



## **Church Defined: How God Sets Up the Local Church**

### **2. Elders / Pastors**

- Elders are the senior male leaders of the church who are also synonymously called pastors, bishops, and overseers throughout the New Testament (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 4:11, 1 Peter 5:2).
- Elders are men chosen for their ministry according to clear biblical requirements (1 Timothy 2:11-3:7, Titus 1:5-9).
- The lead pastor who founds a church must function as the solo elder until a plurality of elders can be established.
- Until a team of elders can be established, the lead pastor should have an advisory board who are available to give him counsel when needed and support if a church discipline issue should arise.
- When installed, elders must lead the church and never represent factions, agendas, or disgruntled or pushy people within the church.

### **Reasons NOT to be a Lead Pastor**

1. You will not be in control of the church. Jesus will.
2. You will want all the glory.
3. You will believe the lie that being lead pastor brings security to your family.

## Going Deeper

When God wants to get something done, Scripture reveals that God always raises up a man to lead that change and works through that man. Examples include:

- Sparing humanity (Noah)
- Founding a nation (Abraham)
- Liberating a nation (Moses)
- Establishing a throne (David)
- Building a temple (Solomon)
- Preparing hearts (John the Baptizer)
- Reaching Gentiles (Paul)
- Redeeming creation (Jesus).

Therefore, a church cannot be successfully launched and expect to survive if it is not led by a man who obediently follows God as He speaks through Scripture and leads through the Spirit.

To qualify as an elder, a man must meet the criteria set in Scripture for an elder.

### Part One: Qualified Eldership

The elder qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 are virtually identical and are the basic minimal criteria that should be expected of any man being considered for eldership:

#### 1. Relation to God

- a. A man - masculine leader
- b. Above reproach - without any character defect
- c. Able to teach - effective Bible communicator
- d. Not a new convert - mature Christian

#### 2. Relation to Family

- a. Husband of one wife - one-woman man, sexually pure
- b. Has obedient children - successful father
- c. Manages family well - provides for, leads, organizes, loves

#### 3. Relation to Self

- a. Temperate - mentally and emotionally stable
- b. Self-controlled - disciplined life of sound decision-making
- c. Not given to drunkenness - without addictions
- d. Not a lover of money - financially content and upright

#### 4. Relation to Others

- a. Respectable - worth following and imitating
- b. Hospitable - welcomes strangers, especially non-Christian for evangelism
- c. Not violent - even-tempered
- d. Gentle - kind, gracious, loving
- e. Not contentious - peaceable, not quarrelsome/divisive
- f. Good reputation with outsiders - respected in the community

## Part Two: Competent Eldership

The lead elder in a church start-up sets the precedent for what faithful pastoral leadership is in that church. The duties of elders are many according to Scripture and until an elder team is in place, the lead elder who founds the church should expect to work as a generalist doing the following duties until more of the load can be shared with other elders, deacons, and members once the church leadership formalizes:

- Prayer and Scripture study (Acts 6:4)
- Ruling/leading the church (1 Timothy 5:17)
- Managing the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
- Caring for people in the church (1 Peter 5:2-5)
- Giving account to God for the church (Hebrews 13:17)
- Living exemplary lives (Hebrews 13:7)
- Rightly using the authority God has given them (Acts 20:28)
- Teaching the Bible correctly (Ephesians 4:11, 1 Timothy 3:2)
- Preaching (1 Timothy 5:17)
- Praying for the sick (James 5:13-15)
- Teaching sound doctrine and refuting false teachings (Titus 1:9)
- Working hard (1 Thessalonians 5:12)
- Rightly using money and power (1 Peter 5:1-3)
- Protecting the church from false teachers (Acts 20:17-31)
- Discipling unrepentant Christians (Matthew 18:15-17)

## Part Three: The Church Planting Elder

Because starting a church from scratch is so unlike pastoring an existing church, there are requirements for a founding, church planting elder in addition to that of a typical elder that a church planter must be willing to embrace and execute. They include the following:

- Gifts of apostleship, leadership, evangelist, and teacher.
- Life of passionately following Jesus that is worth following (1 Corinthians 11:1) and imitating (Hebrews 13:7)
- Ability to pull the church toward God's mission with the strength of an ox (1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- Fight for the purity of the church with the toughness of a warrior (2 Timothy 2:3-4)
- Live a life of discipline so that he can compete with the skill of an athlete (2 Timothy 2:5)
- Work tirelessly like a farmer who is up before the sun doing his job every day (2 Timothy 2:6)