

The Church's Leadership: Servanthood, Authority, and Accountability

Purpose: To examine the Christ's plan for leadership in the church and how leadership is to function within the local church.

Leadership is God's Gift to the Church

Ephesians 4:7-16

A. Individual

B. Corporate

Church Leadership Consists of a Plurality

A. Leaders in Christ's Church Are Called Elders

“In New Testament churches God raised up and qualified, by the work of the Holy Spirit, men who were appointed to exercise oversight over and spiritually care for the churches. These men are called elders, bishops, pastors. The three terms are interchangeable and are all used of the one office. The New Testament never specifies the number of elders, though the term appears almost always in the plural. Their character, integrity, and maturity are always of primary importance.”

Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Seminary

Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17, 19 ; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1:1 & 3 John 1:1

Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-4

The terms elder, overseer, and pastor all refer to the same office from a different vantage point: elder speaks of the office, overseer speaks of his responsibility, and pastor speaks of how it is to be carried out—the care of the flock.

B. Elders Are Spoken of in the Plural in the New Testament

Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-4

“All elders, then, must be armed with a knowledge of Scripture and be able to teach, judge, exhort, admonish, shepherd, and defend the flock against false teachers. Scripture teaches that the entire eldership pastors God’s flock, not just the pastor.”

Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*

Leadership Is Marked by Character and Servant Authority

A. Character is Essential for Leadership

1 Timothy 3:1-7

B. Leadership Exercises Servant Authority

“If we are uncomfortable with the language of ‘submitting to’ or ‘obeying’ church leaders, the Scriptures are not. ...Hebrews 13:17 should be remembered: ‘Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.’ Other passages seem to echo the same thought.”

Brian Habig & Les Newsom, *The Enduring Community: Embracing the Priority of the Church*

Luke 22:24-27

Leadership Is Accountable

A. All Human Authority Is Delegated or Derived

Romans 13:1; Act 20:28; Luke 12:42-43

B. All Authority Is Derived from and Tethered to Scripture

Titus 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 5:19

C. Leadership Authority is Affirmed by the Congregation

Matthew 18; 1 Tim 5:19,