

I. Biblical fly-over

A. Elders in the Old Testament:

- i. nomadic patriarchal tribes (tribes, clans, fathers' houses, with heads of each, cf. Exodus 6:14ff.)
- ii. pyramidal eldership under Moses (Exodus 18:13-27; compare with Acts 15)
- iii. autonomous tribes (period of the Judges)
- iv. royal overlordship (under Saul, David, and later)
- v. after the exile (Nehemiah 9:36)

B. Elders in the New Testament:

- i. Jesus, the Twelve
- ii. Jesus and the Seventy (sent out two by two)
- iii. Acts 6 and "the Seven"
- iv. Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council
- v. Paul's delegates: Timothy and Titus (1 Timothy 5:19-20)

C. Lessons from the biblical data

- i. there should be accountability within the local church
- ii. there should be accountability beyond the local church
- iii. a pyramid structure is wise and biblical
- iv. normally plural leadership is important
- v. a hierarchy of courts is wise and biblical
- vi. overseers should be sanctified and wise
- vii. overseers should be well matched with the people they are going to serve
- viii. normally the congregation should have a say in choosing overseers
- ix. it is good for individual men to strive to become qualified as overseers
- x. but responsibility for finding new leaders ultimately rests on current leaders

II. Human accountability

- A. Overseers are accountable to other believers (1 Timothy 5:19)
- B. Overseers are accountable to overseers (1 Timothy 3:14-15; Galatians 2; Acts 15)

III. True accountability: to Jesus Christ alone (1 Peter 5:1-5)

- A. All other accountability is "alongside;" accountability to God is "from above"
- B. We are accountable:
- C. We are accountable to shepherd the flock of God here in Providence
 - i. this is a huge responsibility! (Colossians 1:28)
 - ii. not under compulsion, but willingly
 - iii. not for shameful gain, but eagerly
 - iv. not domineering, but being examples (Matthew 20:25-28)
- D. We suffer and do good in expectation of glory
- E. We humble ourselves so that God will give us grace (1 Peter 4:7-11)