

The Biblical Elder-Led Model of Church Governance

Basic Scriptures for Review (many other references apply as well)

- a. 1 Timothy 3, 4, and 5
- b. Titus 1
- c. 1 Peter 5
- d. Acts 20:28

Literature for Review

- a. *Biblical Eldership: Restoring the Eldership to its Rightful Place in the Church*, Alexander Strauch, 1997.
 - b. *The Master's Plan for the Church*, Chapter 6, Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 6. John MacArthur, 1991.
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The Case for Elder-Led Plural Leadership

Read Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, Chapter title: Biblical Evidence for Pastoral Leadership by the Plurality of Elders, pages 31-44.

Definitions and Descriptions

- Servant leaders, not dictators
- Shared responsibility (plural leadership, authority, governance, and service among all elders)
- Attributes: a felt call, variously gifted, committed, qualified and experienced in the faith

Duties

1. Lead and Shepherd (protect) individuals and the group
2. Teach, Preach
3. Guard doctrine
4. Visit the sick and needy of the body
5. Be generous and practice hospitality
6. Pray for vision, needs, discernment
7. Appoint additional elders and deacons
8. Oversee or carry out discipline
9. Encourage and support individuals and the body

Biblical Qualifications (explicitly stated in Scripture)

- "It is better to have no elders than unqualified elders"
 - "Do not be quick to lay on hands"(i.e. to convey authority to someone no yet ready)
1. Male
 2. Not a new convert
 3. Not dictatorial, not self-willed or arrogant, leads gently but relentlessly to the truth, doesn't command the conscience of others but appeals consistently to follow God's word, not heavy handed but uses authority when situations require (e.g. 1Cor 5)

4. Not renegade on handling issues
5. Even tempered, self-controlled
6. Not argumentative (patiently build consensus on a topic)
7. Manages home, family, children and personal finances well
8. Practices hospitality
9. Loves good, hates evil. Knows and shows interest in righteousness prevailing to God's honor
10. Holds good relationships with God's people (listens, cares, instructs, encourages)
11. Is willing to work with others without always being in charge.
12. Honest in word and deed (not into sordid gain, does not "stretch the truth")
13. Is not conniving or calculating.
14. Does not indulge in alcohol
15. Is reliable (stands by his word, has integrity)
16. Husband of 1 wife (a "one woman man", sexually pure otherwise, no affairs)
17. Mature and devout in the faith (give to Scripture, Prayer and Service)
18. Knows doctrine and Scripture: Can answer questions concerning doctrine, can guide others to Godly answers to their questions, can defend against false doctrines by using the Scriptures
19. Has a Godly reputation with those outside the church (not a hypocrite)
20. Willing to bear the brunt of bad situations and attacking wolves to protect the flock. Loses sleep so that others may sleep.
21. Has interest and time to commit to serving as elder as a life priority with may demand setting aside other activities as needed.

A "First Among Equals" Role *Scripture Reference: Matthew 23:5-8*

- The alternative to classic role of singular pastor: There is no "protestant priest". Unitary leadership may create a Temple out of a church. It may subtly remove Christ as singular priest and diminishes the priesthood of all believers
- Avoid title if it would perpetuate the impression of a pyramid structure, yet it may be retained if properly understood by the body
- Peter and Paul were leaders, but their leadership was plural to put checks on their individual tendencies and to strengthen their weaknesses.

Process of Identifying and Appointing Elders

- Prayer and fasting to identify those whom God has called and qualified
- Existing elders review whether candidate is qualified. Look into this thoroughly, not cursorily. Be certain as the elder recommendation will be presented to the body and the body should not discover the candidate easily unqualified and therefore reveal the lack of diligence on the part of their elders.
- Present to congregation for input submitted in writing of concerns and whether they could accept candidate.
- Answer every Scriptural concern. If candidate does not pass each qualification, they cannot be endorsed.
- Attend to all dissident individuals in the body if the intent is to endorse the candidate.
- Announce the intent to appoint prior to the actual time of appointment.
- Limit the appointment to the laying on of hands and prayer. More than this may suggest a sacred nature to the ceremony that was similar to the priesthood. The laying on of hands is identification and an endorsement of the brother as an elder who is beginning a new partnership ministry. Prayer should, in part, request God's blessing on this new ministry.