

1 Elders

Shepherds of the Household of God

2 Three Background Assumptions

- ◆ A charcoal sketch of necessary qualities, not an exhaustive HD picture. Requirements not explicitly listed shouldn't change the shape of the sketch—it should only fill it in.
 - ❖ E.g., Man of prayer, available to serve in the role
- ◆ Some requirements explicitly listed, on the other hand, make situational assumptions and describe what an elder's life should look like in those areas provided they characterize his life.
 - ❖ E.g., Married, family etc.
- ◆ Qualified to be an elder vs. being a good fit for a particular eldership
 - ❖ Theological, philosophy of ministry, chemistry etc.
- ◆

3 How Does One Become an Elder?

Appointment (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; cf. Acts 6:1-3)

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- ◆ The examples we see of elders being appointed in the NT occur in cases of existing, yet very new, churches that do not currently have any elders—they are without pastors.
 - ❖ We do not have any examples of *additional* elders being appointed in well-established churches that already have elders, nor do we have any explicit examples of church or organization-birther churches planted with an elder or elders from day one.
 - Therefore, in understanding and developing a process for appointing additional elders in existing, elder-led churches, we must draw upon and synthesize the NT information we do possess, including lexical analysis (i.e., the word "appoint"), the role and responsibility of elders currently serving and our understanding of the nature of the local church more generally.
- ◆

4 Disposition Toward Elders

- ◆ "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves." 1 Thess. 5:12-13
- ◆ "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches." Gal. 6:6
- ◆ "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." Heb. 13:17

5 Honor and Shame

- ◆ "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality." 1 Tim. 5:17-21

6 Submission?

- ◆ To act in accordance with—to trustfully follow (obey/submit | Gr. *peithō/hypeikō*)
 - ❖ Because elders have been given the responsibility to promote and protect biblical teaching within their local church, individuals should not seek to do it for them out of a sense of 1) superior discernment or 2) functional submission to different elders (many of whom they have never met). Both result in individuals serving as self-appointed theological policemen in the church who, regardless of how they would phrase it, stand over the elders in theological judgment, rather than humbly listening and learning with a teachable spirit—even when they happen to privately disagree with a piece of interpretation or a theological position.

7 **Submission: Two Qualifiers and One Clarifying Distinction**

- ◆ An elder is acting within their God-given jurisdiction as a shepherd in the household of God.
 - ❖ Nowhere does the NT suggest that elders have ubiquitous authority. An elder may have helpful counsel in certain areas that are not directly related to the life of the church and/or the oversight of one's soul, but that counsel cannot legitimately take the weight of God-delegated authority.
- ◆ An elder's exhortation does not require something sinful.
 - ❖ The believer's ultimate allegiance must be to Scripture as the final authority. This is the case even as members trust their elders to shepherd them into a more vibrant understanding of Scripture.
 - ❖
- ◆ Three kinds of authority:
 - ❖ Authority of expertise/accomplishment
 - ❖ Authority of coercion
 - Elders do not have the obligation or prerogative to "enforce" their authority through heavy-handedness or a domineering disposition toward those who do not submit to godly exhortation in an effort to coerce obedience.
- ◆

8 **Two Qualifiers and One Clarifying Distinction**

- ◆ Authority of *moral order*
 - Within their realm of God-given jurisdiction, elders have the authority to bind the consciences of believers to take, or cease from, particular actions and behaviors. Failure to follow such exhortations results in sin, a consequence attributable to violation of an authority structured established by God.
 - Discipline will come from either 1) the church in church discipline in the proper circumstances or 2) the fatherly chastening of God toward those not submitting to the spiritual authority that God has placed over them.
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