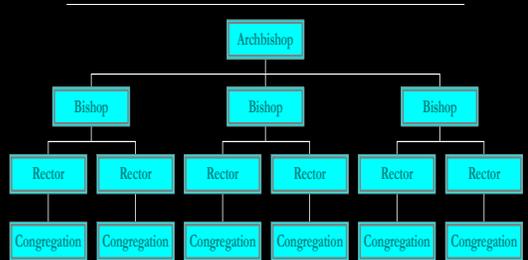


Church Government:

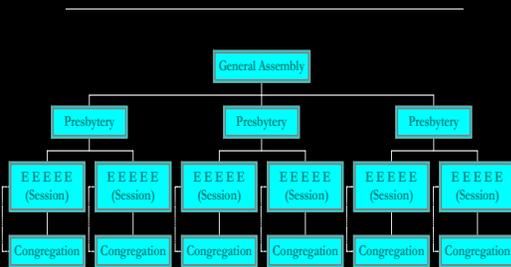
Monarchy,
Anarchy,
or
Democracy?



Episcopal



Presbyterian



The Many Faces of Congregationalism

Congregational

Single-Elder (Single-Pastor)



Congregational

Corporate Board Model



Congregational

Pure Democracy

Congregation

Congregational

No Government but the Holy Spirit



Congregation

Congregational

Plural Local Elder

EEEEE*EE

Congregation

*Pastor

The Evidence for a Plurality

- The OT Pattern—the Jewish Mindset
 - House or family
 - City
 - Nation
- The NT Passages—the Apostolic Example



The New Testament Passages

- Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18
- James 5:14
- Acts 14:23
- Acts 20:17
- Acts 20:28
- Philippians 1:1
- Titus 1:5
- 1 Peter 5:1



Primary Arguments against a Plurality of Elders

- There are passages that show the one-pastor model.
 - E.g., Rev. 1:20ff – “angels of the seven churches”
- The priesthood of every believer supports congregational government (1 Peter 2:9).
 - Heb 10:19-22 - Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
- Christians are all one in Christ and so there is no need for human authority in the church.
 - But in that sense there is no longer male and female (cf. Gal. 3:28).

The Greek Words

- πρεσβύτερος; *elder*
- two primary NT uses
 - older man or old man (1 Tim. 5:1)
 - title for a community official, an elder
- no specific age; implies maturity, dignity, experience, and honor
- 28x in Gospels & Acts → Sanhedrin
- 12x in Revelation → 24 elders, representatives of the redeemed
- 19x in Acts and Epistles → unique group of leaders in the church



The Greek Words

- ἐπισκοπός (*overseer*; also trans. *bishop*)
- secular; any official who acted as a superintendent, manager, controller, or ruler
- LXX → army officers; tabernacle administrators; supervisors of the temple repair; temple guardians; city supervisor or mayor
- Only 5x in NT; 1x of Christ (1 Pet. 2:25); other 4x of church leaders
- General word, like supervisor, manager, or guardian



1 Tim. 5:17 & Oversight

- “rules” means “to put before,” “to set over,” or “to rule”; it is also translated:
 - “leads” (Rom. 12:8); refers to the gift of administration
 - “manages” (1 Tim. 3:4-5); refers to an elder’s oversight of his “household”
 - “managers” (1 Tim. 3:12); refers to a deacon’s managing of his “children” and “household”
- “especially” is used 12x in NT
 - 8x in Paul’s epistles
 - Every time Paul uses this word, what follows it is always a subset of what has come before
 - Gal. 6:10; Phil. 4:22; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim. 4:13; Tit. 1:10; Philemon 1:16
 - In 1 Tim. 5:17 the point is:
 - All elders are supposed to “rule”
 - Some elders rule particularly well
 - While all elders are to be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), some work hard at preaching and teaching; the implication is that some elders have greater teaching responsibilities, probably because of superior gifts.

Acts 6:1-6

- Many commentators agree that this passage does not deal with the offices of elder and deacon, but only a foreshadowing of them.
- However, even if you grant that this passage deals with the church offices, it only confirms that elders have oversight of every aspect of church life and must exercise it.
- Note the following oversight functions of the apostles:
 - Fielded the problem.
 - Determined the key issue was a shortage of manpower.
 - Determined the solution was to put some men over the specific task.
 - Decided how many men were needed.
 - Set up the qualifications for those who would be appointed.
 - Decided who would select the men.
 - Probably checked up on this new ministry to make sure that it was functioning properly.
- The only thing the apostles said they wouldn’t do—and didn’t do—was to actually serve in this ministry.

The Greek Words

- ποιμήν; *shepherd or pastor*
- Noun form occurs 18x in NT
 - Actual shepherds; keepers of animals
 - Christ (e.g. Heb. 13:20-21; 1 Pet. 2:25)
 - 1x of church leaders; translated “pastor” in English versions—Eph. 4:11 “pastor-teachers”
 - emphasizes pastor’s primary role: teaching or feeding the sheep
- Verb form used 3x in context of the church’s leaders:
 - John 21:16 – Christ demanded that Peter shepherd His sheep.
 - Acts 20:28 – Paul reminds the Ephesian elders that they are to shepherd the church.
 - 1 Pet. 5:1a, 2a – Peter charged the elders scattered across Asia Minor to shepherd the flock of God.

Elders = Overseers = Pastors

- All refer to the same office and person:
 - The qualifications for an overseer (1 Tim. 3:1-7) and for an elder (Tit. 1:6-9) are almost identical.
 - Paul tells Titus to appoint *elders* (1:5), then calls the same office *overseer* (1:7).
 - 1 Peter 5:1-2 brings all three concepts together into one office: “I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder ... shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight...”
 - Acts 20 uses all three terms interchangeably:
 - 20:17 “From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the *elders* of the church.”
 - 20:28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers*, to *shepherd* the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Summary of Greek Words

- Elder refers to character – spiritually mature
- Shepherd & Overseer refer to function:
 - Shepherd: feeds, protects, heals his people
 - Overseer: rules or has charge over both people & everything that happens in the church



The Arguments for a Mandate

- The Purpose of the Pastoral Epistles
- Apostolic Authority
 - The Twelve's Example
 - The Apostle Paul's Example
 - The Apostle Paul's Command



The Common Misunderstandings about Elder Rule

- Oligarchy
 - Literally means “rule by a few”
 - Usually implies a heavy-handed, autocratic kind of leadership.
 - Instead, the Bible teaches that the men who lead the church are to be:
 - 1) Servants (Matt. 20:25-28)
 - 2) Examples (1 Pet. 5:1ff)

The Common Misunderstandings about Elder Rule

- Corporate Model
 - Pastor = CEO
 - Elders = the board (much like it works practically in the SBC form of government).
 - Problems:
 - The character of the men: often ignore the biblical qualifications; see them as only for the pastor.
 - The view of the pastor: an employee working under the direction of the elder board.
 - The focus: solely or primarily on the business of the church.
- Egalitarianism
 - Everyone's exactly equal.

Your Duty to your Elders?

- 1) Appreciate & Esteem them
 - 1 Th. 5:12-13 – We request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.
- 2) Support some of them financially
 - 1 Tim. 5:17-18 – The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”
- 3) Imitate their faith
 - Heb. 13:7 – Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.
- 4) Obey & submit to them
 - Heb. 13:17 – Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.