



Titus 1:5

- The church – the local church – the manifestation of the living God in this world – **matters** to God.
- Leadership in God's blueprint for His church is to come from **within** the membership of the local church.
- Before leadership that fits God's blueprint can come from within the membership of the local church, membership in that church must be **meaningful** – it must make a difference.

Acts 20:17-28 (Titus 1:5, 7)

An elder is a **pastor** and an elder is an **overseer**. All three words refer to the same office and the same work of leading the congregation.

When we understand that all three words are referring to the same source, we can begin seeing the role of an elder in God's church.

- An elder is called to **lead**. (1 Tim. 3:4-5; 5:17)
- An elder is called to **shepherd**. (1 Pet. 5:2; Ezekiel 34:2-4)
- An elder is called to **teach**. (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9)

WHAT ABOUT CHURCH STAFF AND DEACONS?

Members of church staff **may** be elders, but simply because someone is hired by the church to perform a certain leadership function does not mean that person **should** be counted among the elders.

1 Timothy 3; Acts 6:1-4

Deacons **serve** to care for the physical, financial, and often personal needs of the church and they do so in a way that heals divisions, brings unity under the Word, and supports the leadership of the elders.

WHAT AN ELDER IS NOT...

- Simply an **older** male. (Life experience alone does not qualify a man to be an elder.)
- Simply a successful **businessman**. (Leadership in the church is fundamentally different than leadership in the business world. *Mark 10:35-45; John 13:1-17*)
- Simply an involved **community** member.
- Simply a "**good ol' boy**."
- A **female**. (The qualifications of 1 Timothy and Titus assume male leadership in this position in the church.)
- A **politician**.

WHAT IS A BIBLICAL ELDER?

An elder is simply a man of Christ-like **character** recognized by the membership and **called** by the Spirit to lead God's people by teaching and/or applying God's Word in a way that profits God's people spiritually. A man who...

- has no reservations about fundamental Christian truths
- holds particular doctrinal distinctives without reservation
- is courageous enough to stand on clear biblical issues against culture or even within the church
- is willing to live a counter-cultural lifestyle in areas where Christ and culture conflict
- whose relational involvement in the congregation reveals a love for the people of God.

In God's design, there is always a **plurality** of elders in a single church.

ADVANTAGES OF PLURAL LEADERSHIP

- Provides biblical **accountability**
- Provides pastoral **balance**
- Provides **burden** sharing (*Eccl. 4:9-12*)
- Diffuses congregational **criticism**
- **Localizes** leadership
- Sets a better **picture** of the church

A church led by a plurality of elders will have in its very system of leadership a constant reminder that the head of the church is not the pastor but the **Lord Jesus Christ**.

Our goal must be to look at the **Bible** and recognize some basic aspects of structure and organization that God teaches both in example and in command and then to organize **our** church accordingly.

New Testament churches are to be congregationally governed yet led by a **plurality of elders** who are released by servant deacons to devote themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer.