

**BETTER TOGETHER**  
**Leadership in the Church**  
**1 Timothy 3:1-7**

**[Leadership at CH: The process of change]**

The Church has been uniquely designed by Christ to serve his divine purposes; both in the Church and in the world. Over the years, I have seen God work through the people all around me in the local church bodies that I have served in, and it always blesses me to see it unfold. I have been especially blessed by the pastors that I have served with here at CH over the last 34 years. Now, as a FAMILY of CHURCHES, we are being led by various gifted pastors at each of our locations into the future. I am so grateful for these godly men that the Lord has brought to us!

The N.T. scriptures do not really prescribe a huge BEAURACRACY of religious leaders in the church, but it portrays a beautiful BODY of believers that work with one another under and alongside a number of called and gifted leaders that are in their midst. These positions of SERVANT LEADERSHIP were called APOSTLES, OVERSEERS, PASTOR/TEACHERS, and ELDERS. Today, we do not have any apostles. Apostles were only CHOSEN MEN who followed Jesus during the time of his ministry and who witnessed his miracles, heard his teachings, and saw him after his resurrection ([See Acts 1:21-22](#)). They were the primary ones who passed on the teachings of Christ to the world and who wrote inspired scriptures, but they are (obviously) no longer around. The spiritual leaders of the church after them are the people described above. **Today, I want to talk about the STRUCTURE of church leadership that God has given to us, to examine the RESPONSIBILITIES they are required to fulfill and the CHARACTER qualities that they are required to exhibit.**

**The first and most important truth that we must acknowledge about church leadership is this: CHRIST is the HEAD of the Church.**

Every pastor is an UNDER-SHEPHERD that must necessarily be fully devoted to the Lord Jesus and HIS purposes and will for the Church. They are not AUTOCRATS who get to decide what the church is to do and be. Instead, they get their orders from the Lord Jesus through his Word and by his Spirit. And the Word and the Spirit will NOT CONTRADICT one another! It is Jesus Christ who calls and equips the Overseers that he wants in his local churches. **Ephesians 4:11 NIV**

**11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,**

According to Paul, the church has been led by a succession of leaders, all of whom are under the authority of Christ. The Apostles and prophets were the first ones in leadership in the church. [The office of Apostle is no longer in existence today. I believe that the office of Prophet is also no longer a functioning office in the church today, even though the GIFT of prophecy still is in operation.](#) Prophecy today is not to be given equal status with the WORD of God, but it is the FORTHTELLING of truth that has been given by the Spirit in alignment with the Word of God for the strengthening of the

church. The work of the EVANGELIST can be equated with the MISSIONARY and the CHURCH PLANTER, whose purpose it is to spread the Gospel wherever the name of Christ is not known, and to establish functioning churches in those places. The ELDERS are those men that are then set apart for the purpose of LEADING and TEACHING in the local church.

### **THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP IS CHARACTER! 1 Timothy 3:1-7 NIV**

1 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

**Notice that each of these have to do with the prospective pastor's KNOWN PATTERN of lifestyle and reputation, as well as his gifts and abilities.** Character cannot and must not be separated from leadership in the church. To do so is to set the church up for disaster! This is why so many verses in the N.T. speak of the BIBLICAL REQUIREMENTS that any man must meet before he can even be considered for ordination! **[Briefly review standards].** Paul told Timothy, **“Lay hands suddenly on no man!” [1 Timothy 5:21-22]** Ordination is not for those that “I like” or that are “good friends of mine.” They must be CALLED BY GOD and RECOGNIZED as godly, gifted men. Paul makes it clear that a man must be TESTED before he is allowed to serve or lead the church. **[1 Timothy 3:10]**

### **PASTORS ARE TO BE HUMBLE SERVANT-LEADERS! 1 Peter 5:1-6 NIV**

1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them--not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 **not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.** 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. 5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Simon Peter's admonitions to pastors express the importance of how HUMBLY and LOVINGLY the Pastor/Elder must lead. This is an exact ECHO of Christ's words to his disciples at the LAST SUPPER. **Mark 10:42-45 NIV**

42 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. 43 **Not so with you.** Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 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."

As you have probably noticed in the verses we have already covered so far, there are several names and titles that are used in the N.T. of those that are to lead the church.

**ELDER** – (Presbyter) Refers to senior (spiritually mature) leadership

**OVERSEER** – (Bishop) Refers to one who MANAGES and LEADS the church

**SHEPHERD** – (Pastor – A Verb) Refers to one who RULES and CARES FOR the church

**TEACHER** – Refers to one who proclaims the Word of God to the church.

These are not necessarily a HEIRARCHY of positions, although various denominations may view them as such. The variety of leadership positions in the N.T. give room for any number of structures, depending on the need of the times. **This is why the various titles are used interchangeably for the same person in several places in the New Testament.** The STRUCTURE of governmental leadership in the churches are like various kinds of methodologies in church programs (areas like worship styles or discipleship structures); they are driven by PRINCIPLES and not CONCRETE RULES. Various denominations see church government differently, and are thus governed according to their interpretation of these roles. We must not be DOGMATIC about this, because the needs of the church are particular, and various styles of leadership can serve the church well if done humbly and lovingly. **But it is important to note that the office of the Overseer is NEVER to be a LONE OFFICE in the local church. Every church should have a PLURALITY of Overseers, even though one may be the Senior Elder.** This is seen in Timothy's ordination, in the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas, and in Paul's instructions to Timothy about ordaining other pastors in his church. He speaks to Timothy as the Senior Leader in his local church, but he refers to OTHER ELDERS that are serving there alongside him. In our day, it is important to note that these leaders are not necessarily all PAID POSITIONS in the church. **There are Elders that are ordained pastors and leaders in the church who may not be PAID staff. In our campuses, we have a number of men that are ordained pastors who have leadership roles here even though they are not paid. It is a disservice to these men when we fail to recognize their gifts and calling even though they are not paid for their ministry work! Men like Stan Roach are an enormous blessing to this body, and they should be HONORED as leaders in this church family!**

But again, the point is that the local church should never be under the "domination" of just one man, but under the loving leadership of several Elder/Shepherds that have been recognized and appointed by other godly ordained leaders. This is a wise type of ACCOUNTABILITY that ought to exist for the protection not only of the church but of the pastor as well. I know that I personally BENEFIT from this organizational structure and accountability here at Colonial Hills.

**ELDERS ARE TO BE RESPECTED AS THE AUTHORITY UNDER GOD IN THE CHURCH. Hebrews 13:17 NIV**

17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

The exhortation to be a SERVANT-LEADER certainly paves the way for members of the church to more easily SUBMIT to their authority. But this is still something that the church members must willingly CHOOSE to do. It can be a JOY or a PAIN. The work of a pastor is not something that one does for himself. His role is to impact and influence the lives of the members of his church through the teaching and preaching of the Word, through his godly character, and through his leadership in guiding the church to creatively and consistently reach the lost and disciple the saved. **[The PASTOR'S BURDEN]**. It is extremely important to note that these leaders are not called to do ALL of the ministry in the church. Instead, Paul tells us that the PASTORS are the EQUIPPERS and the MEMBERS are the MINISTERS! **Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV**

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 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.

The ultimate purpose of the pastor's authority is to help the people MATURE in their faith through their understanding and application of the Word in their lives, and to EQUIP the people to fulfill the ministry in their EVERYDAY LIVES. There is no greater way for Christ to be glorified, for the saints to be edified, and for the world to be evangelized. Each of our lives can be greatly enriched by the faithful leadership of elders in the church, but they need the PRAYERS and the ENCOURAGEMENT of the saints if they are to be successful. This is why the Apostle Paul was ALWAYS pleading for the believers to PRAY for him to faithfully carry out his role no matter how difficult it may be. **We beg you to do the same for your pastors in this challenging day.**

\*Pray that we will continue to mature and to grow in our knowledge of the Word.

\*Pray that we will be faithful to Christ and will be protected from the enemy's traps.

\*Pray that we will be bold witnesses in our daily lives and in our preaching and teaching.

\*Pray for our families