WATCH OVER THE SOULS OF THE FLOCK** (Hebrews 13:17) - "Obey your leaders and submit to them, **for they are keeping watch over your souls**, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."
Hebrews 13:17

SHEPHERD (PASTOR, POIMEN)

A. **GUARD THE FLOCK FROM FALSE TEACHING** (Acts 20:28-30)

"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. **I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.**" Acts 20:28-33

- Rebuke those who teach falsely (Titus 1:9)
- B. **PRAY OVER THE SICK** (James 5:14-20) - "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." James 5:14
- C. **TAKE CARE OF GOD'S CHURCH** (1 Timothy 3:4-5) - "He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he **care for God's church?**" 1 Timothy 3:4-5

- D. **HELPS SETTLE DISPUTES** (Acts 15:2). - “And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem **to the apostles and the elders about this question.**”
- E. **EQUIPS THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY** (Ephesians 4:11-13) - “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the **shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...”
- F. **RESTORES PEOPLE BACK TO THE BODY** (Galatians 6:1) - “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, **you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.** Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

EXAMPLE (ELDER, PRESBUTEROS)

- A. **LOOK LIKE THE CHIEF SHEPHERD** (1 Peter 5:1-4) - “So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, **but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.**”
- B. **ABOVE REPROACH** (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) - “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. **Therefore an overseer must be above reproach...**” 1 Timothy 3:1-2b
- C. **SHOWS OTHERS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SERVANT** (John 13:12-17) - “When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. **For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.** Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Elder-led vs Elder-ruled

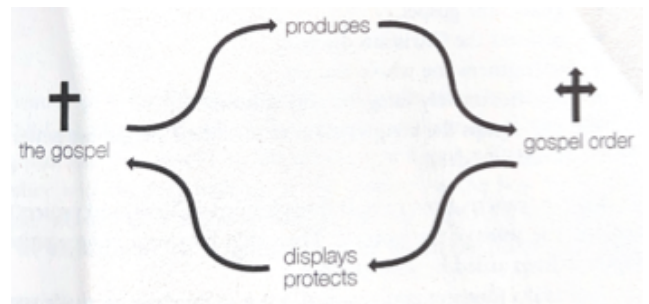
Regardless of the polity churches select, we should all acknowledge that Jesus and His Word possess final authority. The elders/overseers/pastors speak for this Word.

What distinguishes polity in the church is who makes decisions on matters like receiving members, church discipline, removing a disqualified elder, changing a statement of faith, approving a budget, etc.

IF CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, THEN WHY DOES THE CHURCH NEED LEADERS?

The biblical idea of rule is an invitation into the work and stewardship of God.

- God invites Adam into His rule by giving him commands to multiply, fill, and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28) and protect and tend to Eden (Gen. 2:15- "work" and "keep").
- God established a priesthood through Moses to "work" and "watch over" the Temple - the dwelling place of God (Num. 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:5-6).
- God forms the church and gives each regenerated member priest-like responsibilities (1 Peter 2:9).



Elders in the church are set apart by God and recognized by the congregation to "work" (model, train, and direct the church) and "watch over" (care, tend to the needs, guard) the members to ensure that the church displays and protects the gospel. (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:12-13)

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." Hebrews 13:17

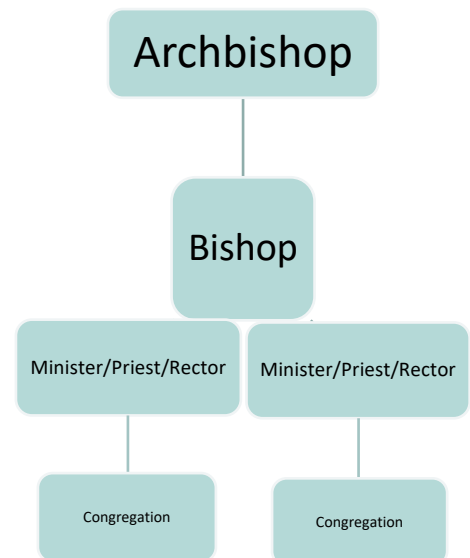
- **THE CONGREGATION FLOURISHES** under godly leadership when their leaders serve in a way that convinces or persuades them to yield to their leadership.
- **LEADERS FLOURISH** when the congregation encourages them to lead and receives joyfully the care and attention of their leaders over their lives.
- The people are inclined to be persuaded and to yield, while the leaders labor to initiate and persuade for the church's joy and benefit.
 - The people want to be led. They want leaders who are "not domineering over those in [their] charge, but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).
 - The leaders are men willing to give more of themselves, willing to sacrifice their private comforts and preferences and time and energy and resources, to care for others.

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR ELDER-RULED?

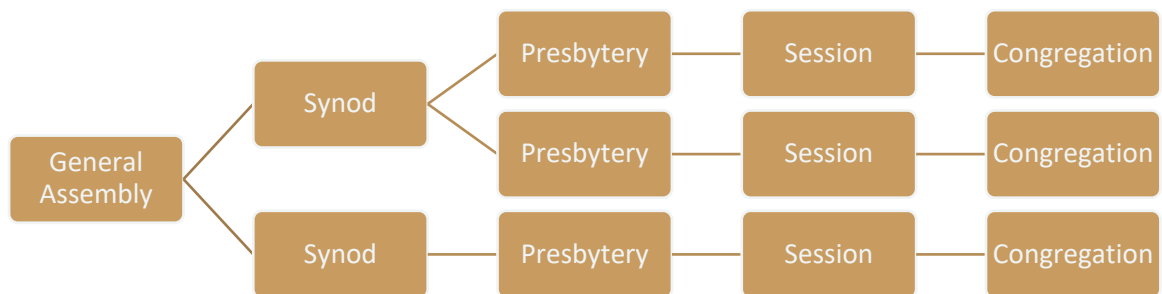
- Elders were a ruling body in the Jewish synagogues, which is the background of the church.
- The term *episkopos* (bishop) is used in the New Testament to refer to church leaders.
- Elder (*presbyteros*) is the title most often used for church leaders in the New Testament and is equivalent with *episkopos* (bishop).
- Matthew 16:13-19 (Roman Catholic - authority of the Pope through Peter)
- Acts 15 (Jerusalem Council) - involves three groups: apostles, elders, and the whole church. The apostles and elders rule on the matter.
- 1 Thess. 5:12-13 - "respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you"
- 1 Timothy 5:17 - "elders who rule well"

TWO MODELS:

- **EPISCOPAL** - follows an imperial model of government. Developed in the context of the Roman Empire. Model is used by Roman Catholic, United Methodist, Anglican and Episcopalian Churches.
 - Derived from Episkopos (Bishop), who was a key figure in this system.
 - Bishop has oversight of all congregations in a particular area (diocese):
 - Power to ordain and assign ministers (ministers, rectors, priests)
 - The archbishop has oversight over multiple bishops.
 - *A benefit of this model* is seen in the context of the early church. The episcopal model served Christians by supporting orthodoxy and unity as they faced persecution and the absence of canonized scripture that was readily available.
 - *5 problems with this model:*ⁱ
 1. Distinction between *episkopos* and *presbyteros* inherent in this model is not sustained in New Testament usage. Terms are used interchangeably, and there is no evidence from New Testament to support monarchical, ruling sole bishop.
 2. New Testament use of *episkopos* centers on plurality of bishops who serve together to lead single congregations. Not a supervisory role.
 3. This model leaves the congregation passive.
 4. The early churches in the New Testament were not institutionally joined (in a denominational sense), but were local congregations associated with one another.
 5. The hierarchical nature of this model appears contrary to the humble, serving spirit commanded of church leaders (Mark 10:41-45; 1 Peter 5:3).



- **PRESBYTERIAN** – follows a republican model of government. Developed in context of pre- and post-Reformation.
 - Derived from *presbyteros*, governance by the presbyters, elders.
 - Group of elders is referred to as: Session (Presbyterian churches); Consistory (Christian Reformed churches); or, Elders (Independent and non-denominational churches)
 - Structure includes one recognized as teaching elder, or pastor, with other elders (typically lay members of the congregation, not vocational elder).
 - Ruling authority over the congregation is vested in the elders.
 - Congregations have some authority to elect or approve of nominated elders.
 - **For denominations that follow this model, levels of authority are added beyond the local church:**
 - Presbytery:
 - Made up of representatives of each session in an area.
 - Reviews decisions or resolves disputes between sessions.
 - Holds the official title to the property and buildings of the local congregation.
 - Synod: regional level
 - General Assembly: national level
 - a. Sets overall doctrine and policy for all local congregations included in the denomination.



- **4 problems with this model!**
 - 1. Elders have authority, but not rule.**
 - 1 Tim. 5:17 – “rule” (*prohistemi*). Two interpretations of “rule”:
 - i. Authoritative: rule (KJV, RSV, ESV)
 - ii. Milder: direct (NIV), good leaders (HCSB). Milder is more appropriate for multiple reasons.
 - 1 Tim. 3:5 – *prohistemi* is used with the verb *epimeleomai* as a parallel. (Only other use of *epimeleomai* is Luke 10:34-35, Good Samaritan)
 - 1 Tim. 5:17 is not to be seen as establishing two classes of elders (ruling and teaching).
 - i. Paul’s focus is comparing elders who lead and teach well against those who do not, either in capacity or efficiency. The special honor is for those who do both.
 - ii. The special honor is not double pay but rather respect and support.
 - “In modern times, Paul has in mind the pastoral staff, whose members, in obedience to God’s call, have devoted their lives to the service of the church.” (Philip Towner)
 - Consideration of the whole New Testament teaching on the nature of spiritual leadership suggests that elders are not to rule but to lead the church into spiritually minded consensus. (Heb. 13:17)

2. This model elevates passages from Acts 13 and 15 to a normative principle. **This is not Luke's point in writing Acts.**
3. The **division of elders into teaching and ruling is debatable.** 1 Tim. 5:17 as support is undermined by the qualification that elders are "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2).
4. While it allows congregations more authority than an episcopal model, **it still needs to capture the fullness of responsibility local congregations hold in the New Testament.**

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "ELDER-LED"?

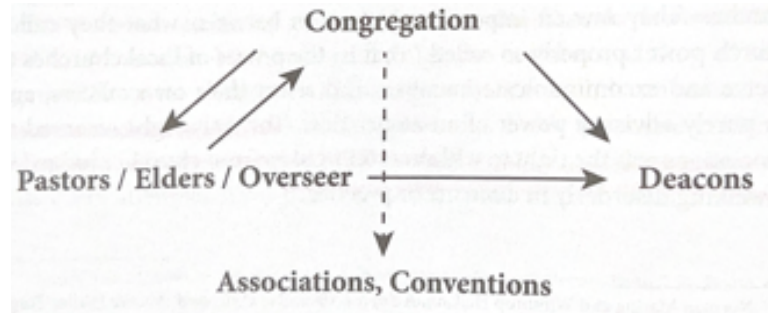
WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR ELDER-LED CONGREGATIONALISM?

- **THE CONGREGATION PRESERVES AND PROTECTS THE GOSPEL WITNESS OF THE CHURCH.**
 - Matt. 16:18-19 & 18:15-20
 - Jesus speaks of the authority of the church to "bind or loose" (accept or dismiss) individuals into fellowship.
 - "Church membership is not a matter of finding a place where one's needs may be met, but finding a place where one can obey God's commands with a clear conscience." (John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*)
 - 1 Cor. 5:2, 9-13 & 2 Cor. 2:6
 - Church in Corinth reminded of responsibility to act against rebellious church member; "majority" of the church acted.
 - 1 Tim. 5:19-20
 - Supports the final authority of a congregation over its elders.
- **THE CONGREGATION IS CHARGED WITH MAINTAINING SOUND DOCTRINE.**
 - Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Tim. 4:3-4
- **THE CONGREGATION SELECTS ITS LEADERS.**
 - Acts 6:3 - The church in Jerusalem selects and appoints the first deacons.
 - 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9 - inferred that the qualifications are passed along to churches for selecting initial elders and succession.
- **THE CONGREGATION SETS APART SOME FOR CERTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES.**
 - Acts 13:2-3 - The church in Antioch commissions missionaries, Paul, and Barnabas
 - Acts 15:22 - The church in Jerusalem commissions Paul, Barnabas, and others to deliver a recommendation letter to the church in Antioch.
 - Most of the letters in the New Testament were addressed to churches, not just their leaders. (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1 and 2 John, Jude, Revelation)
 - Further, no evidence exists that a body more significant than a local congregation ever made decisions for a New Testament congregation.

CONGREGATIONALISM

Congregation exercises ultimate **human** authority in the church, under Christ's **divine** authority. (Government by congregation)

- 1 Pet. 2:9 – Christ the head over a priesthood of all believers. Dominant images for the church demonstrate mutuality, not hierarchy (body, household, family; not kingdom).
- Since all members are regenerate and thus indwelt by the Holy Spirit, all can receive guidance from Christ.
- Involves widespread participation. Every member has equal voice and vote.
- Relationship between the congregation, elders/overseers/pastors, and deacons:
 - Elders lead.
 - Congregation trusts and follows.
 - Deacons serve.
 - All are members of one another.



CONGREGATIONALISM HIGHLIGHTS THE LOCAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH (AUTONOMY) BUT NOT ITS ISOLATION FROM OTHER CHURCHES.

- Local and universal church
- Association of local churches help with matters of doctrine and practice.
 - Cooperation in missions
 - Only power of associations is to withdraw fellowship from church judged to be walking disorderly in doctrine or practice.

WHY ARE WE ELDER-LED AT NORTHWEST?

- It is scriptural. We see it as the strongest biblical argument for church polity.
- It honors Christ. It magnifies Christ by esteeming the Holy Spirit’s work in one another.
- The gospel produces order, and this order is to be maintained by the church members so that they display and protect the true gospel in life and word.
- More likely model to produce stronger, more mature Christians through direct involvement in the life of the church.
- It has been demonstrated to be a strong, historical protection to our evangelism. “the verdict of history (shows)...While it is clear that no certain polity prevents churches from error...the more centralized polities seem to have a worse track record than does congregationalism in maintaining a faithful, vital, evangelical witness.” (Mark Dever, *A Display for God’s Glory*)

“Since the gospel’s work has already begun in us, we are congregationalists. Since the gospel’s work is not yet complete in us, we are elder-led congregationalists.”ⁱⁱ

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY:

- *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology.* John S. Hammett. Kregel Academic: Grand Rapids, 2019.
- *Church Basics: Understand the Congregation’s Authority,* Leeman, Jonathan. B&H Publishing: Nashville, 2016.

ⁱ *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology.* John S. Hammett. Kregel Academic: Grand Rapids, 2019.

ⁱⁱ *Church Basics: Understand the Congregation’s Authority,* Leeman, Jonathan. B&H Publishing: Nashville, 2016.



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The qualifications of an elder: Part 2

I TIMOTHY 3:1-7

TITUS 1:5-9

IX. Not addicted to wine (not a drunkard), 3:3a

- A. LITERALLY: 'not lingering beside wine' or 'one who sits long at his wine'
- B. DRUNKENNESS WOULD OBVIOUSLY DISQUALIFY a man from the office of an elder.
- C. TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL IS NOT HERE DEMANDED or commanded of elders or men who desire to be elders.
- D. Elders (or any man who desires to be an elder) must give serious consideration as to HOW THIS PRACTICE MIGHT REFLECT ON HIS CHARACTER, WITNESS, TESTIMONY, AND/OR REPUTATION:
 - i. **I Timothy 3:2a** Elders are to be above reproach/blameless.
 - ii. **I Peter 5:1-3** Elders are to be examples to the flock.
 - iii. **I Corinthians 10:31-33** Will God be glorified by choosing to indulge?
 - iv. **Romans 14:21** Will use of alcohol cause others to stumble?
 - v. **I Timothy 3:7** Elders are to be reproach among unbelievers
 - vi. **I Corinthians 6:12-20** Just because "I can" does not mean "I should"
- E. Elders and those who desire to be elders should be open to intense and detailed investigation as to when, where, with whom, and why they choose to use alcohol. Questions about the frequency and quantity of use may also be appropriate.

X. Not pugnacious or violent, 3b

- A. DOES NOT RESORT TO USE OF VERBAL OR PHYSICAL AGGRESSION to resolve conflicts
 - i. **Proverbs 18:21** Words can build up or tear down (ruin or destroy) another person's life.
 - ii. **James 3:6** The tongue can be like a flame thrower in a drought stricken forest

XI. Gentle, 3c

- A. Opposite of pugnacious. GRACIOUSLY ENDURES CRITICISM. Speaks the truth in love, does not seek revenge or plan ways to retaliate.
 - i. **Ephesians 4:15** "..... Speaking the truth in love"
 - ii. **I Pete 3:8-18** "...not returning insult for insult..."
 - iii. **Romans 12:17-21** "...never pay back evil for evil"

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness..." Galatians 6:1

"Many leave the ministry because they can't accept criticism men."

JOHN MACARTHUR

XII. Not contentious, 3c

- A. Not quarrelsome or argumentative; he is not looking for a fight; he does not have a chip on his shoulders.
 - i. **II Timothy 2:22-26**
 - ii. **I Timothy 1:4-7** Avoids worthless arguments.

XIII. Free from the love of money, 3d

- A. The heart and motive(s) of the elder is ministry and not money. He must not be greedy or covetous. The following passages speak to this issue:
 - i. **I Timothy 6:5c-10** "The love of money is the root of all sorts of evil....."
 - ii. **I Peter 5:2** "Shepherd the flock of God.....not for sordid gain"
 - iii. **Titus 1:7** ".....not fond of sordid gain"

XIV. **Manages his household well**

XV. **Not a new believer/convert**

XVI. **Has a good reputation in the community**



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Who Runs the Church?

WHAT KIND OF AUTHORITY DO THE ELDERS HAVE?

**CHRIST THROUGH HIS WORD HAS GIVEN DIFFERENT ROLES
TO HELP CHRIST RUN THE CHURCH.**

- **ELDERS** have the responsibility to glorify Christ through **LEADING**, **TEACHING**, and **DIRECTING** Christ's church
 - Elders are given the responsibility to lead and shepherd like Christ for the glory of Christ. (Hebrews 13:17)
 - Elders are given the responsibility to teach for the glory of Christ. (1 Timothy 4:13-16)
 - Elders are given the responsibility of directing Christ's church for the glory of Christ. (1 Timothy 5:17)
- **THE CONGREGATION** has the responsibility to glorify Christ through **MEMBERSHIP**, **DISCIPLINE**, and **DOCTRINE** in Christ's church.
 - The congregation is responsible for adding a members to congregation and continuing the discipleship and growth of those in the body to glorify God with their lives. (Matthew 16:18-19)
 - The congregation is responsible for church discipline in the removal of the member and the continued glory to God in eradicating sin within the body. (Matthew 18:15-18)
 - The congregation is responsible for the doctrine of the church to reflect the glory of God. (Galatians 1:6-9)



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

What is the difference between elders and deacons?

ELDERS are men who shepherd (care and guard), oversee (lead and direct), and serve as examples for the congregation.

- Teach the Word of God. (1 Tim. 4:13-16)
- Provide pastoral ministry to the members. (John 21:15-23; 1 Pet. 5:2)
- Lead the church under the authority of Christ. (1 Pet. 5:3-4)

DEACONS are servants or ministers.

- Serve the congregation through the leadership of the elders.
- Serve spiritual and physical or temporal needs.

Both are following the command and example of Christ to serve.

"But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. **But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave**, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matt. 20:25-28

"Every service offered to Jesus by a believer and done in the power of the Spirit may be called spiritual service." (John Hammett)

Service is ministry. Ministry is service.

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of *ministry* (diakonias), for building up the body of Christ..." (Eph. 4:11-12)

ELDERS are servant-leaders.

DEACONS lead in/by/through ministry/service.

Both are members of the congregation, "the saints," who, all together, serve and submit to one another. (Phil. 2:1-8)

HOW DO ELDERS AND DEACONS DIFFER IN THE SCRIPTURES?

If the offices are identical, why would two be needed? (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13)

ELDERS are distinguished through their qualifications.

- **Teaching** - 1 Tim. 3:2/Tit. 1:9 and 3:9 Elders must be "able to teach" and "able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it," compared to deacons who are to "hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience."
 - o Deacons are to know doctrine but are not charged with teaching it authoritatively to the church (see authoritative teaching in 1 Tim. 2:12).
 - o The gift of teaching is not intrinsic to the office of deacon.
- **Oversight** - Elders are explicitly charged with the function of oversight: both in the synonymous use of the term "overseer" (episkopos) and "elder" (presbyteros) and in the identification of their role (1 Tim. 3:5; Tit. 1:7).

- There are correspondences of
 - managing a household (elders) with the care for the church (deacons)
 - and oversight (elders) with stewardship (deacons)

CAN WOMEN SERVE AS DEACONS?

In 1 Tim. 3:11, while discussing the qualifications for deacons, why does Paul reference “wives”?

- Translation: Greek word “γυναῖκας” (gynaikas) has been translated as both “woman” or “wife” throughout the New Testament.
- How do we understand the progression of 1 Tim. 3 including women?
 - V 2: “An overseer must be...”
 - V 8: “Deacons likewise (must be)...”
 - V 11: “Wives/women likewise (must be)...”
- It appears that Paul lists qualifications for deacons’ wives but not elders’ wives. Why would he do that?
 - Paul’s list of women is too short compared to elders and deacons for him to be introducing a new office. Therefore, Paul is either:
 - a. adding wives to qualify their husbands as deacons,
 - b. or allowing women to serve as deacons, either single or with their husbands.
 - The text is divided into two paragraphs: qualifications for elders, and qualifications for deacons. Given this structure, we should not infer that “Their wives” (3:11) refers to both elders’ and deacons’. Including women/wives is for deacons only.
 - The absence of qualifications for elders’ wives is best understood in relationship to the prohibition of women from exercising authoritative teaching (1 Tim. 2:12). Since women cannot have this authority, elders’ wives cannot participate with their husbands in leading the church. Therefore, elders are not qualified with their wives. This exclusion of wives does not diminish or devalue the elders’ marriages as a qualifying mark.

Since the only prohibition for women is authoritative teaching (1 Tim. 2:12), and deacons are not charged with this responsibility, should we prevent women from serving as deaconesses?

SO, HOW DOES A CHURCH DECIDE TO HAVE WOMEN SERVING AS DEACONS?

- What is our interpretation of 1 Timothy 3: Deacon’s wives and/or deaconesses?
- How do we view ministry and service in the church? Are we becoming title-dependent? What role do women have in ministry and service in the church?

DEACON MINISTRY PLAN @ NWBC:

- Scriptural qualifications: 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- Church life expectations (attendance, participation in the work of ministry)
- Current Areas of Deacon Ministry:
 - Ongoing care for widows and orphans
 - Safety Team
 - Lord’s Supper (preparation and serving)
 - Building and Grounds
 - Greeting Ministry

RESOURCES:

“Deacons”,
Matt Smethurst

“Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches”, John S. Hammett

“Paul’s Vision for the Deacons”,
Alexander Strauch



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Is it necessary to move to an elder-led congregational structure?

REASONS FOR MOVING TO AN ELDER-LED CONGREGATIONAL STRUCTURE

- 1. CLEAR PATTERN IN SCRIPTURE** - Plurality of elders seems to be the biblical teaching and biblical pattern. (Acts 14:23, 11:30, 15:2, 16:4, 20:17, 20:18, Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:5)
"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." **Acts 14:23**
- 2. HELPS MAKE CHRIST KING**- In the single elder model there can be a tendency to make man king rather than Christ. (1 Samuel 8:7)
And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." **Colossians 1:18**
- 3. ENHANCES THE ROLE OF THE CONGREGATION AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY**- In congregationalism members hold each other accountable to glorify God as the church and are accountable to what is being taught. (Matthew 16:19, Galatians 1:6-9)
"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." **Matthew 18:15-17**
- 4. SHARED BURDEN FOR SHEPHERDING THE WHOLE CONGREGATION**- In a plurality of elders the responsibility of shepherding and teaching the flock is shared.
"Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone." **Exodus 18:17-18**
- 5. STABILITY OF LEADERSHIP**- If an elder leaves there is a stable leadership group ready to continue the work God has been doing rather than waiting on a transition and positions to be filled to move forward. (Titus 1:5)
"Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off." **Acts 13:1-3**
- 6. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ELDER-LIKE LEADERS OF THE CHURCH**- If elders are recognized by the church then they must adhere to the qualifications given by the scripture. (Titus 1:5-9, James 3:1)

"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil." **1 Timothy 3:1-8**

7. CLEAR AND DEFINED ROLES THAT FUNCTION AT A HIGH LEVEL- The elders, congregation, and deacons can continue to work for the glory of God fulfilling their roles as God has designed so that the church reflects God's glory.

"Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." **Acts 6:3-4**

8. THE CHURCH HAS MULTIPLE EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW- In a plurality of elders there are multiple examples to follow of godly living and teaching of the Word of God. (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9)

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." **1 Peter 5:1-4**

9. HELPS THE CHURCH STAND AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINES- multiple elders who are able to give sound instructions from the word of God and rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:9)

"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. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." **Acts 20:28-30**

10. INCREASES THE CHURCH'S ABILITY TO MINISTER THROUGH THE WORD AND PRAYER- Prayer and teaching of the Word becomes the burden of many rather than one and the church can ask for more care in these areas. (Acts 6:3-4, 2 Timothy 4:1-5)

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." **James 5:14**

POSSIBLE REASONS ONE MIGHT HAVE FOR NOT MOVING TO AN ELDER-LED CONGREGATIONAL MODEL

1. We have never done it this way before.
2. What we are doing seems to be working
3. There is too much responsibility for the congregation.
4. I just don't know enough about it to make a change.
5. I think that there will be too much power for the elders.
6. We don't know who the elders will be.



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

How does the church raise qualified elders?

HOW DOES GOD PROVIDE ELDERS TO THE CHURCH?

The Holy Spirit instills in certain men a constraining, settled, deep-rooted desire to serve as elders.

Desire is a key qualifying mark of being an elder.

The Bible describes this as "aspire" (1 Tim. 3:1); in our culture, we use the phrase "called to ministry."

"The first sign of the heavenly calling is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work...for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants."

*Charles Spurgeon,
Lectures to My Students*

WHAT ROLE DOES A CHURCH HAVE IN RAISING UP ELDERS?

- Be a healthy church!
- Guard the qualifications for those who serve as elders and do not lower the standard.
- Pray for God to raise generations of elders.
- Demonstrate appreciation for God's leaders by submitting to their teaching, encouraging them in their service, and honoring them. (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17)
- Encourage your elders to take the time to invest in other men to raise new leaders.
- Thank God for the new elders that he gives.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAINING ELDERS?

God has designed us for relationships with himself and others.

Future elders are best raised through mentoring/discipling relationships with other qualified elders.

"...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 2:2)

"Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you." (1 Tim. 4:14)

Spiritual reproduction: If disciples are to multiply disciples, then leaders are to multiply leaders.

WHY SHOULD A CHURCH RAISE QUALIFIED ELDERS FROM AMONG THEIR MEMBERS?

The church is the natural place to encourage and train aspiring leaders.

- **PROTECTS** the gospel witness of the church.
- **ENSURES** continuity of leadership.
- **STRENGTHENS** relationships between congregation and leadership.
- **PROMOTES** a generational aspect of spiritual reproduction and health in the church.
- **DEMONSTRATES** the activity of the Holy Spirit within the church.

WHAT TRAINING DOES THE CHURCH NEED TO EXPECT OF ITS ELDER CANDIDATES?

The New Testament titles for the church's leaders (elders, pastors, overseers) are synonymous with those areas where future elders must be trained and developed.

1. ELDER: Teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9)

- o Teaching with “authority of counsel.”
- o Equipped to explain and apply:
 - Biblical theology: what is the message the Bible presents? (Lk. 24:27, 44-47)
 - Gospel: God. Man. Christ. Response. (Eph. 2:1-10)
 - Doctrine: a correct understanding of God and guarding against false teaching. (Acts 20:28-31)

Topic	Book
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY	God’s Salvation Through Judgment”, James M. Hamilton, Jr. “Christ from Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ”, Trent Hunter & Stephen Wellum
GOSPEL	“What is the gospel?”, Greg Gilbert “Gospel: Rediscovering the Power That Made Christianity Revolutionary”, J.D. Greear
DOCTRINE	“Systematic Theology”, Wayne Grudem

2. PASTOR: Shepherding (1 Pet. 5:1-3; Acts 20:28)

- o Caring for the physical and spiritual needs of God’s people from cradle to grave. (1 Tim. 3:4-5)
For example, pray over the sick (James 5:14-20).
- o Help settle disputes (Acts 15:2).
- o Guiding members through church discipline - rebuke, removal, and restoration. (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 9-13, 2 Cor. , Gal. 6:1)
- o Equipping God’s people to fulfill their ministry and the mission of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-12, 15-16)

Topic	Book
CARE	“On Pastoring”, H.B. Charles, Jr. “Gentle and Lowly”, Dane Ortlund “Listening and Caring Skills”, John Savage “Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life”, Donald S. Whitney

3. OVERSEER: Leading

- o Ecclesiology: the nature of the church. (Matt. 16:16-19)
- o Guarding ordinances: Baptism (“turns one into many”) & Lord’s Supper (“turns many into one”).
- o Lead through teaching (Jn. 21:15-19)...and, through service (Matt. 20:25-28).
- o Directing the church to keep the gospel the main thing. (Phil. 2:1-4)
- o Watch over the souls of Christ’s flock. (Heb. 13:17)

Topic	Book
ECCLESIOLOGY	“Nine Marks of a Healthy Church”, Mark Dever “Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches”, John S. Hammett “Dangerous Calling”, Paul David Tripp “Gospel Eldership”, Robert H. Thune

HOW IS NORTHWEST RAISING FUTURE ELDERS?

- We pray and teach the Word of God
- We encourage men to pursue the desire from the Holy Spirit to become elders.
- We make the qualifications the compass for aspiring elders.
- We put aspiring elders in positions where they grow in teaching, caring, and leading.
- We have developed a Pastoral Residency (2-year commitment) for elder training.
- We have elders who share leadership and promote mutual accountability.



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

How Should we appoint elders at NWBC?

While there is not a formal process lined out in Scripture we see principles in which guide the process.

1. ELDERS ARE SET APART BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ARE GIFTS GIVEN BY CHRIST TO THE CHURCH FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. (ACTS 20:28)

Through prayer and fasting we should trust God to set apart men to shepherd. There should be a yearning or desire to Shepherd Christ's church in which the Spirit gives.

"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task." 1 Timothy 3:1

The word desire means to set his heart on and can mean because he cares and loves God's church. Literally the Greek word means to stretch out his hand.

- Acts 13:2-3
- Ephesians 4:7-16

Therefore we should trust God to provide for the church the leaders we need and continue to fast and pray that the Lord would set apart certain men for this task.

2. ELDERS SHOULD BE QUALIFIED; THEREFORE, THERE NEEDS TO BE AN EXAMINATION PROCESS.

This process should be done slowly. It should be led by the elders and affirmed by the congregation as reflective of the roles in the church.

1 Timothy 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 5:22

• LAYING ON OF HANDS

Interestingly, "the laying on of hands" comes from the Old Testament sacrificial system. When a sacrifice was given, the hands of the offerer were placed upon the sacrifice to show identification. So the laying on of hands became a means by which one could identify himself with another.

Leviticus 1:1-5

In the same way, the New Testament ordination ritual demonstrated solidarity between the elders and the one on whom they laid their hands. It was a visible means of saying, "We commend you to the ministry. We stand with you, support you, and affirm your right to function in a position of leadership in this church."

Because the congregation is finally accountable for the teaching they choose to listen to, the congregation should affirm the leadership of the spirit and the examination by the elders.

Galatians 1:6-9

3. ELDERS SHOULD BE PUBLICLY INSTALLED AND OTHER ELDERS SHOULD LAY HANDS ON THEM AS A SYMBOL OF UNITY IN THE SPIRIT FOR THE APPOINTING TO THE TASK.

AN EXAMPLE FROM NEWCASTLE FIRST BAPTIST ELDER HANDBOOK

IV. ADDING ELDERS

A. SELECTION

When the Elder Council senses God's leadership to add elders, consideration will be given to those who have expressed a sense of calling, or those individuals whom the Elder Council feels led to approach because of their demonstration of leadership abilities and biblical qualifications for the office.

B. MENTORING

A mentoring process will be required of every prospective elder. The time allotted for the process will be unhurried, and will remain focused upon the Elder Council's full exploration of the mentoree's basic beliefs, a willingness to serve, and a demonstration of the biblical qualities for eldership.

The elements of the mentoring process may change from time to time, but basic elements will include a period of observation, a time of investigation through written and personal interviews, and required reading. At a time deemed appropriate by the Elder Council, the mentoree and his spouse will be interviewed as well.

After adequately fulfilling all of the requirements, full examination by the Elder Council, and CONSENSUS support of a

candidate from the Elder Council as a whole, the mentoree will be presented to the church for affirmation. Following approval, ordination procedures will be instituted.

C. TERMS AND ROTATIONS

A full-time vocational elder of FBCN shall have no term of office. A lay elder or part-time vocational elder of FBCN shall serve a minimum of four years, but no more than eight years. A lay elder or part-time vocational elder may be reappointed by the Elder Council and re-affirmed by the church after a one-year absence.

To appoint our first elders we would want other elders from surrounding churches to examine these men's lives and the church would affirm their examination.

We can trace three steps in the process of ordaining leaders. Initially, it was the apostles who selected and ordained elders (Acts 14:23). After that, elders were appointed by those who were close to the apostles and involved in their ministry. For example, Paul specifically charged Titus with the ordaining of elders (Titus 1:5). In the third phase, the elders themselves ordained other elders (1 Timothy 4:14). Always, the responsibility for appointing elders was a part of the function of church leadership.

SOME CHURCHES WHO CURRENTLY HAVE ELDERS WHO WOULD ASSIST IN THE INITIAL START OF ELDERS FOR NORTHWEST BAPTIST.

First Baptist Newcastle
Eagle Heights Baptist, Stillwater
Henderson Hills Baptist, Edmond

Portland Avenue Baptist, OKC
Providence Baptist, OKC



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

How do you remove Elders?

Because elders are men marked by living according to their scriptural qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9), this means they can also violate their qualifications.

- How should the church deal with elders who have violated their qualifications?
- When should elders be removed from their position?

Paul answers these questions by recalling how Jesus instructed the church to deal with sin (Matt. 18:15-20).

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality.

1 TIMOTHY 5:17-21

3 OBSERVATIONS FROM THIS TEXT:

1. VERIFY ACCUSATIONS. (V 19)

- Any charge against an elder is a serious accusation that more than one person should establish.
- If the issue is a private or non-public sin, it should be investigated thoroughly by the church.
- Old Testament Principle: [Deuteronomy 19:15-21](#)
- The aim is not to raise the burden of proof for an elder's sin; rather, it is to not perpetuate unfounded accusations. (1 Tim. 5:19)

2. PUBLICLY REBUKE THE UNREPENTANT. (V 20)

- When an elder is confronted over their sin and is unrepentant, the church gets involved and the sin is made known to the congregation.
- Why do we want to reveal sin?
- Public rebuke serves as a witness to the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)
- Public rebuke warns others to fear the Lord and repent of sin. (Psalm 111:10; Psalm 10:13)

3. SHOW NO PARTIALITY. (V 21)

- It is good and right for the congregation to grow in their love for their elders, and for their elders to grow in their love for their congregation.
- But this love for each other should not lead to partiality.

- Concealing sin or dealing with it lightly so that no harm is done to the leader's or the church's reputation does more harm than good.
- God's church is not to be trifled with, and compromising on sin within the church and leadership goes against the gospel and God's purpose for His church.

WHEN SIN IS VERIFIED, DEALT WITH PUBLICLY, AND DONE WITHOUT PARTIALITY, THE CHURCH GROWS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD AND INCREASES IN ITS DEVOTION TO GOD.

"But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she said, "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

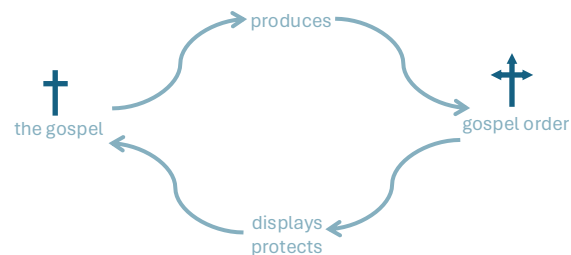
ACTS 5:1-11



DISCOVERING GOD'S PLAN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

What is the congregation's role with elders?

The gospel changes individual lives that are brought together under gospel order, the church. The church is then responsible for protecting (defining the gospel we profess) and displaying (identifying who credibly professes) the gospel through healthy gospel order.



THE ELDERS have the responsibility to glorify Christ through **leading, teaching, and directing** Christ's church. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 4:13-16; 1 Tim. 5:17)

THE CONGREGATION has the responsibility to glorify Christ through **membership, discipline, and doctrine**. (Matt. 16:18-19; 18:15-18; Gal. 1:6-9)

	SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY	PROPERLY APPLIED	MISAPPLIED
Congregation	"Who": membership, discipline "What": doctrine	Trust the elders to recommend a course of action based upon scripture	Distrust elders and erode function of scriptural leadership
Elders	Teaching, leading, directing	Guide the congregation to exercise its scriptural authority	Become heavy-handed toward congregation and erode function of scriptural unity

WHEN SHOULD THE CONGREGATION EXPECT TO ACT THROUGH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ELDERS?

- Is it something that scripture has demonstrated the congregation is responsible to handle?
- Is it something that threatens the gospel or gospel order?
- Is it being considered because it infringes upon our elders' primary responsibilities (teaching, leading, and directing)?

SHOULD THE CHURCH VOTE ON THE COLOR OF THE CARPET?

Asking for a vote when clearly the elders should be trusted confuses members on why they're being asked to vote. Elders also need to protect the congregation from "paralysis by analysis".

Outside of the scriptural areas requiring congregational governance, elders should identify "cliff" votes and bring those to the congregation. The closer an issue gets to a "cliff", then the more responsibility a congregation has to act.

DOCTRINE: If the elders propose removing the article from our statement of faith that declares we believe the Scriptures to be the inerrant Word of God, though the gospel itself is not being denied, the congregation should rise up and act because the church's ability to preserve that gospel is now being seriously threatened. Losing biblical clarity is the "cliff" we never want to go over.

BUDGET: If the elders propose overspending in a way that clearly questions the future viability of the church, the congregation should vote "no". However, the congregation should, most of the time, defer to the recommendation of the elders if they are recommending allocating budgeted funds into different categories year-to-year. For example, allocating more money to missions rather than worship ministry. The budget is significant for two reasons. First, it embodies our spiritual priorities. Second, our church could cease to exist if we mismanage our financial resources.

WHEN SHOULD A CONGREGATION VOTE AGAINST THE ELDERS?

The answer is, "it depends."

The job of the church is to safeguard the gospel for the next generation. According to scripture, that happens when our teaching is biblical and our members are really Christians.

THE CHURCH IS NOT A DEMOCRACY; IT IS A MONARCHY.

A vote in a church is different than a national election. In a democracy, your vote is merely a decision-making tool. You vote to get your candidate into office.

In a church, the elders lead the members in making decisions to serve our King—Jesus Christ. That means your vote is not just about decision-making; it's a commitment to participate in Christ's Kingdom.

Effective elders lead the congregation to adopt the "mind of Christ". (Phil. 2:1-8)

Christian conscience is compelled by Scripture, not by preference, convenience, or personal gain. So, a church member should vote "no" when the issue clearly violates preserving gospel order or will damage the church's ability to display and protect the gospel.

When a church member does not have a clear conscience on the matter, they should have a conversation with the elders before the vote. They should be open to receiving advice from the elders on how to vote based on their conscience in a way that will preserve church unity.

On the other hand, the further an issue is from damaging our ability to protect and preserve the "who" and "what" of the gospel, the more we should trust our elders.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- How would you describe the effectiveness of our church's protection and display of the gospel?
- What areas are we doing best?
- What areas are we neglecting?
- How should the church address these areas of neglect?
- How has our discussion tonight impacted your view of issues the church has been voting on, and should consider voting on going forward?