



SWARTZ

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Detailed Overview of Biblical Eldership

Strauch, Alexander. Biblical Eldership: Abridged. Colorado Springs, CO: Biblical Eldership Resources, n.d.

Scripture: [Titus 1:5](#)

STUDY: Biblical Eldership as Defined by the New Testament in Holy Scripture

TEXT: [Titus 1:5](#) “On account of this, I left you behind in Crete, in order that what remains may be set in order and you may appoint elders in every town, as I ordered you.”

INTRODUCTION:

Why Should we Understand and Apply Eldership?

- It is biblical and gives a fresh sense of obedience to God.
- The congregation will no longer have to rely solely on the pastoral staff. Other gifted men will be empowered and used.

What is the overall goal as we see it interpreted in Holy Scripture?

Our goal is to be faithful to Holy Scripture in how we pastor, shepherd, and oversee the church of God. It is our conviction, based on interpretation and study of the whole of scripture, that the church is to be pastored by a plurality of qualified men called Elders. The New Testament gives us the instruction on how to select, instruct, correct, and protect Elders. Elders are to be the pastors, overseers and shepherds of the church. They are to be The Right Temperament, Not Perfect Men or Sinless, Fully Committed to Apostolic Doctrine, and Able to Instruct and Defend Sound Doctrine.

It is our deep conviction to bring Biblical Eldership to Swartz First Baptist Church. By doing so, we believe we are being faithful to Holy Scripture, led by the Holy Spirit to shepherd the congregation of believers at Swartz First Baptist Church.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY GUIDE:

Overview of Alexander Strauch's *Biblical Eldership: Abridged Edition*. This guide will cover the major themes of the book, while giving scriptural support. For a fuller review, read *Biblical Eldership: Abridged Edition* and *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch.

While attending a music concert, Dr. Strauch noticed in this church pictures on a wall arranged like a pyramid. At the top, the senior pastor, followed below by associate pastors and below those the remaining staff. Further down the hall, on a side hall, he saw another glass case with the names and pictures of the church's elders. "I thought, what a superb illustration of how the elders have been pushed aside to a scarcely visible position in the church! The leadership structure displayed at this church does not represent the New Testament vision for the pastoral leadership." Alexander Strauch *Biblical Eldership: Abridged Edition*

1. OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

TEXT: Titus 1:5 "On account of this, I left you behind in Crete, in order that what remains may be set in order and you may appoint elders in every town, as I ordered you."

EXPLANATION/BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

"Thousands of churches worldwide are led by some form of church eldership because they believe it to be a biblical teaching. In this, they are correct. Unfortunately, many of these churches have a mistaken or inadequate view of the Bible's teaching on elders. They have leaders they call elders, but they do not operate as *biblical elders*, according to the biblical texts." Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: Abridged Edition*

Chapter 1 of Biblical Eldership: Abridged - A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

"Biblical eldership is too important to the local church to be muddled in confusion and unscriptural church traditions. Eldership in the New Testament church is based on the biblical doctrine of eldership as shared pastoral leadership by a team of scripturally qualified, Spirit-placed elders." Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: Abridged Edition*

A. RESTORATION AND CLARIFICATION OF BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

1. BOARD ELDER VS SHEPHERD ELDER

- a. Board Elder - Policy maker, fundraiser, decision-maker, advisor to the pastor. Unbiblical approach to eldership acting in the capacity of a committee or board of trustees
- b. Biblical Elder (Shepherd Elder, Pastoral Elders, Pastor Elder) - Jointly pastor the church, teach the word, protect from false teachers, exhort and admonish believers in sound doctrine, pray with the sick, and judge doctrinal issues.

B. BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF ELDERSHIP

1. Plainly Revealed in Scripture

- a. New Testament Scholar J. Alec Motyer, Trinity College “From the very earliest apostolic times it was customary to appoint elders in every church.....[It] is not as much as hinted in the New Testament that the church would ever need-or indeed should ever want to tolerate-any other local leadership than that of the eldership group.”
- b. [1 Tim 5:1](#), [1 Peter 5:2](#), [1 Tim 3:2](#), [Titus 1:9](#), [Eph 4:11-12](#), [1 Tim 5:17](#), [1 Peter 5:3](#), [Acts 15:2-30](#); [16:4](#); [21:20-25](#), [Acts 20:28-31](#), [Titus 1:9-10](#), [1 Tim 3:5](#), [Acts 20:35](#), [James 5:14-15](#), [1 Tim 4:14](#), [Acts 11:29-30](#), [1 Peter 5:2](#), [Acts 11:30](#); [15:4](#); [22-23](#), [Heb 13:17](#)

2. A Pattern of Elders among the First Churches

- a. The first churches were spread over a large geographical area. A high-level survey shows the predominant model of plural elder leadership in these churches. The following are a few examples
 - i. Elders are found in the Judean churches and surrounding areas [Acts 15:1-29](#); [21:17-26](#)
 - ii. Among the Pauline churches, a plurality of elders were established in churches of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch ([Acts 14:23](#)); in Ephesus ([Acts 20:17](#); [1 Tim 3:1-7](#); [5:17-25](#)); in Philippi ([Phil 1:1](#)); and in the churches on the island of Crete ([Titus 1:5](#))

3. Instruction about Elders Given to the Churches

- a. Scripture provides explicit instructions on how to care for, protect, discipline, select, restore, obey and call the elders. The Apostles intended these instructions to be taken seriously and obeyed.
- b. Examples in Scripture (For the full list, see Biblical Eldership: Abridged)
 - i. James instructs those who are sick to call for elders of the church ([James 5:14](#)).
 - ii. Paul instructs the Ephesian church to financially support elders who labor “at preaching and teaching” ([1 Tim 5:17-18](#))
 - iii. Paul instructs the local church about protecting elders from false accusation, disciplining elders who sin, and restoring fallen elders ([1 Tim 5:19-22](#))

4. Instruction and Exhortation Given Directly to Elders

- a. Scripture also gives instruction to elders on how to pastor God’s church. When we look at the New Testament vs the Old Testament, we see an avoidance of detailed regulation and procedure for the church vs temple worship. So, the fact that there is such explicit direction for elders should cause us to take notice.
- b. Examples in Scripture (For the full list, see Biblical Eldership: Abridged)
 - i. James tells elders to pray for and anoint the sick with oil ([James 5:14](#)).

- ii. Peter directly charges elders to pastor and oversee the local congregation ([1 Peter 5:1-2](#)).
- iii. Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that the Holy Spirit placed them in the church as overseers to pastor the church of God ([Acts 20:28](#))
- iv. Paul exhorts the elders to live at peace with the congregation ([1 Thess. 5:13](#)).

C. THREE KEY FEATURES OF BIBLICAL ELDERSHIP

1. Pastoral Leadership by Elders

- a. Paul and Peter both address elders in the New Testament churches to “oversee” and “shepherd the flock of God”. Since the two most prominent apostles charged the elders - and no other persons or groups - to shepherd God’s flock, we can conclude that, in biblical terms, the elders are responsible for the pastoral oversight of the individual flock God has assigned to them ([1 Peter 5:3](#)). In addition, the elders are to be assisted in their work by a group of qualified deacons. ([Phil. 1:1](#); [1 Tim. 3:8-13](#)).
- b. Shepherd Leadership
 - i. Shepherd leadership beautifully blends the concepts of authority and leadership with self-sacrifice, tender loving care, and intimate relationships. But even more, shepherd leadership patterns itself after the life of the “Good Shepherd” who willingly laid down his life for the sheep ([John 10:11](#)).

2. Shared Leadership by Elders

- a. This is not a new concept to the Christian. A plurality of leadership was the fundamental government structure of Israel in the Old Testament.
 - i. Jesus Gave us Shared Leadership
 - 1. Our Lord did not train and appoint one man but a group of men. Jesus gave a plurality of leadership in the 12 Apostles.
 - ii. The Apostles Gave Us Shared Leadership
 - 1. At the beginning and end of Paul’s ministry we see him appointing and giving direction to a group or plurality of qualified elders to shepherd the churches he established.
- b. Equality and Functional Diversity within the Eldership
 - i. Although all elders share the equally the same office, title, and pastoral charge, there is at the same time diversity in the Spirit-giftedness, life experience, and the Lord’s leading of each individual elder. Scripture gives us this distinction without created hierarchy or another office.

- ii. [1 Timothy 5:17–18](#) “The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching. For the scripture says, “You must not muzzle an ox while it is threshing,” and “The worker is worthy of his wages.””
- iii. Those who lead well and who labor in teaching and preaching deserve “double honor” which includes financial compensation. Scripture allows for functional, gift-based diversity without creating an official, superior, office over fellow elders.

3. Qualified Leadership by Elders

- a. A biblical eldership requires qualified biblical elders. Scripture gives us these qualifications in detail. Scripture gives us more instruction on the qualification of eldership than on any other aspect of eldership.
 - i. [1 Timothy 3:1–7](#) “The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to supervision, he desires a good work. Therefore the overseer must be irreproachable, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching, not addicted to wine, not a violent person, but gentle, peaceable, not loving money, managing his own household well, having children in submission with all dignity (but if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), not newly converted, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the devil. But he must also have a good testimony from those outside, in order that he may not fall into disgrace and the trap of the devil.”
 - ii. [Titus 1:6–9](#) “If anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of dissipation or rebellious. For it is necessary for the overseer to be blameless as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, prudent, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast to the faithful message according to the teaching, in order that he may be able both to exhort with sound instruction and to reprove those who speak against it.”
 - iii. [1 Peter 5:1–5](#) “Therefore I, your fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a sharer of the glory that is going to be revealed, exhort the elders among you: shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion but willingly, in accordance with God, and not greedily but eagerly, and not as lording it over those under your care, but being examples for the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. In the same way, younger men, be subject to the elders, and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

2. PASTORAL LEADERSHIP - SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK OF GOD

TEXT: Acts 20:28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he obtained through the blood of his own Son.”

EXPLANATION/BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

SHEPHERD IMAGERY - [John 10:11](#) “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Scripture is full of shepherding imagery. Paul and Peter both charge the elders of churches to “shepherd the church of God”. David wrote in [Psalm 23:1](#) “Yahweh is my shepherd; I will not lack for anything.” The Apostles did not give this charge to anyone else and the responsibility isn’t for one “hired elder” but for all elders of a church. When we combine the tasks of the given to the elders by the apostles with the biblical qualifications required of elders, we can be sure that we have an accurate picture of a biblical eldership.

Chapter 2 of Biblical Eldership: Abridged - PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

The image of the near eastern shepherd is one of intimacy, tenderness, concern, hard work, suffering and love.

Shepherds and shepherding work are and must be defined in these ways - present, genuine Christ-like love, having authority to correct, hardworking, sacrificial, courageous, skilled and knowledgeable. In turn, the flock will obey and submit to their God-appointed shepherd leaders.

A. FOUR-FOLD RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

Shepherd the Flock of God/the Church of God

The word shepherd is both a noun and a verb. Paul and Peter both used the word *poimainō* to describe the work of an elder. The Greek noun for shepherd is *poimēn*, however it is not directly used to describe an elder. It is appropriate to call an elder a shepherd or pastor (Latin translation of shepherd from Greek) if title pastor is not used to distinguish one elder from another. All elders are charged with pastoring or shepherding. Biblical elders can all be called pastors of the local church, not just one. The work of the elders is to shepherd the flock of God also called the “Church of God”. The Church of God is not a social club. It is a body of believers that gather to worship God in song, pray for one another, remember the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ by sharing communion, bearing on another’s burdens, building one another up, being taught the Scriptures, abstain from worldly temptations, and stand strong in the face of persecution. The community of the redeemed is a living witness to the power of the gospel of the grace of God.

The holy community of saints look to those among them who the Holy Spirit have placed as shepherd to **feed, protect, lead, and care** for their needs.

[1 Peter 5:2](#) “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion but willingly, in accordance with God, and not greedily but eagerly,”

[Acts 20:28](#) “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he obtained through the blood of his own Son.”

1. Teaching - Feeding

- a. The first duty of a shepherd is feeding the sheep. No food, no flock.
- b. “Everything depends on the proper feeding of the sheep. Unless wisely fed they become emaciated and sick, and the wealth invested in them is squandered. When Ezekiel presents a picture of the bad shepherd, the first stroke of his brush is - “he does not feed the flock.” ([Ezekiel 34:2-3](#))” *The Minister as Shepherd*, Charles E. Jefferson.
- c. God requires every elder be able to teach. [Titus 1:9](#) “holding fast to the faithful message according to the teaching, in order that he may be able both to exhort with sound instruction and to reprove those who speak against it.”
- d. The Teaching Ministry: It is so important that some elders, gifted by the Spirit, dedicate themselves fully to teaching the word. [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#) “The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching. For the scripture says, “You must not muzzle an ox while it is threshing,” and “The worker is worthy of his wages.””
 - i. All elders must be able to teach and do teach but some “labor” in teaching as a vocation.
 - ii. Biblical Doctrines can be difficult to understand. We need some learned teachers to help explain scripture and defend against false doctrine.
 - iii. Teaching strategies must be developed by elders to ready the “saints for the ministry, for building up the body of Christ” [Ephesians 4:12](#) “for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ,”
 - iv. Elders Imitate Paul who Imitates Christ in Declaring the Whole Council of God - [Acts 20:18-20](#) “And when they came to him, he said to them, “You know from the first day on which I set foot in Asia how I was the whole time with you—serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, and with the trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews—**how I did not shrink from proclaiming to you anything that would be profitable, and from teaching you in public and from house to house,**”

2. Protecting - Guarding - Watching Over

- a. Since the fall, false teachers and prophets have tried to deceive God's people. We should not be surprised by the presence of false teachers.
- b. Paul charged the elders to be vigilant and guard the flock from the inevitable attack of false teachers
 - i. [Acts 20:28–31](#) "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he obtained through the blood of his own Son. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among you yourselves men will arise, speaking perversions of the truth to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears."
- c. Elders are to guard and protect the church from false Christs and pseudo gospels, as well as from the philosophy of radical secularism.
- d. Elders are to be protectors, watchmen, defenders, and guardians of God's people. [Hebrews 13:17](#) "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you."

3. Leading - Managing - Governing

- a. Knowing the need for leadership, God places elders as overseers or shepherd over **God's** flock.
 - i. A healthy growing flock does not happen by accident. It is a result of good leadership and skillful management of the entire flock.
- b. Elders are the stewards of God's household of faith.
 - i. [Titus 1:7](#) "For it is necessary for the overseer to be blameless as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain,"
 - ii. Stewards manage the estate of another. In this case, the estate is God's. God's stewards have the authority to manage and care for the local church family. Thus, the requirements that follow the description of an overseer as a steward in [Titus 1:7](#)
- c. Leadership/Management/Administrative Skill - [1 Timothy 5:17](#) "The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching."
 - i. Shepherding means elders lead from the front. They do not lead from the sidelines.
 - ii. Elders must be able to articulate and enforce the distinctive beliefs and values of the church.
 - iii. Elders must be able to evaluate themselves as leaders, evaluate ministries, plan for improvements, plan for teachers, and emerging leaders.

iv. Elders should not be the maintenance workers; they must be leaders.

4. Practical Care

- a. Elders are charged with bearing the practical responsibility of practical care for the church. [James 5:14](#) “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray over him, anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord.”
- b. Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders to care for the weak and needy members of the congregation. [Acts 20:35](#) “I have shown you with respect to all things that by working hard in this way it is necessary to help those who are in need, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.””
- c. Caring, loving, leadership is what is required from the elder. This is characterized by knowing people’s names, visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, praying for individuals and families, appreciating people, providing wise council to those who need it, and caring financially for the needy. This is not an all-inclusive list but only an example of what Christlike shepherd leadership looks like.
- d. In all this labor, elders are to be assisted by a group of qualified deacons. [Philippians 1:1](#) “Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.” [1 Timothy 3:8–13](#) “Deacons likewise must be dignified, not insincere, not devoted to much wine, not fond of dishonest gain, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, and these also must be tested first; then let them serve if they are above reproach. The wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderous, temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who have served well acquire a good standing for themselves, and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.”

B. THE “TENTMAKING ELDER” WORKING AND PASTORING

“Some people say, “You can’t expect a man to work all day, raise a family, and help shepherd a local church too.” But that is not true. Many people raise families, work jobs, and give substantial hours community service, athletic activities, home building projects, or other endeavors. It is amazing how much people can accomplish when they are motivated by something they love.” “To be a bi-vocational preacher or evangelist takes a great deal of self-sacrifice and devotion to the Gospel and the people of God” 1.

The term “tentmakers” comes from [Acts 18:3](#) where Paul, along with a couple names Aquila and Priscilla, supported themselves financially by tentmaking and simultaneously sharing the gospel in the city of Corinth.

1. Spiritual Laziness and Neglect - Why the church lacks biblical eldership.

- a. “Spiritual laziness, as well as a lack of self-discipline, is a major reason why most churches never establish biblical eldership”¹.
 - b. Our problem isn’t in the limited time we have, but in our false ideas about work, Christian living, and life’s priorities.
 - c. Too many men are willing to outsource their spiritual responsibilities to the “paid pastor”.
2. Spiritual Dedication - What it takes.
- a. Biblical eldership team cannot exist in nominal Christianity, or a “Sunday & Wednesday” commitment to the faith. Without Biblical Christianity there can be no Biblical Eldership.
 - b. Tentmakers must find their rest in Christ, supporting themselves and their family financially and serving the church as pastor elders.
 - i. “For tentmakers to survive three full-time jobs (work, family and ministry), they must also adopt a sacrificial lifestyle. Tentmakers must live a pruned life and literally find leisure and rest in the rhythm of serving Christ ([Matt 11:28](#)). They must be willing to forego a measure of career achievement and private leisure for the privilege of gaining the prize ([Phil 3:14](#)). Many would like to be tentmakers if they could be wealthy and live a leisurely and cultured lifestyle. But the truth is that a significant ministry in the church and community can only come by sacrifice” R. Paul Stevens, *Liberating the Laity*
 - c. It takes a “team” of tentmaking elders. A team can make a significant contribution to the shepherding of a church. While one tentmaking elder cannot contribute as much time as an elder who serves the church full time, they can contribute something equally as important: examples of God’s love, sacrificial Christian living, love for God, their personal life experiences, and practical wisdom.
3. Working as a Team
- a. No one elder can do it all.
 - i. After learning what it means to shepherd, no one elder can do or should be expected to do all the work.
 - ii. Each elder is part of a team of qualified elders sharing the pastoral oversight of a local church.
 - iii. While one or more elders may serve the church as paid full time, part time or quarter time staff, each elder should protect the other from overwork and burn out.

4. Deacons: Assistants to the Overseers

- a. A successful team of **Elders** is supported and assisted by well qualified **Deacons**.
 - i. Deacons assist the eldership with the tasks of ministry so that elders can focus on teaching and leading God's flock.
 - ii. It is the responsibility of the elders to guide and lead deacons according to their giftedness and the needs of the church. Deacons become frustrated with elders when there is a lack of guidance and leadership on how the deacon body should strategically serve the church.
 1. Elders Set the Strategy and Direction - [1 Timothy 3:5](#) "(but if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),"
 2. Qualified Deacons Serve in Ministry - [1 Timothy 3:8-13](#) "Deacons likewise must be dignified, not insincere, not devoted to much wine, not fond of dishonest gain, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, and these also must be tested first; then let them serve if they are above reproach. The wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderous, temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who have served well acquire a good standing for themselves, and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

5. Every-Member Ministry - Ministry is not the work of one individual, but of the entire body, led by elders, under the head of Christ, who are assisted by deacons and staff members fulfilling the ministry of the church with its members.

- a. Ministry is the work of the whole church.
 - i. Elders are responsible... [Ephesians 4:12](#) "for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ,"
 - ii. The entire body is to be a living and functioning body of believers with each member, gifted by God, fulfilling their role in the life and work of the local church body.

6. Qualified Shepherd Elders

- a. None of these things can occur, scripturally, without the leadership qualified elders.
- b. Shepherding is a "noble task", and a noble task requires noble individuals who meet the qualifications for pastoral eldership.
 - i. [1 Timothy 3:1](#) "The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to supervision, he desires a good work."

3. SHARED LEADERSHIP - “They appointed elders for them in every church.”

TEXT: Acts 14:23 “And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, after praying with fasting, they entrusted them to the Lord, in whom they had believed.”

EXPLANATION/BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

“It is significant that in the New Testament the Holy Spirit never seemed to have led anyone to appoint merely one elder or one bishop in a place. It always elders (plural) or bishops (plural).” James Montgomery Boice.

Chapter 3 of Biblical Eldership: Abridged - Shared Leadership

“Other than the encouragement of my wife, the relationship with my fellow elders has been one of the most important tools God has used for spiritual development of my Christian character and leadership abilities. As a result, we have been able to provide stable, long-term, pastoral care for our church.” “As partners in the work of the Lord, we have sharpened, protected, and strengthened one another through nearly every conceivable life situation.” 1.

A. THE MODEL - EQUALITY AND FUNCTIONALITY AMONG THE APOSTLES

1. Equality

a. The twelve apostles were equals.

i. We see in scripture the names of the twelve as a recognizable group four times in the New Testament. Jesus gave to each of the twelve equally.

1. [Luke 9:1-6](#) “And summoning the twelve, he gave them power and authority over all the demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And he said to them, “Take along nothing for the journey—neither a staff, nor a traveler’s bag, nor bread, nor money, nor to have two tunics apiece. And into whatever house you enter, stay there and depart from there. And as for all those who do not welcome you—when you depart from that town, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony against them.” So, they departed and went throughout the villages, proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere.”

2. [Matthew 19:28](#) “And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that in the renewal of the world, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me—you also will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

ii. Acts record the twelve apostles as being the church’s first collective leaders. The twelve also met, along with the council of elders, to debate serious doctrinal issues at the Jerusalem Council.

1. [Acts 6:1-7](#) “Now in these days, as the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose by the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. **So, the twelve summoned the community of disciples** and said, “It is not desirable that we neglect the word of God to serve tables. So, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will put in charge of this need. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And the statement pleased the whole group, and they chose Stephen (a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit), and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus (a convert from Antioch), whom they stood before the apostles. And they prayed and placed their hands on them. And the word of God kept spreading, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem was increasing greatly, and many priests began obeying the faith.”
2. [Acts 15:1-2](#) “And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved.” And after there was no little strife and debate by Paul and Barnabas against them, they appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others from among them to go up to the **apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this issue.**”

2. Diversity (Of Role or Function)

a. James, Peter and John

- i. Jesus had no difficulty in teaching equality while recognizing and acknowledging diversity, giftedness, and leadership capabilities within the apostolic team.
- ii. Peter’s prominence is unquestioned within scripture. He was a talented leader who God used mightily for His church yet, he was still an apostle named with the Twelve. Together, they comprised an effective team of leaders.

1. Of Bartholomew, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, James son of Alphaeus... “What their specific contributions were to the advancement of the gospel we do not know. Their names, however, like the even longer list of names in [Romans 16:1-16](#), stand as a silent witness to the truth that the existence of the church is indebted to the labors of those who for the most part, remain unknown and unnamed.” James R. Edwards

3. No Rank or Special Title

a. Peter’s Lack of Preeminence yet a Leader of Leaders

- i. The Gospels give no authority or title for Peter over the Twelve. He is not the presiding bishop of the Jerusalem Council [Acts 15:6-29](#) and he carries no special ecclesiastical title.
- ii. He did not make the final decisions for the group and to his fellow apostles, he was “brother”.

1. Oscar Cullmann put it this way, “Peter is ascribed no leading position at all in relation to the group of the Twelve; on the contrary, he appears only as the most representative of the disciples.”

iii. Jesus’s teachings on the uniqueness of servant leadership, humility, and brotherly love give us the example for a leadership team.

1. [Matthew 23:8](#) “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ because one is your teacher, and you are all brothers,” , [Matthew 23:10](#) “And do not be called teachers, because one is your teacher, the Christ.” , [Matthew 23:12](#) “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

4. Model to Emulate - Christ’s Leadership

a. Jesus initiated and established the Twelve apostles. He trained and welded them together as a team

i. This provides us with a model for church eldership, its equality, and diversity of function.

b. The Apostles likely established the first in Jerusalem elders.

i. We witness their close association in [Acts 15:1-29](#).

c. As the Apostles began to scatter around the known world, the church in Jerusalem was left to the elders.

i. [Acts 21:17–18](#) “And when we came to Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us gladly. And on the next day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.”

5. LOCAL ELDERS ARE NOT APOSTLES

a. Elders are not Apostles; the office of Apostle is not transferable or repeatable.

b. Apostles were the living link to Christ in the early church.

c. They were eyewitnesses to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

i. [Acts 1:21–26](#) “Therefore it is necessary for one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time in which the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which he was taken up from us—one of these men must become a witness of his resurrection together with us.” And they proposed two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was called Justus) and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show clearly which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to depart to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was added to serve with the eleven apostles.”

- d. They provided us with a leadership model of brotherly equality, functional diversity, humility, servanthood, and Christlike love.

B. THE APPLICATION - EQUALITY AND FUNCTIONALITY AMONG THE ELDERS

Just as we have seen a pattern of equality, diversity and giftedness in the Apostles, we see the same patterns exhibited in the councils of elders.

Paul to the Ephesian Elders - [Acts 20:28](#) “**Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which he obtained through the blood of his own Son.” [1 Timothy 5:17-18](#) “**The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching.** For the scripture says, “You must not muzzle an ox while it is threshing,” and “The worker is worthy of his wages.””

From these texts we learn both functional diversity and equality existed within the eldership at Ephesus.

1. Equality or Parity

- a. Equality Means: Each elder is qualified to entrust in sound doctrine, defend the gospel truth (some with a greater degree than others), administer communion, participate fully in the decision-making and setting of church policy, lead in public prayer, and anoint the sick with oil. All are accountable to one another and cannot act against the groups wishes. Each bear the designation of elder, overseer, or pastor.
- b. All elders (plural and equal) have been placed by the Holy Spirit as shepherds over the flock of God.
 - i. [Acts 20:28](#) “Be on guard for **yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which he obtained through the blood of his own Son.”
- c. All must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.
 - i. [Titus 1:9](#) “holding fast to the faithful message according to the teaching, in order that he may be able both to exhort with sound instruction and to reprove those who speak against it.”
 - ii. [1 Timothy 3:2](#) “Therefore the overseer must be irreproachable, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching,”

- d. All must meet the same biblical requirements and be examined publicly.
 - i. [Titus 1:5–9](#) “On account of this, I left you behind in Crete, in order that what remains may be set in order and you may appoint elders in every town, as I ordered you. If anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of dissipation or rebellious. For it is necessary for the overseer to be blameless as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, prudent, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast to the faithful message according to the teaching, in order that he may be able both to exhort with sound instruction and to reprove those who speak against it.”
 - ii. [1 Timothy 3:10](#) “and these also must be tested first; then let them serve if they are above reproach.”, [1 Timothy 5:22–25](#) “Lay hands on no one hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. (No longer drink only water but use a little wine for your stomach and your frequent illnesses.) The sins of some people are evident, preceding them to judgment, but for some also they follow them. Likewise, also good works are evident, and those considered otherwise cannot be hidden.”
- e. All elders must pray for the sick.
 - i. [James 5:14](#) “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray over him, anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord.”
- f. All elders share the same designations and “elder” or “overseer”
 - i. [Philippians 1:1](#) “Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.”
 - ii. [1 Timothy 5:17](#) “The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching.”
- g. All elders are to be appreciated, esteemed, loved, honored, and protected from slander, and obeyed.
 - i. [1 Thessalonians 5:12–13](#) “Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and rule over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them beyond all measure in love, because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”
 - ii. [1 Timothy 5:17](#) “The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching.”
 - iii. [1 Timothy 5:19](#) “Do not accept an accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

- iv. [Hebrews 13:17](#) “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

2. Functional Diversity

- a. Although elders may hold the same office, they do not have the same giftedness or skill. Among the elders will be a diversity of giftedness, life experience, and the Lord’s personal leading in each elder’s life. Diversity implies that not all elders will have the same job description. Some will be seminary graduates, and some will be graduates from business school. Some will have significantly more fruitful ministries in public preaching and teaching, and others will work in the background. The Holy Spirit will use each one to grow and mature a local congregation.
 - i. [Galatians 2:8](#) “(for the one who was at work through Peter for his apostleship to the circumcision was at work also through me for the Gentiles),”
- b. Not all elders will be gifted in preaching and teaching, although all must teach. Some may have a higher education or more proficiency in speaking.
 - i. [1 Timothy 5:17](#) “The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching.”
- c. Not all elders will “rule well”. Although they must be able to lead their home, not all will be gifted in administrative leadership.
 - i. [Romans 12:8](#) “if it is one who exhorts, by exhortation; one who gives, with sincerity; one who leads, with diligence; one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”
 - ii. [1 Corinthians 12:28](#) “and whom God has appointed in the church: first, apostles, second, prophets, third, teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, kinds of tongues.”
- d. Not all elders will receive financial compensation or the same amount of compensation; not all elders will receive “double honor” from their congregation. Scripture directs elders to manage well and labor and should be compensated for their diligent labor. This implies that elders and the congregation set aside and support certain gifted elders.
 - i. [1 Timothy 5:17–18](#) “The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching. For the scripture says, “You must not muzzle an ox while it is threshing,” and “The worker is worthy of his wages.””
 - ii. [Galatians 6:6](#) “Now the one who is taught the word must share in all good things with the one who teaches.”

3. Leader Among Leaders - Leaders of Thousands & Leaders of Fifty

- a. Peter's Model as a Leader - Peter has been called a "first among equals" or "first" in prominence among his brother, not over them. There will be natural leaders within an eldership body, however, those who are natural leaders will not lead over the brothers but with or among the brothers.
 - i. [Matthew 10:2](#) "Now these are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother,"
- b. Elders as Leaders - The Old Testament speaks of leaders of thousands, hundreds, and fifty.
[Exodus 18:21](#) "And you will select from all the people men of ability, fearers of God, trustworthy men, haters of dishonest gain, and you will appoint such men over them as commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, and commanders of tens."
 - i. Some leaders can effectively lead large groups of people while managing a large workload. Others can only manage a small number of people or a less heavy workload.
 - ii. A wise team of elders will be able to recognize the gifts among the team and distribute pastoral work according to giftedness.
 - iii. A wise team of elders must also beware that the sin of jealousy lurks within our hearts, this has wrecked and split countless churches.
 1. [1 Corinthians 3:3](#) "for you are still fleshly. For where there are jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and do you not live like unregenerate people?"
 2. [Proverbs 27:4](#) "Cruel is wrath and overwhelming is anger, but who will stand before jealousy?"

4. No Formal Rank or Hierarchy

- a. Functional Diversity with True Parity
 - i. Peter and John were leading apostles with no special title or formal distinction. Elders who receive "double honor", may therefore be leaders of the team but hold no special distinction.
 - ii. Scripture allows for functional diversity within the eldership team without creating an official, superior office over fellow elders. In the body of Christ... [1 Corinthians 12:4-7](#) "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but the same God, who works all things in all people. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is beneficial to all." [1 Corinthians 12:11](#) "But in all these things one and the same Spirit is at work, distributing to each one individually just as he wishes."

iii. Some spiritual gifts, preaching, are public gifts while administrative or people leadership skills are gifts of quiet service. Preaching and teaching will naturally position those into leaders among their brothers, but they must remember they are gifted by God and assigned to teach the congregation, equipping the saints for ministry and building up the body of Christ.

1. [1 Peter 4:10-11](#) “Just as each one has received a gift, use it for serving one another, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as the oracles of God; if anyone serves, let it be as by the strength that God provides, so that in all things God will be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”

5. Two Unbiblical Examples

- a. Reverend - Historical sacralizing one gifted elder making him, in effect a Protestant priest/ordained clergyman, minister of the word. This special ordained minister having the ability to bless and administer sacraments. This represents a three-office view: clergy, lay ruling elders, serving deacons. This view focuses the attention to one sacred person.
- b. Complete Uniformity - The other view is to force complete uniformity among the elders. This leaves no room for individual giftedness. It ignores [1 Tim 5: 17-18](#) or reinterprets it to the opposite meaning of what it says. Scripture gives room for each elder to express his God given giftedness to its full potential. This view focuses on keeping everyone in the group completely equal.

C. REASONS FOR MULTIPLE ELDERS

1. Human Sinfulness & Collective Accountability - [Jeremiah 17:9](#) “The heart is deceitful more than anything else, and it is disastrous. Who can understand it?”
 - a. Collective council of biblical eldership provides genuine accountability. This safeguards the church and congregation. Because of our foundational beliefs of sin and human depravity, we should understand why people in positions of authority are easily corrupted. Parity creates an environment of accountability.
 - i. If the eldership is comprised of genuine Spirit-appointed elders, with shared partnership and accountability - autocratic leaders will shrink from this at all costs.
 - b. Church leaders (like all of us) can be lazy, forgetful, fearful, tired, and too distracted with the wrong things to fulfill their primary responsibilities. They need colleagues in ministry who they are answerable to for their time and work. These men can come alongside one another. The Lord sent the disciples out two by two to preach His Gospel. We should model the same.
2. The Extended Family of the Church
 - a. The first Christians avoided chiefly and lofty titles to describe their family members. The strong familial community saturates the New Testament.

- b. The elder structure of leadership within a church lends itself to this familial model. Any brother, who is qualified for the office, can share in the leadership of the local church family.
3. Shepherding a congregation is extremely hard work. The multi-elder system of leadership distributes the heavy burden from one pastor to many.
 - a. [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#) “Two are better than the one, for they enjoy a better reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will help up his companion. But pity the one who falls and there is no one to help him up. Also, if two lie together, they can keep each other warm. But how can one person be warm? Although an assailant may overpower one person, two may withstand him. A threefold cord is not easily broken!”
4. We all have our blind spots. Collective leadership provides balance against the faults of another. We need people in our lives to help us see these blind spots and provide us with correction.
 - a. [Proverbs 27:17](#) “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” [Proverbs 15:22](#) “Plans go wrong when there is no counsel, but with many advisors it will succeed.” [Proverbs 11:14](#) “Where there is no guidance, a nation shall fall, but there is safety in an abundance of counsel.”
5. Jesus made the disciples a promise, [Matthew 18:20](#) “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them.”. Because they knew Jesus was present with them as Ruler, Head, Lord, Shepherd, Teacher, Overseer, High Priest and King, they implemented a form of government that reflected this distinctive and fundamental truth that Christ is always in their midst.

D. FAULTY EXAMPLES OF ONE PASTOR RULE

1. Special Apostolic Delegates
 - a. Timothy, Epaphras, and James and generally held up as examples of a “one pastor/bishop” system. A close look at the scriptures will reveal that these men were special Apostolic delegates to the churches. In the case of James, he was not the sole pastor of the church in Jerusalem but an apostle who uniquely ministered to the Jews as well as being Jesus’ half-brother. He is considered a “pillar” of the church along with John and Peter.
2. “The Moses Model”
 - a. This model follows the model set by God for Israel in the Exodus with the pastor serving as the sole leader assisted by elders.
 - b. This model outright rejects New Testament passages that teach plurality of elders. It also ignores Paul and Peter’s direct charge to the elders (plural) to pastor the flock of God.
3. One Elder Per House Church & City Churches & Poor Guesswork
 - a. This model proposed the idea of a “one elder” model by viewing the New Testament churches as having “city churches” with one bishop comprised of smaller individual house churches.

b. We have no clear scriptural or historical reference for this viewpoint.

4. One Pastor/Teacher

- a. Many see [Ephesians 4:11-12](#), “And he himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ,” as setting apart a single individual to be the minister of the word and senior pastor.
- b. There is evidence, through textual review, that the grammatically correct way to view this passage is - Shepherds are teachers BUT not all teachers are shepherds. We cannot expect every spiritually gifted teacher to be called to shepherd but we must expect every shepherd to be a teacher.
- c. This also doesn’t give us a basis to believe a church should only have one shepherd-teacher.
- d. Today we have many gifted seminary professors and graduates who are gifted teachers but not gifted shepherds.
- e. The purpose of God giving us shepherds and teachers as well as shepherd-teachers, is to build up the body of Christ [Eph 4:12](#).

E. PROMINENT LEADERS AND TEACHER WITHIN THE CHURCH

1. Building the Body of Christ

- a. To content that pastoral oversight by a plurality of elders is not to deny that God raises up gifted individuals to teach his people.
 - i. Apollos was a gifted teacher. [2 Corinthians 8:18](#) “And we have sent at the same time with him the brother whose praise in the gospel has become known throughout all the churches.” [Acts 18:24](#) “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, a native Alexandrian, arrived in Ephesus—an eloquent man who was well-versed in the scriptures.”
 - ii. Epaphras was a gifted shepherd [Colossians 4:12](#) “Epaphras, who is one of you, greets you, a slave of Christ always struggling on behalf of you in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.”
- b. Multi gifted teachers and leaders may or may not be qualified to serve as elders, this does not mean that there is no place for them in building up the Body of Christ.

4. QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP

TEXT: 1 Timothy 3:2 “Therefore the overseer must be irreproachable, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching,”

EXPLANATION/BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

A. BIBLICAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ELDERS

1. LEAD AND DIRECT

- a. [1 Timothy 5:1](#) “Do not rebuke an older man, but appeal to him as a father, younger men as brothers,”

2. EXERCISE INSIGHT

- a. [1 Peter 5:2](#) “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion but willingly, in accordance with God, and not greedily but eagerly,”

3. TEACH AND DEFEND THE GOSPEL

- a. [1 Timothy 3:2](#) “Therefore the overseer must be irreproachable, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching,” , [Titus 1:9](#) “holding fast to the faithful message according to the teaching, in order that he may be able both to exhort with sound instruction and to reprove those who speak against it.”

4. EQUIP AND PREPARE BELIEVERS FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

- a. [Ephesians 4:11–12](#) “And he himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ,”

5. SOME LABOR (WORK) IN TEACHING AND PREACHING

- a. [1 Timothy 5:17](#) “The elders who lead well must be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor by speaking and teaching.”

6. MODEL THE CHRISTIAN LIFE FOR OTHERS

- a. [1 Peter 5:3](#) “and not as lording it over those under your care but being examples for the flock.”

7. SHEPHERD, THAT IS, PASTOR THE WHOLE CHURCH ([1 PETER 5:2](#)): FEED, PROTECT, LEAD, AND CARE FOR

- a. [1 Peter 5:2](#) “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion but willingly, in accordance with God, and not greedily but eagerly,”

8. JUDGE DOCTRINAL DISPUTES

- a. [Acts 16:4](#) “And as they went through the towns, they passed on to them to observe the rules that had been decided by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.” ;

9. GUARD THE CHURCH FROM FALSE TEACHERS

- a. [Acts 20:28–31](#) “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he obtained through the blood of his own Son. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among you yourselves men will arise, speaking perversions of the truth to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears.”
- b. [Titus 1:9–10](#) “holding fast to the faithful message according to the teaching, in order that he may be able both to exhort with sound instruction and to reprove those who speak against it. For there are many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,”

10. CARE FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD

- a. [1 Timothy 3:5](#) “(but if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),”

11. HELP THOSE WHO ARE WEAK

- a. [Acts 20:35](#) “I have shown you with respect to all things that by working hard in this way it is necessary to help those who are in need, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.””

12. PRAY FOR THE SICK AND ANOINT THEM WITH OIL

- a. [James 5:14–15](#) “Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray over him, anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins he will be forgiven.”

13. LAY HAND ON CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS

- a. [1 Timothy 4:14](#) “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, that was granted to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.”

14. HANDLE CHURCH FINANCES

- a. [Acts 11:29–30](#) “So from the disciples, according to their ability to give, each one of them determined to send financial aid for support to the brothers who lived in Judea, which they also did, sending the aid to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.” , [1 Peter 5:2](#) “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion but willingly, in accordance with God, and not greedily but eagerly,”

15. REPRESENT THEIR LOCAL CHURCH TO OTHER CHURCHES

- a. [Acts 11:30](#) “which they also did, sending the aid to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.” ; [Acts 15:4](#) “And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and reported all that God had done with them.” ; [Acts 15:22-23](#) “Then it seemed best to the apostles and the elders, together with the whole church, to send men chosen from among them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas who was called Barsabbas and Silas, men who were leaders among the brothers—writing this letter to be delivered by them: The apostles and the elders, brothers. To the brothers who are from among the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Greetings!”

16. WATCH OVER THE SPIRITUAL HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE

- a. [Hebrews 13:17](#) “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they can do this with joy and not with groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

B. THE APOSTOLIC QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ELDERS

1. *Qualifications as Stated into Timothy from St. Paul* - [1 Timothy 3:1-7](#) “The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to supervision, he desires a good work. Therefore the overseer must be irreproachable, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching, not addicted to wine, not a violent person, but gentle, peaceable, not loving money, managing his own household well, having children in submission with all dignity (but if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), not newly converted, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the devil. But he must also have a good testimony from those outside, in order that he may not fall into disgrace and the trap of the devil.” ; [1 Timothy 3:10](#) “and these also must be tested first; then let them serve if they are above reproach.”
 - a. Be Examined
 - i. [1 Timothy 3:10](#) “and these also must be tested first; then let them serve if they are above reproach.” [1 Timothy 5:22-25](#) “Lay hands on no one hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure. (No longer drink only water but use a little wine for your stomach and your frequent illnesses.) The sins of some people are evident, preceding them to judgment, but for some also they follow them. Likewise, also good works are evident, and those considered otherwise cannot be hidden.”

b. Male Qualifications

- i. [1 Timothy 2:8-10](#) “Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting holy hands without anger and dispute. Likewise, also the women should adorn themselves in appropriate clothing, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold jewelry or pearls or expensive clothing, but with good deeds which are fitting for women who profess godliness.” [1 Timothy 2:12-14](#) “But I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived, but the woman, because she was deceived, came into transgression.”

2. *Qualifications as Stated in to Titus from St. Paul* - [Titus 1:5-9](#) “On account of this, I left you behind in Crete, in order that what remains may be set in order and you may appoint elders in every town, as I ordered you. If anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of dissipation or rebellious. For it is necessary for the overseer to be blameless as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not violent, not greedy for dishonest gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, prudent, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast to the faithful message according to the teaching, in order that he may be able both to exhort with sound instruction and to reprove those who speak against it.”

a. Elders are Overseers & Stewards

- i. Paul uses the designations of elder and overseer intentionally for those who pastor (elder). The use of the term overseer is important to understand that an overseer is a steward. In the ancient world, a steward was the household manager of an estate. The steward was under the authority of the master who was given authority over the household to manage and govern.
- ii. Elders are overseers/stewards (oikonomos) of God’s household, His Church. This responsibility must be carried out by those who are trustworthy and above reproach.

3. *Qualifications as Stated by St. Peter* - [1 Peter 5:1-5](#) “Therefore I, your fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a sharer of the glory that is going to be revealed, exhort the elders among you: shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion but willingly, in accordance with God, and not greedily but eagerly, and not as lording it over those under your care, but being examples for the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. In the same way, younger men, be subject to the elders, and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

a. Peter and Paul are in complete agreement about the identity and work of elders.

b. Peter is uniquely concerned with how the elders shepherd and oversee God’s flock. He focuses on motives and attitudes that should or should not characterize a true shepherd of God’s flock.

C. REASONING FOR QUALIFICATIONS

1. Stewards for the Most High

- a. There is no other office in the New Testament with more instruction and attention on the qualifications than there is for the eldership.
- b. The elder is God's Steward and is entrusted with His most dear and costly possessions, His children. Moreover, he is entrusted with the Gospel of His Son and its message of salvation.
- c. Elders are to be examples of Christ for the Church
 - i. "A man's life is always more forcible than his speech; when men take stock of him, they reckon his deeds as pounds [dollars] and his words as pence [pennies]. If his life and his doctrine disagree, the mass of lookers-on accept his practice and reject his preaching. A man may know a great deal about truth and yet be a very damaging witness on its behalf, because he is no credit to it." Charles Spurgeon

D. SUMMARY QUALIFICATIONS FOR ALL ELDERS

There are only two biblical offices in the New Testament, deacon and elder. There is no special ordained office of clergy with its own list of qualifications and an office of lay leader with its own list of qualifications. The New Testament teaches no such division between sacred clergy and common laity. These divisions are ancient in origin but unscriptural and unauthorized by God.

The qualifications for elders apply to all elders and the qualifications for deacons apply to all deacons. There is no exception based on education or paid/volunteer. This is critical to the understand of plurality and parity among the elders.

Here, we provide a short summary of qualifications from [1 Timothy 3:1-6](#) "The saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to supervision, he desires a good work. Therefore the overseer must be irreproachable, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching, not addicted to wine, not a violent person, but gentle, peaceable, not loving money, managing his own household well, having children in submission with all dignity (but if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), not newly converted, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the devil."

1. The Right Temperament - Characteristics of the right tempered shepherd.
 - a. The qualified elders are to be "above reproach" in their relationships, especially with women.
 - b. If a husband, he should be faithful to his wife, a responsible father (if one) and respected by his children.
 - c. A scripturally qualified elder demonstrates self-control in the use of money and of his authority.

- d. He cannot be arrogant, quarrelsome or violent. He must be gentle and forbearing, loving people. He is spiritually mature.
2. Not Perfect Men or Sinless - We are all fallen and in need of God's grace.
 - a. The bible is a realistic book, not a romantic book. We see the flaws of the greatest saints across both testaments. Men and women are sinners and imperfect people.
 - b. elder qualifications do not demand sinless perfection. Elders, even the best ones, have annoying traits and weaknesses, blind spots, and will at some point disappoint their fellow leaders or make bad choices that hurt people.
 - c. Elders and congregations must exercise fair and balanced judgement to assess whether a candidate meets the qualifications of eldership. No one has mastered each qualification, and several of the qualifications are not "yes" or "no" but measured in degrees.
 3. Fully Committed to Apostolic Doctrine
 - a. Holding Firm - [Titus 1:9](#) "holding fast to the faithful message according to the teaching, in order that he may be able both to exhort with sound instruction and to reprove those who speak against it."
 - i. Sola Fide: The trustworthy word is the gospel message of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" [Eph 1:13](#).
 - ii. Sola Christus: The word is completely trustworthy and reliable because of the one who gave it to us. An elder must hold firm and guard against false teachers.
 - iii. Sola Scriptura: As "taught" means as brought to us by the Apostles and Christ Himself.
 1. "Elders must not be chosen from among those who have been toying with new doctrines" Philip H. Towner
 - iv. Elders must hold firm to historic and apostolic doctrine.
 1. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, found in Scripture alone.
 4. Able to Instruct and Defend Sound Doctrine
 - a. All elders must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine.
 - i. An elder cannot instruct in sound doctrine unless he is firmly committed to it.
 - ii. He must be able to stand against those who bring charges and false teaching against the faith (apostolic doctrine)
 - b. All elders must be able to articulate well-formulated doctrinal conviction and the distinctive beliefs held by the Church.

- c. Differing degrees of education.
 - i. Each elder will possess differing levels of biblical knowledge. Some may be seminary trained and others not.
 - ii. Regardless of formal education, no elder shall be biblically illiterate.
 - iii. An elder who does not know the Bible is like a shepherd without legs; he cannot lead or protect the congregation.
- d. The difference between a board elder and a shepherd elder is this; New Testament elders are both guardians and teachers of sound doctrine.