

# UNDERSTANDING PASTORAL CARE

In order to build the church (Matt. 16:18) and reach the world with the gospel, God has appointed leaders within the local church to help fulfill his purpose. Sadly, theological deficiencies in the church regarding the importance of leadership and the biblical role of elders has sentenced congregations to immaturity and aimlessness. Health and fruitfulness flow, however, from churches who understand the strategic significance of leadership and receive pastoral care from gifted leaders with proven character.

## I. INTRODUCING THE ELDER

### A. Clarifying the Terms

Although there are several terms used for church leaders, there is a great degree of overlap between them. Thus, the terms “elder”, “bishop”, and “pastor” can be used interchangeably, for they describe those who have the task of overseeing and caring for the people of God.

*Titus 1:5-7 “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. <sup>6</sup> An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.”*

*1 Peter 5:1-2 “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.”*

*Acts 20:28 “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.”*

In general, in the New Testament *Elder* is the office, *Overseer & Pastor* are some of the tasks. Throughout the rest of this chapter we will refer to church leaders who provide pastoral care as “elders.”

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### B. Back to the Bible

Scripture alone must shape our perspective of pastoral care. Today it is increasingly popular for *tradition and culture* to influence the church’s perspective on the role of clergy.

Traditional Role

Servant of people

Biblical Role

Servant of Christ

Traditional Role

Servant of people  
Church sets agenda

Needs define priorities  
Reactor/accomodator  
Serving tables

Biblical Role

Servant of Christ  
Prayerful leadership  
sets agenda

Scripture defines priorities  
Equipper  
Given to word & prayer

**C. Understanding the Qualifications of an Elder**

1. Examining the Call

We may identify several key ideas regarding the call to be an elder:

- a) A need in the church does not indicate a call.
- b) The church does not issue the call – it comes from God
- c) The church’s function is to confirm the validity of the call.

2. Bay Ridge Christian Church’s “Calling Equation”

*The Converted Candidate + Character + Conduct of Home + Capabilities +  
Communication + Confirmation = CALLING*

3. There is a considerable amount of confusion in the Church today concerning eldership within the Church, especially who is eligible to hold the position of elder. We believe that the scriptures clearly teach this to be a role to be held only by a man.

*1 Timothy 3:1-2b <sup>1</sup>Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer (elder), he desires a noble task. <sup>2</sup>Now the overseer (elder) must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, ...*

*Titus 1:6a <sup>6</sup>An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, ...*

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The teachings in both 1 Timothy and Titus are teaching from the perspective that the elder is to be male. Paul states that the elder is to be the *husband* of one wife. Clearly, this is a role which only a man can fulfill.

*1 Timothy 2:12-13 <sup>12</sup>I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*

*1 Corinthians 14:34a Women should remain silent in the churches ...*

Paul in both instances is addressing the same issue, and that is that women are not to be in a role of teaching or authority over a man. That is what the phrase “*she must be silent*” is referring to.

This is not making the suggestion that women are not to talk while in church. In fact in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul discusses the ability for women to both pray and prophesy within the church. The key to these verses is a positional one – God has directed that only men are to

This is not making the suggestion that women are not to talk while in church. In fact in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul discusses the ability for women to both pray and prophesy within the church. The key to these verses is a positional one – God has directed that only men are to teach and have authority over the church.

It is important to note that this does *not* prohibit women from active ministry in the church. Women may read Scripture, pray, prophesy or use other spiritual gifts, teach children, or share a testimony. In fact, they are essentially restricted from only two activities – being an elder or teaching men in the assembly. This is not due to our sin or any cultural considerations – it was God’s good design from the beginning – when He formed Adam first, and then Eve.

For a full discussion of biblical manhood and womanhood please reference “Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood” by John Piper and Wayne Grudem

## II. THE BIBLICAL JOB DESCRIPTION OF AN ELDER

### A. Lead the Church

According to scripture, elders are called by God and accountable to God to lead the local church. They do this through:

*1 Timothy 5:17a “Directing the affairs of the church”*

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*1 Thessalonians 5:12 Executing “charge over” the church (NAS)*

*Hebrews 13:17 Exercising appropriate “authority...as who will give an account.”*

These different functions are all critical features of eldership.

### B. Equip the Church

1. Elders are to be equippers. Indeed, the health and future of the church depends upon them transmitting sound doctrine and biblical practice to others. One sign of effective pastoral ministry is the extent to which leaders are released and expected to train and equip others, particularly emerging leaders.
2. In a healthy local church, leaders train -- people minister!

*Ephesians 4:11-13 “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers <sup>12</sup> to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*

### C. Protect the Church

1. Elders are to transmit sound doctrine. Consider the qualifications and responsibilities of eldership in the New Testament:

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*1 Timothy 3:2 "Able to teach"*

*Ephesians 4:12 "To prepare God's people"*

*Titus 1:9 "Encourage others by sound doctrine"*

*Titus 2:1 "Teach what is in accord with sound doctrine"*

*2 Timothy 2:25 "Gently instruct"*

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2. Elders are to discern cultural trends and protect the flock from erroneous doctrine or practice.

*Acts 20: 28-31 "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. <sup>29</sup>I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. <sup>30</sup>Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. <sup>31</sup>So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."*

## D. Shepherding the Church

1. The elders are to shepherd the flock by providing caring structures for equipping and care.

*Acts 20:28 "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God..."*

2. There also need to be safeguards in the exercise of authority.

God's word is the final authority. Biblical authority prohibits a leader from asking for anything that is unscriptural, immoral, or a violation of conscience.

*Acts 17:11 "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."*

The New Testament always speaks of "Elders" in the plural form. In other words, there is a plurality of pastoral care. Authority never rests in one person alone.

*Acts 14:23 "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church..."*

*Titus 1:5 "The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you."*

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Servanthood must be the root motive of the leader. They do not lead for their own good or to fulfill their own needs or desires; they lead to serve others.

*Mark 10:42-45 “Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”*

**Teaching Tapes Available for Further Study on the Role of Leaders:**

*The Role of Leaders in the Church – August 18, 1996*

**I** *Gifts of Leadership and Guidance – August 9, 1998*

**A. Aggressively Identify the Local Church Where God Has Called You**

The New Testament is quite clear that each Christian is given to a specific local church and to the eldership of that church. This divine call creates responsibilities for both the elders and the person.

*1 Peter 5:2-3 “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; <sup>3</sup> not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”*

*Hebrews 13:17 “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.”*

This call also creates an accountability arrangement where the unrepentant believer can be handled biblically and redemptively.

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*Matthew 18:15-17 “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others with you, that if they also hear and do not listen, you may tell the church. But if he refuses to listen even to the church, he is to be treated as a Gentile and a tax collector.”*

*Matthew 18:15-17 “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”*

For more information on the process of church discipline, see the Church Discipline Addendum in section 12 of this binder.

## **B. Exercise the Responsibilities of Membership**

We must begin with recovering a biblical understanding of submission. Submission does not mean blind obedience, passivity, resignation, being a “yes man,” or a doormat to the wishes of church leaders. Submission is not a mindless act but an expression of love and trust done in faith.

How do we evaluate our response to leadership?

Do you gladly support and follow your leaders? Do you offer partial obedience while criticizing?  
Do you bypass those over you to seek the counsel (i.e. gossip) with those not directly involved?  
Do we joyfully attend and support the pastoral structures (Sunday celebration, small group, special meetings) which have been developed for our care and growth?

## **C. Honor Your Leaders**

Honor is an expression of integrity. The biblical concept of honor exhorts us to cultivate the habit of appreciating and crediting our sources.

*1 Timothy 5:17 “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”*

*1 Thessalonians 5:12 “Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.”*

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There exists an unfortunate confusion between exalting leaders and honoring leaders in the body of Christ. Exalting leaders is idolatry and is totally unacceptable. Honoring leaders is biblical and should be the regular practice of every Christian.

### **Teaching Tapes Available for Further Study on the Role of Church Members:**

*The Role of Members in the Church – August 25, 1996*

*The Vital Signs of a Healthy Church: Loving Church Discipline –  
November 24, 1996*



**NOTE:** At this time, if you believe that God is calling you to become a member of Bay Ridge Christian Church, you need to fill out the “Letter of Recommendation” form located in section 12 of this binder. After completing the form, please give it to the person leading the class.

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