

# New Testament Church Leadership in Action Today

Brent Knox & John Hopler



*This book is dedicated to the (present and future) pastors in Great Commission Churches. We are so grateful to be a part of this “band of brothers,” who are devoted to reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*New Testament Church Leadership in Action Today*

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## Author Biographies

### **Brent Knox**

While a college student at the Great Commission church in Ames, Iowa, Brent's life was radically changed by Jesus Christ. After being appointed as a pastor in Ames, he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota to co-found Evergreen Community Church. Evergreen is a unique multi-site church at five locations in the Twin Cities area. Its innovative practices have modeled a fresh approach to reach the un-churched. Also, Evergreen has pioneered the cutting-edge multi-site phenomena currently happening across the country. Brent continues to pastor at Evergreen and is also a Regional Director for the Great Commission churches. He and his wife, Mary, have three sons.

## **John Hopler**

John is Director for Great Commission Churches. In 1973, he came to faith in Jesus Christ while attending Ohio State University. In 1979, John became a pastor at the Great Commission church in Columbus, Ohio. For over 20 years, he has been active in Great Commission in a national role, overseeing church planting, pastoring the pastors, and editing content for the Great Commission Leadership Institute. John and his wife, Sandy, have eight children.

# Preface

JOHN HOPLER

In 1970, thirty college-age Christians got on a bus to share the gospel of Jesus Christ on campuses in the southwestern part of the United States. From that initial evangelism initiative a fellowship of churches was birthed called the Great Commission church movement. Since 1970, churches have been planted in the United States and in 20 countries throughout the world.

In 1972, a church was started by some of the original leaders of this movement on the Iowa State University campus. A year later, a church planting team was sent to Ohio State University. Brent Knox, who wrote the initial draft of this book, experienced a radical life transformation through Jesus Christ while a part of the Great Commission church in Iowa State. I became a Christian at the Great Commission church at Ohio State and was later appointed to be a pastor in that church.

Herschel Martindale, one of the founders of this movement, made this statement in 2007:

*“The greatest contribution our movement of churches has made to the overall body of Christ is not our emphasis on evangelism, or our devotional lives, or our commitment to church planting—all of which are highly valued in our churches. Rather, the greatest contribution Great Commission*



*churches have made is the example of leading churches through a plurality of elders raised up in local churches.”*

This is a book about this paradigm of church leadership. In our movement, the local church is led not by a “CEO” (Chief Executive Officer), but by a “COE”—Community of Elders. Some are full-time or part-time church staff. Others work another full-time job. These servant leaders are raised up within the local church based upon their Christ-like character, as described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. This book is an explanation of how Great Commission churches have applied the Scriptures in recognizing and raising up elders within the local church.

Because of our commitment to leading in plurality, we thought it would be good to model plurality by writing the book together.

We write this book as a service not only to the people in Great Commission churches, but also to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in churches outside of our movement. We in Great Commission are deeply indebted to godly pastors and leaders throughout Christianity who have laid down their lives to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have learned much from these leaders. We humbly offer these pages as our “loaves and fishes” to the Lord and to His Church, in the hope that He will multiply leaders throughout the world to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To Him be all the glory.

## INTRODUCTION

# The Importance of Church Leadership

BRENT KNOX

Much rises and falls on leadership.

I have noticed that rarely does a business fly higher than its leaders. This is why organizations pay big dollars for competent and inspiring executives. Companies lure capable leaders from other companies with enticing stock options and pricy benefits because they know how important leadership is to their goals.

Football teams hire and fire coaches routinely, looking for just the right person with just the right skill.

Universities scour the nation to find a president who is not only an academic, but also skilled in administration, consensus building, vision casting, and fundraising.

It is no wonder the salaries of CEOs, coaches, and presidents are skyrocketing! Competent leaders are difficult to find.

While businesses, football teams, and universities are important, the Church is far more important. In fact, the most important organization in the world is the Church.

God masterminded the Church. God is the head of the Church. The business of the Church is to glorify God by winning the lost, making disciples, and sending out workers. The

Church is God's community of redeemed people filled with the Holy Spirit and demonstrating God's life and power to the world. There is no other organization in the world whose business is expanding the Kingdom of God through the gospel and strengthening transformed people. The Church is in the business of transforming people from the inside out! Jesus Christ is the hope of the world—and He has chosen to work through His Church to bring hope to the world.

In His wisdom, God has arranged the universal Church into smaller congregations called local churches. God has also provided specific instructions on how the local church ought to operate. In fact, the main reason why Paul wrote to Timothy was to pass on some of these specific instructions.

*“Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:14-15).

Since the work of the church is so important—namely, being the pillar and foundation of the truth—then the instructions ought to be carefully followed. One key set of instructions that Paul writes to Timothy regards church leadership. Paul imparts very important leadership principles. IF leadership is critical to the health of an organization, AND if the church is the most important organization in the world, THEN great care ought to be given to the biblical instructions of church leadership.

Businesses, football teams, and universities rise and fall on the quality of their leaders. Churches are no different. Churches rise or fall based on the quality of leadership.

IF the church is the world's most important organization,

AND if leadership is arguably the most important factor in a church's success, THEN the most important decision that can be made in the world is, "WHO are the church leaders and WHAT should they do?"

There are clear church leadership truths in the Bible. As we understand and implement these truths, the incredible potential of God's Church will be unleashed in the 21st century.

## **The Great Commission Lens**

To understand church leadership, we first must understand the mission of the Church. And to understand the mission of the Church, we need to be reminded of the biblical story.

In Genesis, we learn that God created the world and created man to live and rule in the world, but man sinned and rebelled against God. In response to this, God formed a people from the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the people of Israel. He gave them the Law that they did not follow. God also gave a promise that a Messiah would come who would save them from their sins and be the King not only of Israel, but also of the entire world. Two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth was born of a virgin in fulfillment of the promise of God. Jesus led a sinless life, healed the sick, and raised the dead. Then, after three years of public ministry, Jesus was crucified on the cross for the sins of the world. He was buried, and He was raised from the dead on the third day by the power of God. This Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

After His resurrection, Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples:

*"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and*

*on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).*

For those who heard these words, the mission was clear: Go into all the nations to make disciples (converts, followers, believers) of Jesus Christ, baptize them, and then teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded.

The Book of Acts is the story of how the disciples of Jesus Christ fulfilled the Great Commission over the next 30 years. After Jesus ascended to Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to fill His followers with a supernatural power to be witnesses for Christ (Acts 1:8; Acts 2). Beginning in Jerusalem, the gospel message of Jesus Christ then spread to the nation of Judea, and eventually to the entire world. The Apostles established churches—congregations of believers—that were baptized, taught to follow Jesus Christ, and who then proclaimed the gospel message to those who had not heard it. The mission was being fulfilled.

New Testament church leadership can only be understood if we look through a Great Commission lens. The heart of Jesus Christ is to spread the gospel throughout the whole world. To do so, Jesus builds local churches—and He raises up leaders in those churches who share the gospel with the lost, baptize them, and build them into mature followers of Jesus Christ.

We cannot separate the mission of Christ (the Great Commission) from the vehicle He selected (the Church) to accomplish the mission. Also, we cannot separate the mission of Christ from the biblical paradigm He chose for developing leaders within the

local church.

What is at stake is much more than simply having a nice New Testament church. What is at stake is fulfilling the Great Commission. If we are serious about making disciples of all the nations, it is imperative that we understand and apply the New Testament pattern for developing leaders in the church today.

What kind of leader is described in the New Testament? In the next seven chapters, we will look at seven biblical beliefs on New Testament leadership that we have had in Great Commission churches. These beliefs give us a picture of the kind of leaders that Jesus wants—leaders that will fulfill the Great Commission.



BELIEF 1

## Pastors Are to Be Servants and Leaders

BRENT KNOX

I appreciate the following statement from the Great Commission Core Values paper:

*A pastor/elder is to be a servant, modeling Christ-like humility, teachability, and love, as well as a leader, demonstrating faith, courage, and strength in managing the church (Luke 22:26; Hebrews 13:7).*

Every year at our Great Commission Churches Pastors Conference we give two awards. The first is the Golden Bus Award, based on the example of those who started our movement in 1970 by getting on a bus to preach the gospel on college campuses in the southwestern part of the United States. This award is given to those leaders who demonstrate faith and courage in advancing the gospel. The second award is the Golden Heart Award. This is given to leaders who exhibit a humble, servant's heart in caring for the church. Our desire is that these two qualities—courageous leadership and humble servanthood—be found in every leader in God's Church.

Let's look first at pastors as leaders. People need leaders. Without leadership, people sink towards the lowest common denominator and follow the path of least resistance and effort. We all have seen teenagers sitting around with a group of friends and



asking each other, “What do you want to do?” Someone responds, “I dunno. What do you want to do?” Then there is an awkward and helpless silence. Finally, the path of least resistance is chosen again—another movie is watched, or another video game is played. And life is wasted once again. Yet, usually there are some teens sitting there thinking, “This is just a waste of time. I wish we would do something different, something more meaningful.” But no one has the courage or the vision to lead that small group of young Christians to a better place. Deep down inside, Christians want to do something worthwhile. God designed Christians to yearn to make a mark on the world and live for eternity, but because there is no courageous leadership, this little flock is paralyzed. God’s people need to be led to a better place.

When I was a young believer, I was given the responsibility of being a leader of a small group of Christian college students. I was sick about all the entertainment options available to us. I had already wasted too much time. So when we gathered together as friends, we did not sit around and try to think of ways to entertain ourselves. We sat around and thought of ways to reach people for Christ. But I had to initiate that discussion. It was scary. At first, most people do not like to be prodded to spiritual action. It grinds against the flesh. Watching another movie is far easier than witnessing and serving. When I initiated a spiritual discussion, or suggested a spiritual action, I had to endure rolling eyes. Once the initial resistance of the flesh was overcome, however, good-hearted people were glad to be led to a better place.

One day, while praying, I got an idea. The fall break was approaching for Iowa State University. My small group consisted entirely of college students. I knew if we did not have a challenging plan, we would simply waste our fall break doing nothing

important. So I suggested that we find a nearby university that might still be in session, invade the campus, and share our faith. It was a bold and uncomfortable plan, but after some discussion, my small group jumped on board. I assigned people to find housing. Others planned transportation. Talented writers produced and printed a brand-new gospel tract to hand out at a football game. When the time came, all our plans materialized. We had a fantastic week of stepping out in faith and evangelizing the University of Nebraska. Our small group returned to the new semester at ISU pumped and encouraged. No pastor told us to do this. It wasn't a church project. We just did it, and I led it. I was only 21 years old. I learned that God's people need to be led to a better place.

At the heart of spiritual leadership is the heart of a servant. Spiritual leadership must be seen through the lens of a servant. I led the trip to the University of Nebraska because I wanted to serve God's people. I wanted to help them grow and experience God in a fresh way. That was my motivation. I did not lead to become popular, to please church leaders, to climb the church leadership ladder, or to gain recognition. I led because I truly wanted to serve them. This heart is difficult to attain because it is so contrary to the spirit of the world. Jesus describes the proper heart of leadership as he deals with his disciples who were jockeying among themselves for positions of honor.

*"Then the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus with her sons. She knelt respectfully to ask a favor. "What is your request?" he asked. She replied, "In your Kingdom, will you let my two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one at your right and the other at your left?" But Jesus told them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of sorrow I am about to drink?" "Oh*

*yes,” they replied, “we are able!” “You will indeed drink from it,” he told them. “But I have no right to say who will sit on the thrones next to mine. My Father has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen.” When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant” (Matthew 20:20-23).*

James, John, and their ambitious mother were lured by the prospect of honor and personal glory. So they approached Jesus in private and jockeyed for position. They lobbied the boss. A conversation took place behind closed doors. When the “rest of the office” heard about it, they were miffed. “James and John are trying to get ahead, trying to get a step up on us!”

Jesus knew he had a challenge on his hands. He knew that the whole paradigm of leadership, power, and personal glory needed to change with these people.

*“But Jesus called them together and said, “You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord it over the people beneath them. But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must become your slave. For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:24-28).*

Notice how Jesus responded to these glory-seeking disciples! He never chastised them for their ambition to be great. He never snuffed out their desire to lead, but He changed the route to greatness. The route to true greatness comes by donning the towel of a servant.

In contrast, the route to greatness in the world comes by lording over people, by exerting power over people, and winning the matches of willpower. If you want to be great in this

short-lived world, assert yourself, be strong, be bossy, and don't let people push you around. But if you want to be great in God's kingdom, then you must imitate Jesus and become the servant of many. Spiritual leadership starts with a burning heart to serve. Self-promotion must be resisted and loathed.

Chuck Colson, the former Special Counsel to President Nixon, is very familiar with worldly power and lording over people. He wrote:

*"Nothing distinguishes the kingdoms of man from the kingdom of God more than their diametrically opposed views of the exercise of power. One seeks to control people; the other to serve people; one promotes self, the other prostrates self; one seeks prestige and position, the other lifts up the lowly and despised."*<sup>i</sup>

Jesus affirmed the desire to be a leader ("whoever wants to be a leader"), but he re-directed the route and the heart to that goal.

Ambition is important. This is why Jesus did not chastise the disciples for their ambition. Be ambitious, yet with a godly ambition. Godly desires move us towards the painful commitments of spiritual growth. I only became a leader because I desired to be a leader, and that desire spurred me to engage in the necessary spiritual disciplines to grow.

The church of God needs qualified leaders. The flock needs loving shepherds. God's people need to be led. Where there is lack of leadership, churches wither, home groups wither, small groups wither, and ministries wither.

A leader is someone who brings order out of chaos. Because sin entered the world a long time ago, the whole world is subject to death, decay, and increasing disorder. Things naturally fall apart. Cars naturally rust. Lawns grow weeds. Families drift

towards disorder. Churches gravitate towards confusion. Small groups and ministries naturally descend towards disarray. Energy and effort must be applied to reverse what is natural. Godly leadership helps supply that energy to reverse the trend of increasing disorder.

People want someone to step forward and to bring order to the natural drift. For instance, people want good, quality small group times. Good small groups just don't happen naturally. Also, people desire that church ministries operate well. People want their time to be used well if they participate. They want to feel like they are making a difference rather than just spinning their wheels. Therefore, people want to be led by good leaders. God's people want to make their lives count and need to be led there.

Who will heed the need to serve and "stand before" God's people and lead? Who will dedicate himself to bring order out of chaos, not to promote himself or gain prestige, but to serve?

As stated earlier, a leader is to have the heart of a servant. A servant's heart comes first, then a leader's work. Notice how the writers of the New Testament saw themselves:

*"Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1).*

*"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons" (Philippians 1:1).*

*"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings" (James 1:1).*

*"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus*

*Christ.*" (Jude 1).

In Romans 1:1, how did Paul see himself? The order is important. Like the other leaders quoted above, Paul first saw himself as a servant of Christ. Then he considered himself an apostle. Other places he describes himself as a prophet, teacher, and evangelist. All these designations are descriptions of his "roles." But a "servant" is a description of his person. Since he was a "servant," he eagerly took the role of an apostle, prophet, teacher, and evangelist. The servant performs various roles that the master asks of him. Timothy, James, and Jude also had this attitude. The very essence of their being, indeed their self-identity, was as a servant of Jesus.

The word most often translated "servant" comes from the Greek word *doulos*, which means, "bondservant" or "bond-slave." The first century bond-slave was the lowest slave in the scale of servitude. It described one who gives himself up to the will of another. Paul calls himself a "bond-slave" because he had formerly been a bond-slave of Satan and having been bought by Christ, he was now a willing slave of Jesus Christ. Jesus bought our freedom from enslavement to the Evil One. Let's use our freedom to become a slave of Christ!

The notion of becoming a volunteer slave was very countercultural to the Greek and Roman mind. For the Greek, the highest ideal was self-determination: "I get to do what I want. I am free to decide what I want to do with my life. I control my destiny." Therefore, Greeks and Romans looked upon the slave as an inferior person. It would have been contradictory to cultural thinking to speak of becoming a servant to another, even to God. Christianity stood this worldly ideal on its head.

I was fortunate to have the “servant first/leader second” attitude modeled for me. The leaders who came before me were servants at heart. When I attended a conference early in my Christian walk, I walked through the food line to receive my meal and noticed that the main speaker of the conference was back in the kitchen washing dishes. I was taken aback. My knee-jerk reaction was to save this leader from the lowliness of the kitchen, but then it dawned on me—God is calling leaders to be servants. I don’t remember much of the teaching from that conference, but his example remains with me to this day.

The battle of pride can be intense. Our flesh wants to be noticed and valued. This must be purged. Years ago, when I was a college student, I was asked to join a logistic team to set up a ski conference out in Colorado. My job was to organize lost and found items. Anything that was found was brought to me. And anyone looking for something came to me. It was a huge responsibility! Finally, my moment of glory came. During one main session of the conference, when announcements were being made, the conference coordinator introduced me to the crowd. “If you have lost anything, then please check with our lost and found coordinator, Brent Knox. Brent, stand up and wave so people can see who you are.” I stood up with pride. My moment was glorious. All eyes were on me. My prestige skyrocketed. Finally, I was someone important. Then God convicted me. “Brent, why are you doing what you are doing? Are you serving to get recognition from people? Or, are you serving to please Me?” I wrestled with my motivation for the entire conference. I asked God to purge my motivations and make my service to Him pure. By the end of the conference, there was a huge breakthrough. My heart changed, with God’s help.

God wants leaders, but He wants those men to be servants first. If we are to fulfill the Great Commission, it is vital that God raise up pastors who lead out—who initiate with authority out of a servant’s heart. Men who have a courageous faith and a humble spirit are the men God uses in His church organization—which is the focus of the next chapter.



BELIEF 2

## The Organizational Chart of the New Testament Church is Simple

BRENT KNOX

I love simplicity. And I dislike bureaucracy! Everyone, at one time or another has felt victimized by endless swathes of red tape. Finding the right person to serve your interests through a government agency can be maddening. Bureaucracy can make simple things become burdensome and complex. Multiple levels of management can be costly. Decisions are delayed and filtered. There is very little outside-the-box thinking.

Over the centuries, many churches have also constructed a heavy bureaucracy with multiple layers of leaders. Some churches have senior pastors, associate pastors, ruling elders, and a proliferation of committees. Other churches have multiple clergy ruled by bishops who are in turn, ruled by someone else.

However, the New Testament pattern is less complex. While it is true that in the management of a church there may be many staff, the overall structure of the church is to be simple, with pastors leading. Even though there are several types of leaders in the New Testament, the ultimate authority within the church resides with the pastor-elders.

Let's look at several types of leaders found in the New Testament:

## 1. Apostle

The word *apostolos* literally means “messenger” or “sent one.” Broadly speaking, an apostle is a person sent out as a messenger for a purpose. The word “apostle” has been used by Christians to describe three types of individuals found in the New Testament.

1. The Apostle. This title is given to the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:1).
2. The Twelve Apostles. This title is given to the twelve men commissioned as *the* Apostles by Jesus in the Gospels. Jesus had a special purpose for them and sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God. These men had special recognition, requirements, and abilities. They were eyewitnesses of the Lord in His ministry (Acts 1:21). God gave them the ability to do miracles to prove the reality of their witness (Acts 2:43). Also, many of them were used by God to write the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul was not one of the twelve, but God seemed to add him to the twelve. God confirmed his apostleship with signs, wonders, and miracles as Paul was given a unique ministry to the Gentiles (2 Cor. 12:12).
3. Apostles who were missionaries who started churches and cared for churches. Many others were sent out and used by God to advance the gospel into new territories, starting new churches (such as Barnabas and Timothy). God used them to not only start new churches, but also to provide care and oversight to existing churches (Acts 14:4; 1 Thes. 2:6).

In Great Commission churches, we do not believe that there are apostles today in the first and second categories. Jesus is the One and Only Apostle—the One whom we worship and serve. And it is clear from the Scriptures that the Twelve were unique

in their role of establishing the Church. There is a debate in the Christian community whether or not the apostolic gift is operating today in a practical way, as described in the third category above. That debate is beyond the scope of this booklet, too.

However, the scriptural example of apostle does provide a biblical basis for church leadership beyond the walls of the local church. To advance the gospel, we need missionaries and church planters going into new territories. Also, there is a need for leadership that provides for national and international cooperation between churches. The apostles of the early Church provided direction, counsel, and leadership to local churches. They also “webbed” local churches together by being a conduit for meeting financial needs of needy churches and people. As in the first century, there is still a need today for national and international leadership to help local churches and ministries participate in the Great Commission. However, this subject is beyond the scope of this booklet, too. Instead, this writing will focus on leadership within the local church.

## 2. Deacon and Deaconess

The Greek word *diakonos* is translated “deacon” in 1 Timothy 3:8,12. However, the word is used much more often throughout the New Testament. It is used in many passages and translated “servant” or “minister.” *Diakonos* referred to someone who executes the commands of another, especially of a master or of a king. Church tradition considered the selection of seven men by the church in Jerusalem to wait on widow’s tables (Acts 6:1-7), to be the first deacons of the early Church. This important task was soon formalized to become an official office in the local church.

The Scriptures seem to hint that the office of a deacon is open to women. Phoebe is labeled a *diakonos* in Romans 16:1. She was on a special errand for Paul, serving the apostle. Also, it seems that the qualifications of a “deaconess” are listed in 1 Timothy 3:11. There is debate whether or not this verse refers to “deaconesses” or the “wives of deacons.” Since there are no qualifications listed in the passage for the wives of overseers, which seems to be more important, then it is logical to assume that 1 Timothy 3:11 is referring to “deaconesses” rather than “wives of deacons.”

Deacons did not seem to have a teaching role. There is no qualification that they must be able to teach. Nor did they have a role of church authority. A deacon is a recognized position in the church assigned to an important task in the church. They were servants to the church, under the leadership of the pastors. The office of deacon emphasizes “service,” rather than “leadership” or “authority.”

There is only one clear kind of leader in the local church that is invested with spiritual authority and they are the pastors.

### 3. Pastor

The term “overseer” (*episkopos*), sometimes translated “bishop,” is one of five words used in the New Testament to describe church leaders invested with authority. “Elders” (*presbyteroi*) is by far the most common. Other terms such as “rulers” (*proistamenoi*, Romans 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:12), “leaders” (*hēgoumenois*, Heb. 13:17) and “pastors” (*poimenas*, Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) are also used. Though each of these terms may describe a different facet of leadership, they all seem to be used inter-

changeably in the New Testament to designate the same office. We realize that some churches have taken the view that pastors and elders are not interchangeable. However, our view in Great Commission churches is that elders and pastors refer to the same individuals.

The “interchangeableness” of these words is seen most easily in the following passages.

*“To the elders (presbyteroi) 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: Be shepherds (poimenas) of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers (episkopos)—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve” (1 Peter 5:1-2).*

*“From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders (presbyteroi) of the church. ‘Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (episkopos). Be shepherds (poimenas) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood’” (Acts 20:17, 28).*

These words seem to be referring not to different leaders, but to the different responsibilities of a church leader. There was no leadership hierarchy in local New Testament churches. There were no bishops over ministers. No pastors over a board of elders. No board of elders over a pastor. No senior pastors over associate pastors. The organizational chart of the local New Testament church seemed quite flat.

What is also striking about the passage in Acts 20 is that when Paul needed to give this very important message to build believers in Ephesus, he called for the elders as a group. He did not call for the pastor of the church to meet him in Miletus. In

a similar way, Paul addresses the church in Philippi in the first chapter and verse of Philippians:

*“...to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons...”*

This passage suggests that the overseers (elders) as a whole group were the ones who were responsible in the church—not just one man.

Some churches in America have chosen an organizational chart with elders on the financial board overseeing an elder on full-time staff, who is called the pastor. The reason for this is that there is a desire to clarify and distinguish roles and responsibilities in the leadership team. Elders who have a secular job do not want to have too much pressure for the day-to-day operation of the church programs. And the elder on staff wants to have his vocational responsibilities and job description made crystal clear by having a different title than the other elders.

Although we understand these real life issues, in Great Commission churches, we generally have not taken this approach. In our association of churches, we consider elder and overseer and pastor to be interchangeable terms in the Scriptures—and it was the elders as a whole who led the church. We have chosen not to make distinctions among the elder team (pastor versus elder) based upon where they get their full-time paycheck. It seems from the Scripture that the elders as a group actively led the church—with the possibility that some elders would be paid a full-time salary for their work:

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

So, rather than designating some as elders and another person as a pastor, churches in Great Commission instead will typically make it known to the church that some of the elders (pastors) are on staff and some are not. This way the simplicity of the New Testament organizational structure is preserved with a church led by a plurality of elder-pastors, while at the same time different roles and responsibilities for the day-to-day ministry of the church are recognized.

## **Pastor? Bishop? Elder? Leader?**

In my home, I am a “husband.” I am also a “father.” I am also called the “breadwinner.” And when my wife tells the children they are in trouble she declares, “Just wait until your father gets home!” I am also known as the “Rule Enforcer.” At times, I am also referred to as the “Repairer of Broken Things.”

Even though I have different titles, I am the same person. Each title succinctly captures the important work that I do in my household. In the same way, there are four different titles that the New Testament church leader is given that summarize the important work that a church leader is assigned.

### **1. Elder**

*“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust” (Acts 14:23).*

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

*“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” (Titus 1:5).*

*“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” (1 Peter 5:1).*

*“You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders” (1 Peter 5:5).*

The Greek word *presbuteros* was used in first century culture to distinguish an older person. It often came with a sense of authority. In the Jewish nation, “elders” described the heads of tribes, families, and the synagogue. In the first church, the term came to indicate the church leader’s maturity of spiritual experience.

This is the predominant New Testament term to describe local church leadership. This term reflects the spiritual maturity of the church leader. It is very important that the church leader be an example for his people. God’s people need a living example to be able to grasp the practical implications of spiritual growth. Spiritual maturity should not be confused with physical maturity. While it does take time to grow in Christ and obtain a level of spiritual maturity, the growing process need not take a lot of time. Young men who are wholeheartedly devoted to Jesus, who are daily picking up their cross, denying themselves, and following their Lord, can grow very quickly.

Older men who have been Christians a long time, but are not walking closely with the Lord can remain spiritually stunted because they have not allowed Jesus full lordship in their lives. Spiritual maturity and physical maturity do not automatically go



hand-in-hand. While it is true that wisdom comes with time and life experience, a young man who is fully dependent on God and becomes a vessel for the Holy Spirit can become a vibrant leader in the local church. The early church in Jerusalem was led by young men, probably in their twenties.

At the same time, we recognize that there is a strong correlation between wisdom and age. Men who walk with God over a long period of time will usually have more maturity than those who are younger. And men who are older will normally receive more respect than those who are younger physically. Having said that, it is clear from the Scriptures that men were appointed as elders in the church not because of their age, but because of their Christ-like character.

The big idea of the term “elder” is spiritual maturity.

## 2. Overseer (Bishop)

*“Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach”* (1 Timothy 3:2).

*“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons”* (Philippians 1:1).

*“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”* (Titus 1:7).

The Greek word *episkopos* is defined as a man charged with the duty of seeing that those things that are to be done by others are done rightly. An overseer is comparable to a curator,

guardian, or superintendent. He is to oversee and to govern a local church. There are many moving parts to a fully functioning church. There are also many crucial decisions that need to be made. A church leader needs to be able to step back and see the big picture. He needs to be able to keep the moving parts working well and make crucial and timely decisions so that the local church lives up to its redemptive potential.

The big idea of the term “overseer” is taking responsibility for the care and management of the church.

### 3. Pastor (Shepherd)

*“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11).*

*“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: 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” (1 Peter 5:1-2).*

The Greek word *poimen* is translated “shepherd.” It made its way into the English language through the Old English and French languages. The English gave us the word shepherd, but the French gave us the word pastor. But both have the same root and refer to the same position. This title reflects the work of a pastor to “shepherd” his flock. In the first century, the image and work of a shepherd was very vivid and apparent. The shepherd was responsible for feeding the flock. He was to scout out the land and lead the flock to good pasture and plentiful water. In this way he fed the flock. He also protected the flock from savage predators. He nursed sick sheep back to health, and he sought out

straying sheep in hopes of bringing them back to the fold.

In the same way, a pastor is to feed the flock. His primary responsibility is to teach the Word of God, but his duty to his people does not end with teaching. He also is to warn his people against false teaching, expel spiritual predators from the flock, tenderly care for spiritually sick people, and seek out lost people. The work of a pastor is very challenging.

The big idea of the term “pastor” is tending, feeding, and protecting the flock.

#### 4. Leader (Ruler)

God’s people are compared to sheep for a reason. They need to be led. Sheep without a shepherd are scattered and easily harmed. There are two important Greek words that help capture the spirit of church leadership.

First, the Greek word *hegeomai* is defined:

1. to lead. 1A to go before. 1B to be a leader. 1B1 to rule, command. 1B2 to have authority over. 1B3 a prince, of regal power, governor, viceroy, chief, leading as respects influence, controlling in counsel, overseers or leaders of the churches. 1B4 used of any kind of leader, chief, commander. 1B5 the leader in speech, chief, spokesman.<sup>ii</sup>

The following verses use this word:

*“Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers”* (Acts 15:22).

*“Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Con-*

*sider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith*" (Hebrews 13:7).

*"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"* (Hebrews 13:17).

*"Greet all your leaders and all God's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings"* (Hebrews 13:24).

The second important Greek word, *proistemi* is defined literally "to stand before," hence to lead, to attend to (indicating care and diligence) is translated "to rule."

The following verses use this word:

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

*"If it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully"* (Romans 12:8).

*"He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church)"* (1 Timothy 3:5)?

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

In the New Testament, those who lead are called to be servants—but they are also called to lead. The big idea of the term "leader" is initiating with authority through a servant-like heart.

## Concluding Thoughts

In the New Testament, the church was led by a group of men who were referred to as pastors, elders, overseers, or leaders. Different names were used to describe the same group of church leaders. These men led the church in a way that inspired people to follow their lead. They followed their lead because they were men of character—which is the focus of the next chapter.

BELIEF 3

## The Biblical Qualifications of a Pastor Are Based on Christ-like Character

BRENT KNOX

I have noticed how parents are very picky on whom they choose to watch their children. Loving parents will only entrust their children to the care of reliable and faithful babysitters. Yet God cares for His children a lot more than even loving human parents. His children are extremely precious to Him—so precious that He paid for us in blood, and not with jewels or precious stones. Therefore, God does not wish to have an unfit person of questionable character take care of His precious children.

There are two very clear and important passages that outline the qualifications of a pastor.

*“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into*

*the devil's trap*" (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

*"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. 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. 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. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:5-9).*

If you have ever wondered what spiritual maturity looks like, then take a close look at these two passages. Paul paints a great picture of spiritual maturity. Every Christian ought to measure themselves by these character traits because God wants every Christian to be spiritually mature. A pastor is to be a spiritually mature person, demonstrated by godly character. Jesus said, *"By their fruit you will recognize them"* (Matthew 7:15-20). Therefore, the qualification of pastor is based on observed character.

This is not to say that a pastor has no more need to grow. Every pastor still has a long, long way to go until he is like Christ! But these lists of character traits describe a spiritual adult. In a sense, these lists describe the desired qualities of a man when he turns twenty-one, when he becomes an adult. Just as a man still has many more years to mature after his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, so does a pastor have many more years to mature when he reflects these basic character traits. Even pastors need to grow!

Also, this does not mean that a pastor won't sin or make

mistakes. Actually the most important character quality that a man needs to have in leadership is humility, worked out in a solid faith in the grace of God. A pastor who admits his failures and his mistakes is a breath of fresh air to a congregation. When he confesses his failures, the focus in the church is on the grace of God, not the spiritual achievements of the pastor. Paul was the greatest sinner because he persecuted the church in its infancy (1 Timothy 1:15). Peter denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:61). John Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas when they needed his help (Acts 13:13). Yet God worked through each of these men after their failures because their trust was not in their performance, but in the forgiveness and grace of God.

We believe that men who live in the grace of God consistently will develop in Christ-like character over time. Biblically qualified pastors are to meet the qualifications listed in these two passages. While this seems obvious, this is not universally practiced in the modern Western church. In many situations, pastors are recognized or ordained based on their education or their gift, not on their character.

Career choices follow a familiar path. If you want to be a mechanical engineer, then attend a good technical college and pursue a degree in mechanical engineering. If you want to be a nurse, then attend a nursing college and pursue the qualifications of a registered nurse. This “career path” thinking exists in the Church, too. If you want to be a pastor, then choose a Bible school or seminary and pursue the necessary degree. While Bible schools and seminaries are fine options for men and women aspiring to the ministry, this path could potentially perpetuate the spiritual myth that a good education equals spiritual maturity.



Over the past few decades, Christians have recognized more and more that spiritual knowledge does not equal maturity. Bible schools and seminaries are making greater efforts to provide mentoring and ministry opportunities to develop the character of students as well as “distance learning” classes to those who are actively doing ministry in the local church where their character can be formed. Nonetheless, it is unfortunate that many churches still put more emphasis on a man’s education than his character in recognizing and ordaining him as a pastor. This common practice has allowed spiritual weakness to enter the pulpit.

Spiritual knowledge does not equal spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity begins with spiritual knowledge, but it does not equal maturity. In Great Commission churches, we consider it very important that pastors know the Scriptures well. The general practice is that pastors in Great Commission will daily immerse themselves in the Word of God over many, many years. Some, in addition, have taken classes at Bible school or seminary. Whatever path they take, we expect all pastors to be men who know the Word of God. So, you need to know biblical truth in order to grow, but you need to consistently *obey* biblical truth over time in order to mature.

A man needs to believe who he is in Christ—that he is forgiven, that he is a new creation, that he has the Holy Spirit—in order for him to experience a changed life. Not everyone who knows these truths believes these truths. Being a pastor is very different from being a mechanical engineer. You can be a good engineer without solid character. A good engineer needs knowledge more than character. Not so with being a pastor. An effective pastor must demonstrate the character of Christ.

If church leaders are to have a great impact on other people, then they must walk their talk. Imagine for a moment, sitting under my teaching in a local church. What would you think if you listened to me give a message entitled “How to Have a Great Marriage” and yet you knew I couldn’t even come to church with my wife because we didn’t get along very well? In reality, I probably would not even speak on the subject of marriage. I couldn’t. Because I knew I would be a hypocrite. Therefore, I would remain silent on the subject of marriage, and this critical subject would be shelved in the life of the church. Or, I would suggest to the church to attend a marriage conference where they could listen to a different speaker. However, a subtle, yet clear, message is sent to the church—the truth about marriage is not worth obeying because the pastor does not bother to obey it himself.

Imagine if I were prone to quarrel. Imagine if I loved to start arguments, spar in verbal battles, and basically dominate people. What would you think if I gave a message about cultivating great relationships? What if one of my main points is to be a peacemaker? What would you think? Even if my message were accurate and biblical, if I were not an example of what I taught, then my message would have little impact. Effective teachers must live lives that are an example to their people.

Church leaders are called to be living examples!

*“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; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2-3).*

People need to see a living example. They need to see someone who obeys the words of God. If someone is teaching some-

thing but not living it, what is that called? What is the leaven of the Pharisees? It is hypocrisy.

*“Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: ‘Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy’” (Luke 12:1).*

Hypocrisy is like yeast in a lump of dough. It spreads. If a pastor does not walk the talk, then hypocrisy spreads to the entire church. The entire church soon begins to understand that Jesus’ words are to be admired, but not necessary to obey.

A pastor has one of the few jobs in the world where his personal life greatly impacts his ability to gain respect from those he leads. A few years ago, a friend described a crisis that occurred at his public relations firm. His boss had announced that he was homosexual and was leaving his wife and children for a male lover. The office was in an uproar! Several of the employees began to have a difficult time respecting and responding to the boss. So the company brought in a psychologist to help the office staff learn how to accept the lifestyle choice of their boss and to accept one another’s differences. The basic message of the seminar was: “The lifestyle choice of your boss is none of your business. What you do on your own time is your own business. As long your personal choices, or your boss’s personal choices, don’t interfere with your work, then what you do in private is no one else’s business. So lighten up and get back to work and be open-minded about the sexual preferences of your boss. His private life is none of your business.”

The truth is that a leader’s personal life does affect the people he leads, whether that person is leading in the marketplace or

in the church. As a practical reality, people are quicker to see the link between private life and public leadership in the church than in the secular workplace. A pastor's personal life greatly influences his work. The teaching of a pastor is extremely personal. God calls us to obey in the most private and personal areas of our life and a pastor's teaching should address these personal issues. A pastor is required to teach the whole counsel of God. To teach effectively, he should be an example of holiness and obedience in his personal life. A pastor's personal life makes him or breaks him as a leader in his congregation.

Again, this does not mean that a pastor must be perfect. We are all progressing towards maturity in Christ. We are all going from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). But a pastor is one that is respected by the congregation as an "older one"—an elder whose character is worth imitating.

Pastors are called to be living examples for their people. This is why the biblical qualifications for a pastor are based on character. Yet churches across this country have tended to value education over character when making a decision of ordaining or hiring a pastor. This may be the biggest reason why the Church is weak in America.

After carefully polling people all over the country, one of the startling and sad findings of George Barna is that there is very little lifestyle and moral differences between born again, evangelical Christians and people who are non-believers. Why is this? Some have speculated that there are many false converts sitting in pews in America who think they are Christians, when in fact they are devoid of the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, some people think that preachers need to preach a purer gospel.

Other people speculate that the unusually prosperous country in which we live is short-circuiting the lives of Christians. The love of money and the desire for other things has choked out the Word of God, making it unfruitful.

While these reasons have validity, I think Christians are weak in America because churches are weak. And churches are weak because the pastors are weak. And pastors are weak, because the qualifications for being a pastor are often ignored or overlooked.

Sadly, we continue to place many people into the ministry who are unqualified. Unfortunately, the Western Church has become too much like a business. While there is much to learn from successful business practices, there are important distinctions between a church and a business that must be kept in mind. If a business needs to fill a position, what is the process in which that position is filled? Qualified candidates are sought through advertising and word-of-mouth. Resumes are accepted. Human resources will study resumes and select a few for interviews. Extensive interviews are conducted. Then a hire is made. Many churches select pastors based on the same process. If a church needs to find a pastor, a pulpit committee is formed to do the hard work of sifting through and selecting potential pastors. Qualified candidates are acquired through advertising and word-of-mouth. Resumes are accepted. The pulpit committee will study resumes and select a few for interviews. Extensive interviews are conducted. A few sample sermons are given. Then a hire is made.

While it is true that God has used this approach in many positive ways in churches throughout the years, there is a general weakness with this typical process. How can a church tell

if a man is qualified, according to the Bible? How can a church tell, through a resume, or a sample sermon, or an interview, if the man is a man of character? How can the pulpit committee conclude that a man “*is not overbearing*” or “*not given to anger*” or “*manage his household well*”? Education can be seen on a resume. Experience can be seen on a resume, but character cannot be seen on a resume. Education can be noticed in an interview or a sample sermon. Experience and gifting can be noticed in an interview or a sample sermon, but a personal private life is usually not revealed through such a process.

As a result local churches are vulnerable, potentially led by educated yet unqualified people. Whatever the leaders are, the people become. Jesus said it this way: “*A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher*” (Luke 6:40). Students tend to become like their teachers, not like what their teachers teach.

Alexander Strauch, in his book, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, commented on this glaring need in American churches:

*“The most common mistake made by churches that are eager to implement eldership is to appoint biblically unqualified men. Because there is always a need for more shepherds, it is tempting to allow unqualified, unprepared men to assume leadership in the church. This is, however, a time-proven formula for failure: A biblical eldership requires biblically qualified elders.”*<sup>iii</sup>

The Bible puts it this way:

*“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure”* (1 Timothy 5:22).

Perhaps many hasty ordinations are done because churches

continue to confuse education with maturity.

Doesn't the qualifications "*able to teach*" and "*hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it*" imply Bible knowledge? Isn't a good, solid Bible education important? Yes. Men should know the Bible well in order to use the Bible well. Almost any type of Bible education is good, if it is balanced, accurate, and emphasizes obedience, but again, I want to stress—Bible education does not insure character! A person must obey what he knows. And when he obeys and grows in character, he becomes an influential person.

*"The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life"* (Proverbs 10:11).

*"The tongue of the righteous is choice silver"* (Proverbs 10:20).

*"The lips of the righteous nourish many"* (Proverbs 10:21).

There are advantages of a formal, biblical education. It can be a very helpful biblical orientation for a leader before he embarks on a lifetime of ministry. Also, a degree might help a pastor relate to the culture. Since education is valued, some people will have a greater confidence in a pastor if there is a "sheepskin" from a Bible school or seminary hanging in his office. But keep in mind, a seminary degree is not a biblical qualification.

The most important decision church leaders can make is who will be a pastor. This decision will make or break our churches. The wrong decision can set back a church for years. The right decision will lead to great blessings in the church and in the community. This is a decision worth lingering over. It is a decision worth praying and fasting over. Jesus prayed all night on the mountain before He chose the Twelve. It is a decision that

must be based on Christlike character, and character can only be seen over a long period of time. Do we know the men well enough to know their character?

This leads us to the next crucial leadership belief. How can a church really tell if a potential pastor is really qualified? How can a church tell if a man really is a man of character? This question is answered in the next chapter.



## BELIEF 4

## New Pastors Are to Be Developed from Within the Congregation

BRENT KNOX

I see this belief from what Paul wrote to a leader named Titus.

*“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town”* (Titus 1:5).

Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete? There was unfinished business in the churches in the towns of Crete, and part of that business was to appoint new pastors in every church in those towns. These new pastors came from within these churches.

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they appointed new pastors from those churches.

*“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust”* (Acts 14:23).

In Great Commission Churches, our practice has been to develop and appoint pastors from within the congregation. Although there have been some situations where ministry staff were hired from outside the church, our practice is to work with the Holy Spirit to raise up leaders from within the church. And the general practice in Great Commission churches is to appoint individuals as pastor-elders only after they have been part of that

congregation for a period of time.

There are two crucial advantages to appointing pastors that come from within the congregation.

## 1. The church knows the man

How can a church be assured that a potential pastor is a man of character? Character can only be evaluated over a long period of time. Anyone can appear like an angel over the course of a few minutes—especially if those few minutes are trouble-free minutes! As Jesus warned in the parable of the sower and seed, a person is revealed over time and trouble.

*“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means. . . . The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away” (Matthew 13:18, 20-21).*

A man’s character is seen best when tested by time and through the fires of difficulties. Any person can seem bright and shiny under the artificial light of interviews and sample sermons, but true character surfaces when trials come. When sickness invades his family, does the potential pastor respond with grace and patience? When a man is mistreated at work, does he respond with thankfulness, trusting in the sovereignty of God? When a man is pressed with many responsibilities, does he exert mastery over his schedule and seek God? When money is tight, does he continue to tithe and trust God for his financial future?

Family life also reveals a man’s character. A man might be able to cover over his own weaknesses and show his best side to people, but character flaws inevitably appear in the lives of his

wife and children. Does his wife enthusiastically respect him? Do his children respectfully obey him? Families can smell hypocrisy like a dead rat. Dad can shine himself up for the public, but his true character seeps out at home. If his children spot that he does not walk his talk, then they can become frustrated and angry. Children will not want to play the game they see dad playing. Rebellion will be manifested. His wife might continue to follow her husband, but it will be through clenched teeth.

One of the big reasons men step away from ministry is because of infidelity. Is the potential pastor a man of self-control? Does he have definite boundaries with the opposite sex? Is he completely clean of pornography? Is he self-controlled with food and alcohol? Unfortunately, these issues are private issues and are not easily seen, but a lack of self-control is a cancer to character. And these cancerous cells can only be detected if a man is intimately connected to a church and is being open, honest, and accountable to other men.

True character is only revealed over time, trials, and tight relationships. Paul hammers this point home in his instructions to Timothy.

*“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.... The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden” (1 Timothy 5:22, 24-25).*

Some men’s sins are obvious. Their sins are like a flashing neon light that says to the congregation, “Don’t entrust anything important to me.” But some men’s sins are private and occur away from the eyes of people. These men appear more than they

are. They appear to be spiritual and capable men, but have a secret, cancerous sin. Someday, at the place of judgment, their sins will come to light. Great care should be given to not lay hands (or appoint) pastors too quickly. Like cancer, time usually causes sin to exhibit itself.

Dennis Clark is one of the founders of Great Commission Churches. A few years ago, Dennis moved from a church in Maryland, which he was pastoring, to a new church in Denver, Colorado. When Dennis arrived in Denver, he was put on staff in the church, but he was not appointed as an elder immediately. Instead, the church waited 12 months before laying hands on Dennis. A question some might ask is, “Why would Dennis Clark, as founder of this movement, be expected to wait a year before being appointed as an elder in this church?” Because Dennis humbly recognized that a congregation cannot be expected to embrace a man as a pastor until they have had time to know him in the midst of life’s trials.

In the context of a functioning church, a man can be tested and approved by time, trials, and tight relationships. This is why pastors should be found from within the congregation. The church knows the man.

## **2. The man knows the church**

The second advantage for finding pastors from within the congregation is that the man already has strong relationships with people. Influence follows relationship. Once strong relationships are established, then influence can begin. Pastors who come from outside of the congregation will often spend years establishing strong relationships and building trust in order to shepherd ef-

fectively. Trust is vital. The bond between a congregation and the pastor is crucial and it is built on trust. Trust is not manufactured overnight. Trust is slowly constructed, piece-by-piece, over time.

But if a man has already been an active part of the congregation, then relationships and trust equity are already in place. Also, the man is already familiar with the strengths, weakness, challenges, and obstacles of the church. Additionally, the man can decipher the core values of the church. Each church is unique just as each Christian is unique. God has a special plan for each church to serve in His Kingdom in a unique way. This uniqueness can be described by the core values of the church. Each church has distinct values that define the church. Sometimes these values are clearly identified, but more often than not, these values are more caught than taught. It is important that a new pastor understands, cherishes, and lives out these core values of the church. Otherwise, there will be confusion, tension, and misunderstanding down the road. A man can only really grasp the core values of a local church if he lives in that church for a long period of time.

One criticism of appointing men from within the congregation is that the church may open itself up to become “barn blind.” Barn blind is a term for loving something so much you are blind to its faults. If a business is not doing well, sometimes a new CEO is brought in from the outside to shake things up and give a new perspective. Outside eyes can see faults that inside eyes cannot see. While this is a valid point, pastors who listen carefully to outsiders can overcome “barn blindness.” Pastors need to be constant learners. The admonitions from the Book of Proverbs are clear—wisdom comes from getting counsel. Therefore, wise pastors learn from others. They read, attend conferences, and ask

questions. Of course, they seek God. The best wisdom comes from asking God, studying the Bible, and hearing His voice. They also carefully weigh the reasons why people leave their churches.

For over 30 years, pastors in Great Commission churches have been raised up from within their local churches. This practice has provided a practical way for the congregation to see whether or not a man truly has the Christ-like character needed to lead the church of God.

## BELIEF 5

## Pastors Are Not to Lead Alone

JOHN HOPLER

Many years ago, I went to a church growth conference. It was a tremendous time, as I learned a number of practical tips that I later used to help build my church. At one of the breaks, I went up front to talk to one of the speakers, who was asked this question by another conference attendee: "Have you seen churches growing strongly that practiced a plurality of elders model?" I will never forget the speaker's response. He said: "I see it in the Bible, but I have not seen it work."

Since its beginnings in 1970, Great Commission churches have sought to practice a plurality of leadership model. We have not been perfect in this process. And we have much more to learn, but we can say this: A plurality of elders model, as described in the Bible, *does* work.

While the Bible does not command the practice of plural leadership, the belief was practiced in the New Testament. For instance, Jesus did not appoint one man to lead His Church. He personally appointed and trained twelve men to lead the early Church. The Twelve comprised the first leadership council of the church in Jerusalem. Most early New Testament churches were led by a plurality of pastors (1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 14:23;

20:17, 28; Titus 1:5; Philippians 1:1; James 5:14). Even Paul did not travel alone. He traveled and ministered as a team with others (Acts 13:1, 15:35; 1 Corinthians 16:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

After Mark Darling and Brent Knox founded Evergreen Community Church, they attended a metrowide, interdenominational pastor's meeting. As they introduced themselves to several pastors, one asked, "Which of you is the senior pastor?" They replied, "Neither of us. We pastor together as co-equals." He looked at them quizzically. "Co-equals? Who submits to whom?" They answered, "We submit to one another, as Ephesians 5:21 teaches." He raised his eyebrow. "Then how do you make decisions and how do you get anything done?" Brent responded that decision-making wasn't always easy, but making decisions together, as co-equals, always ended with greater depth and wisdom. He was intrigued. "We need to have you make a presentation on this unusual kind of leadership." Brent and Mark realized then that a leadership plurality of co-equals was a rarity in most churches!

Why is the belief of plurality of leaders important? What are the benefits of a "council of equals?" There are eight important benefits.

## **1. Jesus Christ is exalted**

Nothing is more important in a local church than bringing glory to Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of each local church. He is the One who is building the Church. When a plurality of elders—rather than one man—is leading, it helps the congregation to focus their eyes on the true leader of the church: Jesus



Christ.

The temptation in the American culture is to have a superstar mentality. We look for heroes in sports, entertainment, and in politics. And this mentality carries over into the church, where *the* pastor is often looked to as a superstar to people in the congregation. But for Christians, there is really only one superstar: His name is Jesus Christ. By distributing the leadership responsibility to a group of under-shepherds, the congregation is more likely to avoid putting one person on a pedestal.

Christ is exalted when a church is praying and when the church is teaching the Word. When leaders are empowered to pray and teach, it becomes apparent to all that Jesus Christ—not any one individual—is the real leader of the church. The plurality model helps the pastor’s focus on this main activity of prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). If the church is primarily a business organization, then it makes sense to have one leader to be in charge of the whole church so that the church can be organized. If the church is a living organism, however, empowered by the Holy Spirit, then the main activities will be prayer and teaching the living Word of God, to people publicly, in small groups, and one-on-one.

## 2. Humility and love become the “main thing”

Jesus said, *“The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves”* (Luke 22:26) and, *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35).

Here is a question for you: What is the most important quality in a leader? According to Jesus, it is not his speaking ability or

his organizational skills, but his humility and his love.

Here is a second question: In a single pastor model, what quality in the leader gets highlighted? Is it not his speaking ability or his organizational skills? But in a plurality model, what gets promoted? Is it not the love and humility of the elders toward each other?

In Great Commission Churches, we use the term “submissive plurality” to describe this Spirit-led relationship whereby elders are servants to each other. In a submissive plurality, Ephesians 5:21 occurs in the context of church leadership: “*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*” Pastors are to be living examples to the flock, including in the area of submission.

Brent Knox vividly remembers using his relationship with co-pastor Mark Darling to counsel married couples who were struggling. He exhorted couples, “If Mark Darling and I can work together, even though we are so different, then you can learn to love one another, even though you are so different. I am not asking you to do anything more than I am doing—not only in my marriage, but in my working relationship with others.”

Several years ago, Mark Bowen, one of the pastors at Evergreen Community Church in Minneapolis, was asked this question, “Why has Evergreen been such a fruitful church?” His response was interesting. He did not talk about the church’s advertising program, or its music team, or its small group ministry (although all of these are excellent features of the church). Rather, Mark pointed to the commitment made by two of its pastors, Mark Darling and Brent Knox, to love one another as co-elders, despite differences in outlooks and personalities. This love for one another as men working within a plurality of elders

was a model to the entire church, resulting in a very fruitful and effectively managed church.

One exciting testimony in this regard is what God has done in the marriages of members in Great Commission churches over the past 40 years. While the divorce rate among Americans (and Christians in general) is reportedly around 30%, the divorce rate in Great Commission churches is miniscule—estimated at below 3%. One reason for this is that the congregation has seen, lived out year after year, a plurality of elders who have learned to submit to one another. These are strong leaders who are “persevering in plurality” —sticking it out relationally as an example to the couples in the church. A culture and standard exists in Great Commission churches of resolving conflicts at the leadership level—which has a trickle-down effect in every marriage in the church.

### 3. Mutual accountability

If you have been a student of world history, you may have come across this statement by the English historian, Lord Acton. As he studied monarchies and dictators over the history of the world, he concluded:

*“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”*

He saw a correlation between power and sin. In other words, the more power a person has, the more likely he is to sin. We have seen this belief at work in government, in business, and even in the family. We have been disappointed by corrupt politicians, nasty bosses, and abusive fathers, but we shouldn’t be surprised.

There is something about power that stirs up sinful flesh.

There is something about our sinful nature that gets energized when we are given power. As a general rule, the more power a person is given, without accountability, the greater potential there is to sin. The better we understand the doctrine of sin, the stronger our commitment to accountability and plurality of leadership. Every person in a position of power needs checks and balances.

The Founding Fathers of our country designed our government with the failure and oppression of European monarchies in mind. While our government isn't perfect, it has checks and balances in place. The Judicial, Executive, and Legislative branches of the government of the United States have shared authority. Each branch of government was carefully designed to lead this country in plurality. Each branch has shared power, not complete power. This type of government was revolutionary in the history of the world and the fruits bear out its wisdom. People, as well as governments, need checks and balances.

*“Power is like saltwater; the more you drink the thirstier you get. The lure of power can separate the most resolute of Christians from the true nature of Christian leadership, which is service to others. It’s difficult to stand on a pedestal and wash the feet of those below.”* — Chuck Colson, *Kingdoms in Conflict*.<sup>iv</sup>

When Paul gathered the pastors of the church at Ephesus together, his first command to them reflects the belief of plurality.

*“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”* (Acts 20:28).

The first command to the Ephesian elders is to “keep watch over yourselves.” The Greek word for “keep watch” is translated in

other places as “guard, beware, and pay attention.” This is the first responsibility of pastors of a church. Obviously this is a difficult command to obey if you are leading alone. Paul is directing this command to a team of pastors. He is insisting that they first keep careful watch over themselves. This is a command for accountability. Because of our sinful nature, it isn’t wise to allow men to lead churches alone.

Don’t we all have flaws? Don’t we all have weaknesses? Are we not sometimes blind to our own faults and flaws? Don’t our flaws and weaknesses sometimes distort our judgment? Do we really want to entrust the church to one person? Hasn’t Christian history confirmed to us that talented leaders have destroyed themselves and their flocks because they had no peers to confront and balance them?

*“To be a lone chief atop a pyramid is abnormal and corrupting. None of us are perfect by ourselves, and all of us need the help and correcting influences of close colleagues. When someone is moved atop a pyramid, that person no longer has colleagues, only subordinates. Even the frankest and bravest of subordinates do not talk with their boss in the same way they talk with colleagues who are equals, and normal communication patterns become warped.” - Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*<sup>v</sup>*

Left to ourselves, we tend to do what we want to do, not what we should do or what is best for others. This is especially true if we are under stress. When under stress, we look for easy ways out. Stress might come from facing tense and confrontational situations with church members. Therefore we tend to avoid unpleasant confrontation. We need prompting from spiritual peers to do what we need to do and say what we need to say. We have had fellow pastors challenge us about our parenting and

exhort us about our teaching. This sharpening would not have occurred unless they had the freedom that comes with being a co-equal. Without a doubt, our relationship with our fellow pastors has been a great tool God has used for our own personal development.

*“Within an eldership (council of equals) extreme ideas are tempered, harsh judgments moderated, and doctrinal imbalances corrected. If one elder shows prejudice toward, or personal dislike for any person, in or outside the church, the others can correct that and insist on fair play and justice. If one elder is in a fierce mood over some offender, that offender has others to whom he can appeal.” - Erroll Hulse, editor of Reformation Today<sup>vi</sup>*

#### **4. The leadership burden is spread among multiple people**

Another important benefit of leadership plurality is that the heavy burden of leadership is spread over numerous people. Leading a church is a weighty burden! The occupation of a pastor is a very honorable work, but it is a very difficult work. It can be a very costly work. The greatest reason for disability among the clergy is the emotional instability caused by stress.

Pastors in Great Commission churches are so grateful that they share co-equal leadership with other men at their church. They are relieved that they share the pulpit a large percentage of the time. They find that they need an emotional break from teaching to recharge their batteries and hear freshly from God. Great Commission pastors are thankful that they don't have to respond to every invitation and attend every social function. There are other men who are not only their equals, but are their equals in

the eyes of the church. These men carry the same spiritual weight. They are relieved that they share the burden of providing counsel and comfort for people in distress. They are comforted by the fact that they are not the only hooks on which the church is hanging. Pastors don't have to be emotionally "up" all the time when they enter the doors. Because of plurality, they can be real and authentic and avoid the temptation of putting on a mask. When they are down, other pastors are up! Plurality of leadership is a great relief for pastors in Great Commission churches!

*"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Isn't the wisdom of Solomon true? Two are better than one. It is true in all aspects of life, including leading the church.

## **5. Balanced building of the church**

The fifth benefit of leadership plurality is a more rounded edification of the church. There are great differences between pastors. There are spiritual gift differences, personality differences, temperament differences, and even maturity differences. What would happen to a church if the church was led and taught by only one man? Students tend to become like teachers. *"A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher"* (Luke 6:40). Over time, the church becomes like the pastor, complete with his strengths and weaknesses. No pastor is perfectly balanced. But if a plurality of pastors leads and feeds the

flock, the church is led and fed by a team of pastors that balance and compensate one another's strengths and weaknesses. The church is equipped in a more balanced way. Also, decision-making is more reasoned. Each person views the world from their own mountain peak. While their view is valid, it isn't complete. A plurality of pastors often wrestles with clashing personal views on matters and usually arrives at more well rounded decisions, than if decisions were made single-handedly.

## 6. Leadership development

In Great Commission churches we have seen that a plurality of elders model helps inspire other men to lead. Jesus said, *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field"* (Matthew 9:37-38). The message from the Lord is clear: We need more leaders! People need to hear the message of the gospel—and we need more workers who will go out into the harvest.

A plurality of elders model demonstrates to the congregation not only that any man can become a worker in the gospel, but also that leaders have different gifts and different personalities. Some leaders are introverts; some are extroverts. Some pastors are great counselors. Others are great administrators. Some excel in the gift of mercy. Other pastors are strong exhorters. Merely by having a variety of pastors in a church, you expand the number of potential leaders in the congregation who can identify with the gifting, effect, and personality of someone who is leading the church.

In addition, the plurality of elders model is a great way for raising up young "next generation" leaders. In Great Commis-



sion churches we have always had a focus on reaching the next generation, particularly on college campuses. We have found that young leaders being brought into a community of elders will grow much more quickly, simply because they have many pastors from whom to learn. Also, young potential leaders are motivated to persevere in a church through the process of character development rather than taking a job somewhere else, because they know that when the process is done, they will not just be a “youth pastor,” but a co-elder in the church.

## **7. Church planting and smooth leadership transitions**

Leadership plurality allows for easier leadership transitions. Churches may find themselves in a dilemma if a church has enjoyed the teaching and leadership of one main pastor for many years and the pastor retires or is led to church-plant or to another ministry, then it is difficult to find an adequate replacement. Often churches will experience a huge loss of momentum when the popular pastor moves on. But if the church has experienced a true plurality of teaching and leading pastors over the years, and then one of the pastors leaves, the leadership transition is far easier.

Great Commission churches are a relatively young movement of churches, largely led by baby boom pastors. Many of our pastors are aging. Over the next 20-30 years, many current pastors will be disabled or will be with the Lord in Heaven. Leadership transitions might be difficult. If existing pastors entered into co-equal plurality with younger men, then future leadership transitions would be easier.

Also, church-planting transitions would be smoother. Often times churches plant new churches with the youngest and least

experienced pastors. Why? It is difficult to let go of the older, main pastor with whom the church is dependent. But if there is a true, co-equal leadership team in place, the older pastor may feel greater freedom to plant a church himself.

## **8. United for the Great Commission**

Perhaps the most precious value of a plurality of elders model is that it develops men who will be united with other elders regionally, nationally, and internationally for fulfilling the Great Commission. When a new church is started, the elders from both churches still maintain a fellowship together, cooperating together for the mission. The unity that they had within the church is simply continued as co-laborers in different churches.

It is hard to describe how wonderful the fellowship of the pastors is in the Great Commission churches. We are a band of brothers, working together for the greatest cause in the world: The Great Commission of Jesus Christ. We gather together in regional meetings, for prayer and encouragement. We pray for each other, for our families, our churches, and the gospel to multiply in our regions. We gather together as leaders and as humble servants, we become cheerleaders for each other. Our love and loyalty towards each other keeps us going in the battle we are fighting for the souls of men (see Appendix #3 for the covenant Great Commission pastors make to God and to each other).

This fellowship of brothers is one that is developed initially in the local church, and is strengthened and maintained through regional gatherings. So, the plurality of elders model is important for building an army of leaders that will work together for reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Leadership among the elders

Although the Bible describes the principle of plurality, there is recognition that in many cases one individual will provide servant leadership to the community of elders. Pastors who act jointly as a council of equals and share authority and responsibility for the leadership of the church will have differences in their giftedness, biblical knowledge, leadership ability, experience, or dedication.

1. Among the Twelve, Peter, James, and John had a unique role with Jesus. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, Paul speaks of James, Peter, and John as the "acknowledged 'pillars' of the church in Jerusalem" (Galatians 2:9).
2. Among the three, Peter seemed to have a primary role. In all four lists of the Apostles' names, Peter's name is first (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13). Matthew actually refers to Peter as "the first" (Matthew 10:2). Peter is a predominant leader in the early Church.
3. Although Paul and Barnabas were co-equal missionaries, Paul was known as the chief speaker (Acts 13:13-16; 14:12).
4. James was the apparent chairman of the Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15.

This pattern in the New Testament allows for one pastor to provide coordination or leadership within the pastors of the church, without creating an official, superior office over fellow pastors. A pastor might have that role because of his maturity, his giftedness, or because of his experience with the church. In particular, when a church is founded by a church planter who later

appoints elders to co-lead with him, it is natural for that founder to be given an added measure of authority and respect in eldership. The root of the word “authority” is the word “author.” That is, a person who authors, or starts, a church or family will naturally be seen as an authority to whatever he authors. So, a founding pastor who had the courage and faith to lead a church planting team will by virtue of this one fact be given special respect by the other elders and the congregation.

In churches in our association, there typically is a point person for the elder community. The elders maintain authority over the whole and together govern the entire church as a group, but the designated elder provides good management to the elder team. We have seen some churches stagnate because the elders as a group could not lead themselves. It is like a small group Bible study where there is no clarity as to how the group will function. So, it is vital for the proper functioning of a community of elders that there is clarity on how the elders will be led and managed as a group.

At the same time, this principle needs to be kept in balance with the “plurality of elders” principle. If not, there are two potential pitfalls. One, the other “associate” pastors might relinquish their God-given responsibilities. All of us have a lazy streak and would rather have someone tell us what to do rather than stand before God and figure out what to do. Second, the church may begin to respect the lead pastor and disrespect the other pastors. This may occur if the church interprets the other pastors as having little or no authority. Some church members may feel that their problems, concerns, or grievances cannot be adequately addressed until they speak with the lead pastor. Then the “legs” of the other pastors are cut out from under them.

*“Since all the elders will give an account, then all elders must grant to one another—and share together— ultimate responsibility for the church. That does not mean one man cannot be first among equals, or even be called a senior pastor. But he, and all elders, must recognize there is a responsibility they have that cannot be assigned to another. They are accountable before God for one another and for the church. If they relinquish that responsibility, they have failed as elders.” - John Meyer, Pastor at Summitview Community Church in Fort Collins, Colorado*

What about using different titles among the pastors? What about the titles “lead pastor” or “senior pastor” or similar title? There are a variety of approaches in Great Commission churches concerning the use of these terms. For some, a term like “lead pastor” is used in order to clearly identify the elder who is providing servant leadership to the community of elders, for the management of the affairs of the church. Other Great Commission churches want so much to communicate to the members that the church is led in plurality that they prefer to give all the pastors the same title, for example, in the church bulletin or website. Regardless of whether a lead pastor is identified publicly, the general standard for a Great Commission church is to function with a true and active plurality of elders.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

The belief of plurality is very important. At the heart of plurality is true, authentic, and operating accountability. However, some churches do not have the ability to have multiple pastors. In spite of that limitation, wise leadership will devise ways for true accountability to occur even if the church is being led by only one

person. For instance, Great Commission churches with one elder usually designate “elders in training” and a GCC regional director to give accountability to the lone elder.

Most churches have a designated pastor who provides good management to the community of elders. Some churches have a pastoral staff with a designated “lead pastor” or “senior pastor.” While there are a number of good reasons to use this term, this kind of leadership structure must be administered with great care. If too much power is given to the lead pastor (e.g. the unilateral ability to hire and fire associate pastors), then associate pastors will not have the freedom, or the courage, to challenge or confront a lead pastor in times of need. True accountability can only be constructed when people are truly co-equals and have co-authority in the church.

BELIEF 6

## Only Men Are to Be Elder-Pastors

JOHN HOPLER

I believe that God wants men to lead in the home and in the church. I also believe that God wants women to be encouraged and empowered for ministry in the church. And I also believe that God wants men—and men alone—to be pastor-elders.

This leadership belief is perhaps the most controversial. There is a difference of opinion in the Christian community regarding gender roles and church leadership. Many gospel-preaching churches have taken a different stance on this matter. For example, the highly influential Willow Creek Community Church has women elders. Also, many of the most influential Vineyard churches teach that women can be elders and senior pastors. However in Great Commission churches we have taken the position that only men are to be pastor-elders.

It seems to me that one motivation churches have in appointing women elders, or women pastors, is the general desire to bestow great honor on women. I agree heartily with this general desire. Galatians 3:28 indicates that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. Men and women in Christ are equally glorious in the sight of God. And we as His children are to show—er all believers—male and female—with respect and honor as

fellow heirs of the grace of life. In Great Commission churches our aspiration is that no woman will feel like she is a “second-class citizen.” Our desire is that every woman will know that she is respected—and that she is released to use her gifts and abilities to her full potential.

Why then do we take the view that only men are to be pastors? Doesn’t this limit women in the church? Isn’t this making them second-class citizens?

We understand why these questions are asked. At first glance, it could seem to some that having only male pastors is restrictive and dishonoring to women, but our view is that men and women will experience the most honor and reach their maximum potential when the Scriptures are followed. And our understanding of the Scriptures is that God has designed the family and the church to be led by men.

Let’s look at some of the biblical beliefs that form Great Commission Church’s opinion on this important issue. (Thank you to John Meyer for these thoughts.)

1. Rooted in God’s created purpose for men and women are distinctions between them intended to express the fullness of the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Those distinctions are revealed in Genesis chapters two and three, and other places in the Old and New Testament. Because both men and women share equally in expressing essential aspects of God’s image, the distinctions of manhood and womanhood are of equal value and equally important. The Scriptures teach that God desires differing, complementary expressions of human interdependence through the masculine and feminine in some areas of human life. It is through these



complementary interactions that the invisible Creator can reveal the fullness of His nature to His creation.

2. These complementary interactions, or roles, are most specifically described in two areas—marriage (and family) and spiritual leadership of God’s people.
  - a. Male headship in the family is described in both Old and New Testament teachings (Genesis 2:18-23; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19). God established Adam’s headship in his marriage to Eve before they sinned in the Garden of Eden and was not a result of the Fall. This indicates that the roles of loving leadership and united support are God’s Plan A, and that both of these roles are part of God’s perfect nature.
  - b. The masculine role of responsibility and leadership is also clearly assigned to males in both Israel and the Church. The high priest was male, and elders in the church are defined as male as well (1 Timothy 2:9-13; Titus 1:5-9). New Testament passages base this belief of male leadership both on God’s created image in men and women (Genesis 1:26-27), and in principles revealed in the Fall (Genesis 3), the clearest passage being found in 1 Timothy 2:12: *“I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.”* We understand from this that God is glorified when men faithfully assume responsibility to teach God’s truth to the church overall and lead the church into obedience to God’s will.
3. We must recognize, however, that the Fall introduced distortions into Adam and Eve’s relationship, and thus between men and women down through the ages. For exam-

ple, in the home God's command to the husbands is to be loving and humble in his position of headship. Because of the Fall, this attitude tends to be replaced by one of domination or passivity. Also, because of the Fall, God's command to the wife of intelligent, respectful submission tends to be replaced by resistance or fearful servitude. In the church, God's instruction to elders (pastors) is to guard the flock (Acts 20:28), and serve the church, never misusing their authority (1 Peter 5:1-4).

4. Our position in Jesus Christ as His Redeemed makes it clear that both males and females occupy an equally honorable position in the sight of God (Galatians 3:28). As we focus on this truth, distortions regarding differing roles are exposed. In the family, husbands are to forsake harsh or selfish leadership, and grow in love and care for their wives (1 Peter 3:7). Wives are to forsake resistance to their husband's authority and willingly respond to their leadership (1 Peter 3:1-2). In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation, as well as equal access to a fruitful life in serving Christ and in ministry opportunities. The only distinction is in the positions that require teaching or exercising authority over a man (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 2:12).
5. In every situation Jesus Christ is our supreme authority and His earthly example is a guide for both men and women. Therefore no earthly submission—domestic, religious, or civil—ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin. Leadership is to be an exercise in the imitation of Christ. Whether in the home or in the church, the goal of leadership is to serve others.

(NOTE: For a more comprehensive theological explanation on this subject read *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, published in 1991 by Crossway Books.)

The key question for a church is not: “Can women be pastors in the church?” The key question is “What is the best way to lead the church so that men and women both will lead out in their homes and in the church?” When men provide servant leadership in their homes, families are blessed and the church is strengthened. When men do not lead in their homes, the family suffers and the church is weakened. If churches are pastored by men rather than women, it will inspire men to lead in their homes and in the church—and the entire church body will be strengthened as a result.

Some might argue, “Is this role distinction really that important an issue?” Paul thought so. First Timothy was written as an instruction on how Timothy was to conduct the church (1 Timothy 3:15). After exhorting Timothy to make sure the church prays (2:1-2), and before he gave direction on appointing elders in chapter three, Paul addresses the role distinctions between men and women (2:11-15). Prayer is important. So are the standards for elders. It logically follows that the instruction about the distinctions between men and women, which is given by Paul between his words on prayer and elder appointment, is equally important.

But some might ask, “How does this leadership approach respect and honor women? And how does this leadership belief help women live out their full potential?” Let’s address both of these questions:

1. Women being respected and honored equal with men. The argument is made that a woman is not respected if she cannot attain the position that a man has in a church. Some argue that a woman is dishonored as a “second class citizen” if she cannot be an elder. We need to be reminded, however, that our value as people is not found in the positions we hold. Our worth is found in who we are in Christ. Our value is not based on the work we do, but on the work that Christ did for us. Men and women alike are created in the image of God and are equal in Christ (Galatians 3:28) as joint heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). Our value is not found in the role we play in the family or the church.

When I was a young Christian I was in a church where the men were urged to be spiritually ambitious. As a result, many had their hopes set on being a small group leader or a ministry leader or a deacon in the church—and they desired to “climb the spiritual ladder of success.” At that time, the Lord impressed on me that because of the work of Jesus Christ all believers are already seated with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). Someday we will sit on a throne to judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). I thought, “I can’t get any more high up in leadership than I already am. I am seated with Jesus Christ! Therefore, all that is left for me to do is sacrificially serve others.” God used this truth to guard my heart from wrong ambitions. As a result, I never saw a leadership position as a basis for my personal value. My value in Christ was sufficient.

It is neither helpful nor honoring to people to give them positions in the church to make them feel better about themselves. How sad is it when a person’s self-worth is

based upon a position held in the church! When a person is secure in Christ, then they will ask the questions: “Lord, how do you want me to serve you? What role do you want me to play?” If it is the role of a pastor, fine. If it is the role of a wife and mother, fine. It doesn’t matter what my role is. My value is secure independent of my role.

So, the best way to honor women—or men—is to help them understand that their value is found in their position in Christ alone. Then their self-worth will be on a solid foundation.

2. We are to release women to use their gifts to their full potential. In male-led churches women can be released to their full potential in the following ways:
  - a. As stated earlier, when men lead in the church, men are more likely to lead in the home. This will bring more power and life to women and children in the church.
  - b. As stated in chapter one, New Testament leadership must be seen through a Great Commission lens. In the Matthew 28:19-20, the goal is to make fully obedient disciples. Discipleship is best done one-on-one with people with whom you relate with well. From the standpoint of a division of labor, doesn’t it make sense for men to disciple the men in the church and women to disciple the women in the church? This is what Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:2 when he urges Timothy to train faithful men, and in Titus 2:3-5 when he urges older women to teach younger women. For those women who are married with children, their time and energy is used primarily in the raising of their children—which is the absolute

best use of their gifts. For those without children, there is plenty of work to do if women focus on teaching other women as Paul instructs in Titus chapter two.

- c. Apart from teaching other women, a female in the church has many opportunities to use her gifts to serve the church as a whole, without being an elder. Many women have had a prayer ministry that has had a huge impact for the gospel. Others use their gifts to provide leadership for service projects. For example, in our church a woman heads a massive evangelism project each year, sending hundreds and hundreds of shoeboxes overseas through Samaritan's Purse. And in one church, the pastor's wife leads the music team in the annual passion play that has shared the gospel with thousands of people in that community. These women were able to lead because the men led in the church, resulting in an opportunity for the women to have a greater impact through their ministries. Bottom line, when men lead in the church, ministry opportunities open up that would not have existed otherwise.

## Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, the real issue is not "How do we value and release women to minister and lead in the church?" The better question is "How do we value and release men and women to minister and lead in the church?" When the gospel is preached and rightly understood, men and women are respected and honored. And when men lead in the home and in the church, women are released to their maximum potential.

BELIEF 7

## Pastors Are to Focus on Prayer and Teaching the Word

JOHN HOPLER

In Great Commission churches, I appreciate that we have adopted the tagline: New Testament Christianity in Action Today. Our desire is that the Christianity we see in the New Testament will be lived out and practiced in today's world. In particular, we have historically gone to the Book of Acts to find our example of what New Testament Christianity looked like. In that regard, let's read the following verses from the Book of Acts:

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42, 47).*

*"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).*

*"But the word of God continued to increase and spread" (Acts 12:24).*

*"In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power" (Acts 19:20).*

What marked the first century church was the rapid spread of the Word of God. When the Word of God is spreading

throughout a community and the church, God is glorified and the Great Commission is fulfilled.

How does the word spread? Is it not through leaders praying and preaching and teaching the Word of God? In light of that, look at these verses:

*“...and [we] will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).*

*“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13).*

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

*“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).*

*“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2).*

These verses indicate that what is needed in the world today are men who will pray and preach the Word of God—men who will share the gospel with unbelievers (making disciples) and teach the Word with believers (teaching them to obey all that Christ commanded). The more men pray, the better. The more preachers, the better. The more teachers, the better. May God raise up more and more men who will seek God in prayer and who will then herald the Word throughout the world, to believers and unbelievers alike.

Some might say, “Our church already has a pastor who prays



for us and teaches every Sunday. Why do we need any more teachers?" This question reminds us of the man who applied for a position in the Great Commission church in Ames, Iowa. He believed that he had a calling to preach the Word, and he wanted to do so at the Sunday morning meeting. One of the pastors of the church took him outside and pointed to the Iowa State dormitories and said, "There is your congregation. Go preach the gospel to them!"

We are not restricted to Sunday morning to preach the Word. People who want to fill their community with the Word of God will find opportunities. They can start a neighborhood Bible study, or offer a seminar at a community center. They can begin an evangelistic small group at work or offer a discipleship class at their church. The church needs men who are passionate about teaching the Word of God.

Several years ago, I found myself somewhat defeated as a pastor. I was actively involved in ministry in so many ways, but something was missing. At that time, I went to a meeting of the *Global Pastors Network*. This is an international alliance of ministries and denominations that are working together to see people won to Christ and churches planted. At this conference, I was impressed with the power and confidence that the speakers had as they taught the Word of God. When I left the conference, I thought about the following verse, which radically changed my ministry:

*"Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith"* (Hebrews 13:7).

According to this verse, leaders are marked by one quality:

They are men of God. They are men of prayer, who speak the word of God. Leaders speak the word of God in faith, with a life that backs up what they speak about. They seek God in the prayer closet and then speak the word one-on-one; they speak the word of God in small groups; they speak the word of God in large groups; they speak the word of God to believers; they speak the word of God to unbelievers; they speak the word of God in their homes; they speak the word of God in public.

Bottom line, the Great Commission of Jesus Christ will be fulfilled if the seven beliefs discussed earlier are lived out. Let's review them:

## **Summary of the Seven Beliefs on Leadership**

**Belief #1:** Pastors are to be servants and leaders. The pastors are to be humble servants as well as courageous leaders.

**Belief #2:** The organizational chart of the New Testament church is simple. The church is led by a group of men called elders, overseers, pastors, or leaders.

**Belief #3:** The biblical qualifications of a pastor are based on Christ-like character. Pastors are qualified to lead based upon their character, rather than their talents, education, or gifting.

**Belief #4:** New pastors are to be developed from within the congregation. The New Testament pattern is to raise up elder-pastors from within the church.

**Belief #5:** Pastors are not to lead alone. They are to lead together in plurality, as a "Council of Equals." The church is led by a "COE" (Community of Elders) in which there is

typically a “first among equals” leader providing coordination and management for the entire elder team.

**Belief #6:** Only men are to be elder-pastors. The best way to honor and empower men and women in the home and the church is to follow the biblical instruction to appoint only men to be elder-pastors.

**Belief #7:** Pastors are to focus on prayer and teaching the Word. This is the main task of pastors—to spread the Word of God.

Do you catch the vision of the New Testament church leader? Do you see the power of a church led by a simple organizational structure of pastor-elders providing leadership to the church? Men who are humble and courageous, leaders who have Christ-like character; these are men who are multiplied through the church and raised up in the church. These leaders work as a team, humbly submitting to each other as a community of elders. Also, these men pastor the church to inspire the men in the church to lead in their own homes. Men like this who are released to pray and teach the Word of God, can teach with power and authority. This is what marked New Testament leaders. They were men who had been empowered by God to change the world.

What God did in the first century, He wants to do in our century. “New Testament Christianity in Action Today.” God wants the Book of Acts to be lived out in our churches. He wants to do it through every Christian. He wants to do it through pastors like the ones in the New Testament—pastors who become impact players for God’s Kingdom.

These are the leaders God wants—leaders who will fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

## CONCLUSION

## The Noble Work of a Pastor

BRENT KNOX

I have appreciated the uniqueness of the letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. They are referred to as the “pastoral letters.” They are written by an experienced church leader to younger, less experienced, church leaders.

Paul is like a boxing coach in the corner of Timothy and Titus. Paul uses phrases like “fight the good fight.” He is urging and motivating his younger leaders to fight well, to fight hard, and to not give up. He is also instructing his protégés regarding crucial practices and principles of the church. These letters are the definitive manuals on church leadership!

Paul turns his attention to the crucial area of church leadership in 1 Timothy and opens with this verse, “*It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do*” (1 Timothy 3:1).

This is a striking introduction to the topic of church leadership. We can make several observations based on this first verse.

1. Paul does not command every man to be a pastor. However, if any man desires the office, it is a good desire that he has. The desire to be a pastor evidently is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

2. Spiritual ambition is important. There is no great accomplishment in life unless it is preceded with desire. Paul applauds the desire to become a pastor.
3. The work of a pastor is one of the most important jobs in the world. What other job in the Bible is described as “fine?”

This verse ought to be carefully considered by every man!

***“It is a trustworthy statement...”***

This is a fascinating phrase. It is used five times by Paul in his epistles (1 Timothy 1:15, 3:1, 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8). Other than 1 Timothy 3:1, each time this phrase is used to underline and emphasize the most fundamental and most important aspects of our faith—the very gospel of Jesus Christ. It is thought that this phrase, “*it is a trustworthy statement*,” introduced sayings of the New Testament prophets in the early Church that summarized important teachings. They were like mottoes. People tend to summarize important concepts into easy-to-remember pithy statements. Evidently, what Paul writes next is extremely important and he wanted his listeners to remember it. In essence Paul is saying, “Sit up in your seats! The following statement is extremely important! Pay attention!”

***“...if any man...”***

What does this mean? It seems that the office of a pastor is open to any man. As you study the biblical qualification of a pastor, you will notice certain qualifications missing. For instance, there is no qualification listed for a certain education. There is no qualification listed for a special spiritual gift or ability. Nor is

physical age listed as a qualification.

The office is open to any man! This is the logical extension of the critical principle of the priesthood of all believers. Any person in Christ has access to God. Any person in Christ is a priest of God that represents the people to God and God to the people. Any person in Christ can bring the presence and power of God to people. What a privilege and opportunity! Any man can become a pastor of a local church! This helps eliminate elitist thinking, whether it is educational elitism or any other form of elitism. Everyone is on the same level. You don't need to be part of some elite group in order to be a pastor. Pastors are no different from anyone else.

If the pathway is clear to all men in a local church on how to become a pastor, then powerful motivation is given to men to grow. It can give normal "Joe Christian" a goal and vision for his life. "I can be a pastor someday!" This vision and dream can fire the spiritual engines of men in the church. It gives a man a dream to be fruitful and influential, and motivates them to shoulder increasing spiritual responsibility.

Certainly a man should know God has led him to be a pastor. And not every man will be a pastor, but the office of a pastor is open to any man.

*"...aspires..."*

The Greek word translated "aspires" is *oregomai*. It means to "to stretch one's self out in order to touch or to grasp something." Think of a small child who eyes a cookie jar on the top shelf in the kitchen, and says to himself, "I want that cookie." But this little boy doesn't just desire it...he does something about it!

He pushes a chair over to the cabinet, climbs the chair, stands on his tiptoes, and stretches himself out as far as he can to grasp that cookie jar. All great accomplishment is preceded by great desire and ambition!

A true desire to pastor comes from God. God plants the desire to pastor in a man's heart, but not in every man's heart. This is why Paul told the pastors at Ephesus that the Holy Spirit appointed them as overseers (Acts 20:28). It was the Spirit who called them to shepherd the church and motivated them to care for the flock. The Spirit planted the pastoral desire in their hearts. If a man does not aspire to shepherd the church of God, then it is not God's will that he is appointed to do so. However, every man should aspire to become like Christ and offer himself fully to the work of the Kingdom.

There are good desires and bad desires. Desires shape our lives. Therefore, it is important that we have the right desires. The Greek word *oregomai* is also used to describe the love of money.

*"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Timothy 6:10).*

The desire for money can cause Christians to wander from the faith and encounter terrible grief. Therefore, we must keep careful watch over our desires! Our desires can shape our lives.

Evidently, it is a good desire to be a pastor. A man becomes a pastor after he desires to be one. It is a basic principle of life that great achievement is first preceded by a strong desire or ambition.

It is good to be ambitious! It is true that the Bible condemns

selfish ambition (Philippians 2:3), but in 1 Timothy 3:1, the Bible promotes godly ambition. Perhaps this is why Jesus did not condemn the disciples for wanting to be leaders. He only re-directed them to greatness through the path of a servant (Matthew 20:24-28). Selfish ambition seeks status. It desires the personal glory and prestige of being in an important position. Godly ambition seeks to serve. It seeks to be used as a vessel to build God's Church and increase God's glory. It's a matter of the heart.

One great mistake that men make is passivity. It is having little or no spiritual ambition. The Bible is littered with examples of men who aspired for little and did nothing. The Christian Church is also littered with men who sit passively in pews. Unfortunately, the engines of many churches are run by women, while the men sit in Lazy-Boy recliners and watch football. Spiritual laziness is a huge problem in American churches. Men are more than willing to let someone else take over their spiritual responsibilities, whether it is their wives or their pastors.

Brothers, what spiritual aspirations do you have?

*“...to the office of overseer...”*

As we saw in Chapter 1, the office of overseer is synonymous with the office of pastor.

*“...it is a fine work...”*

The Greek word, *kalos*, translated “fine” means beautiful, handsome, excellent, choice, surpassing, precious, useful, suitable, commendable, noble, and admirable. To do the work of a pastor is a noble and beautiful work!



Frankly, before I was 20 years old, I did not consider being a pastor as attractive. In fact, I was repulsed by the idea of being in ministry. I could not see myself wearing black robes, preaching to sleeping people, and begging for more money. I could not understand why anyone would want to be a pastor.

But there was a time in our society when clergy were highly regarded and were considered the pillars of communities.

Times have changed. Because of recent media coverage of church leadership scandals, and the declining interest in church, the ministry has been marginalized.

We need to have a fresh look at the great work of being a pastor. It is a beautiful work, not ugly. It is excellent, not second-rate. It is noble, not pitiable. There is no other position in the Bible described in such glowing terms. What other position is so directly involved in the Kingdom of God? What other role is so crucial to the workings of the church?

When I became a member of a biblically functioning church, my esteem of the work of a pastor shifted from nauseating to something that became surpassing, precious, useful, noble, and admirable. Then I began to aspire to the office of an overseer.

*“...he desires to do.”*

This Greek word, *epithumeo*, for “desire” can be translated as “lust” or “covet.” Generally, the Bible instructs us to stay away from lusts and coveting. However, in this context men are called to lust for and covet something noble. Desiring the work of a pastor is a good thing!

Stephen Covey, in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Ef-*

*fective People*, counsels effective people to “begin with the end in mind.” You need to know where you are going or you won’t get there! Military missiles only reach their target unless they have been pre-programmed. If missiles don’t have the end in mind, they fly around the sky aimlessly. They expend a great deal of energy going nowhere.

Men, some of you need to pre-program yourself. Perhaps God wants you to write into your spiritual software, “I am going to be a pastor someday.” If not a pastor, then what great things for God will you do someday?

Olympic athletes train with the end in mind. There is a tremendous difference in training between an Olympic athlete and a weekend warrior who is simply trying to stay in shape. Not everybody is an Olympic athlete. Nor should everyone be an Olympic athlete, but if you want to be an Olympic athlete, you better desire it because the training and discipline required being a world-class athlete is not easy. A strong desire will take a person through the pain and discipline.

*“Many people raise families, work, and give substantial hours of time to community service, clubs, athletic activities, and/or religious institutions. The cults have built up large lay movements that survive primarily because of the volunteer time of their members. We Bible-believing Christians are becoming lazy, soft, pay-for-it-to-be-done group of Christians. It is positively amazing how much people can accomplish when they are motivated to work for something they love. I’ve seen people build and remodel houses in their spare time. I’ve also seen men discipline themselves to gain a phenomenal knowledge of the Scriptures. The real problem, then lies not in men’s limited time and energy, but in the false ideas about work, Christian living, life’s priorities, and especially—*

*Christian ministry.*"<sup>vii</sup>

Men, do you have the desire to be a world-class man of God? If so, go for it! Otherwise, you will never get there.

*"A Spirit-given desire for pastoral eldership will naturally demonstrate itself in action. It cannot be held in. A man who desires to be a shepherd elder will let others know of his desire. That is one way in which the congregation and elders can know of a prospective elder. The knowledge of this desire will prompt the elders to pray and to encourage such desire through appropriate training and leadership development. More important, the person with a Spirit-created motivation for the work of eldership will devote much time, thought, and energy to caring for people and studying the Scriptures. There is no such thing as a Spirit-given desire for eldership without the corresponding evidence of sacrificial, loving service, and love for God's Word. Eldership is a strenuous task, not just another position on a decision-making board. In fact, the stronger a man's desire for eldership, the stronger will be his leadership and love for people and the Word."*<sup>viii</sup>

## **A Personal Note**

Before the summer of 1976, my goal in life was to be a doctor. I was set. My undergraduate grades were excellent. I had connections. The path before me was marked clearly. Then I attended my first conference in the summer of 1976. The conference organizers obtained a condemned school building. All the guys slept in the gym, on the floor. There were about 600 people in attendance. There were only six total shower spigots in the locker room. There was no hot water the entire week. There were only two meals served a day and one of the meals was squashed peanut butter sandwiches and carrot sticks. Back in

1976, that's when men were men and women were women.

And that's when I heard Herschel Martindale expound on New Testament church leadership. He explained 1 Timothy 3:1 and the biblical principles of pastors. And that's when God called me to be a pastor. I did not hear His voice audibly, but He placed in my heart a desire to be a pastor. I thought to myself, "What better work can I do? Why not shoot for that? It is a good thing to try to heal people physically, but why not invest my life into healing people spiritually? The physical body will last only a short time. Why not invest my life into a work that will last forever?" At that Kansas City conference, I decided to make a switch in my life aspiration. I changed what I was reaching for.

This new desire was very challenging to me. When I looked into the mirror, I saw all kinds of weaknesses, flaws, and character defects. My faith was challenged. "How could I ever become like my pastors? ONLY THROUGH GOD'S HELP!" Could I believe that God was big enough to grow me? Could I believe that in a few short years I could be a completely different man than I am now? Would I be willing to pay the price? Would I be willing to engage in rigorous spiritual disciplines, that even my peers were not doing?

I dove in. I began to aspire. I began to make changes. I dedicated myself to make the effort to grow. I dedicated myself to the local church. I allowed God's tool, the church, to shape, mature, and mold me. I determined to step regularly outside my comfort zone by trying to reach people for Christ. I assumed new responsibilities within the church to allow God to expand my life.

Within a few years, I was ordained as a pastor. I realize that this door doesn't open for every man, but I am convinced that

God is pleased with the godly ambition of any man. I am just one story on how God can take an ordinary college student and turn him into a pastor, through a very ordinary church, with really pretty ordinary leaders. But this very ordinary church, in a very ordinary state (Iowa), in a very ordinary town (Ames), produced many extraordinary men who went on to plant churches all over the United States.

In Great Commission Churches, God has raised up many pastors within the local church. Some are on full-time staff. Others are part-time. Still others work another full-time job, but all of them have this in common: They have devoted their lives as pastors to build the Church of Jesus Christ.

I believe that God wants to do more of that. God wants men of character raised up in the local church who will live in plurality as a band of brothers to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Are you one of those men?

## APPENDIX 1

## What is the Congregation's Role in Leading the Church?

BRENT KNOX

In Great Commission churches, we strongly affirm the priesthood of all believers. Every believer in Jesus Christ has the Holy Spirit and is empowered by God to be active in reaching unbelievers for Christ and in serving in the church. The question is “What kind of role does a congregation have in church decisions?”

As the Church has developed over the centuries, many forms of church government have arisen. The four most basic forms are: episcopal, presbyterian, congregational, and a form of non-government.

In the episcopal form of government, authority resides in the “bishop” (GK. *episkopos*, or overseer). To those who hold to this type of church government, a “bishop” is a national, not a local, position. The number of levels of bishops varies between denominations. The simplest form of episcopal government is found in the Methodist Church, which has only one level of bishops. The Roman Catholic Church has the most extensive system of hierarchy; with authority being vested in the supreme pontiff, the bishop of Rome, the Pope.

The presbyterian (or elder led) system of church govern-

ment places primary authority in a particular office as well, but there is a critical difference of emphasis. While the episcopal form tends to place authority into the hands of one person, the presbyterian form places authority in the hands of multiple people. The presbyterian system also differs from the episcopal system in that there is only one level of clergy. No higher levels of authority, such as bishop, exist.

A third form of church government stresses the role of the individual Christian and makes the local congregation the seat of authority. There are two important concepts that power the engine of congregational government: 1) autonomy and 2) democracy. Autonomy means that no external power outside the local church can dictate action to the local church. Democracy means that every member of the local congregation has a voice in its affairs. Theoretically, it is individual members of the local congregation who possess and exercise authority. Among major denominations that practice the congregational form of government are the Baptists, Congregationalists, and most Lutheran groups.

A fourth form of church government is non-government. Certain groups deny that the church has a need for a concrete or visible form of government. Accordingly, they have virtually eliminated all government structure. They stress instead the inner working of the Holy Spirit, Who exerts His influence upon and guides individual believers in direct fashion, rather than through organizations or institutions. A church group that practices this type of government is the Quakers (Friends).<sup>ix</sup>

The churches in Great Commission Churches (GCC) are elder led (presbyterian) with congregational affirmation, partner-

ing with national (episcopal) leadership for equipping, mission efforts, and accountability. Each local church in GCC has final authority over its own affairs, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Local churches are governed by a plurality of elders who, as they seek the leading of the Holy Spirit, seek the counsel and affirmation of church members, as well as the counsel of national leadership. While there are many great churches in the body of Christ that have a different governmental structure, GCC feels that this system most accurately reflects the teaching of Scripture.

Notice that existing leaders appointed new leaders in churches. In Great Commission churches, elders are appointed only after receiving input from the congregation. While it is very wise to gain the counsel of the congregation, existing pastors and leaders appoint new pastors.

*“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust” (Acts 14:23).*

*“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” (Titus 1:5).*

The following passages demonstrate the authority that is invested and located in the pastors as a group:

*“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” (Hebrews 13:17).*

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



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

There are five types of relationships in our society that involve authority about which the Bible gives some instruction:

1. Husband/wife (Ephesians 5:22-33)
2. Parent/child (Ephesians 6:1-4)
3. Government official/citizen (Romans 13:1-7)
4. Employer/employee (Ephesians 6:5-9, involving masters and slaves)
5. Pastor/church member (1 Peter 5:1-5)

The basic responsibility of a person under authority is to respect and submit to the authority. The basic responsibility of an authority is to lead with a servant's heart. God designed these authorities to bring order to a world tending towards chaos. God is a God of order, so He designed human authority to govern the world. Those under their authority have a God-given responsibility to follow. Early churchman, John Chrysostom, stated, *“Anarchy then is an evil, and a cause of ruin, but no less an evil also is the disobedience to rulers. For it comes again to the same. For a people not obeying a ruler, is like one which has none; and perhaps even worse.”*<sup>x</sup>

For some, authority is a scary word. Ever since the cultural rebellion of the 1960's, people have become much more suspicious of those in authority. Over the past few decades it was common to see a bumper sticker on a car that said, “Question Authority.” Especially in America, where individualism runs rampant, people suspect anyone who is in authority and refuse to place themselves under authority. However, authority is useful if it is

invested in godly leaders. Paul writes the church at Corinth, a group of people who were questioning his authority, *“This is why I write these things when I am absent, that when I come I may not have to be harsh in my use of authority - the authority the Lord gave me for building you up, not for tearing you down”* (2 Corinthians 13:10).

Authority is valuable, if it is applied properly. Authority has the great potential of building people up. It also has the ability to tear people down. That’s why authority ought to be invested in godly people who operate in plurality. Good people use authority to build others. Bad people use authority for selfish means and end up lording over others. In a healthy church, elders will honor members in the church and members will honor the elders.

A Christ-like elder recognizes that his goal is to help people in their relationship with God. When giving counsel, a godly elder will communicate to the church member that he or she must obey God, not men. That elder will point people to the Bible. When he gives opinions he will be careful to identify it as simply that—an opinion. And he will urge church members to search the Scriptures and to seek out more godly counsel in determining God’s will for their lives.

If proper authority is given to qualified church leaders, then they will have the freedom to lead confidently, teach strongly, warn diligently, comfort, encourage faithfully, and expect a response. They will worry less about trying to please people (if churches are governed by the congregation, then pastors can be pulled to please people), and concern themselves more about pleasing God.

Effective churches have two dynamics in place: Leaders lead and people follow. When leaders lead and people follow, then

great things can happen!

There is so much that is written and said about the responsibility of leaders, but followers have a great responsibility too. Followers need to give up their self-centered plans and follow leaders. This isn't easy because a great consumer mindset has invaded the American Church. Choice is now king. Businesses can only survive if they offer many choices. A business must cater to the customer's desires as precisely as possible. At one time, in the distant past, we got our coffee at the grocery store. Then convenience stores began to serve coffee. Now, there are entire stores dedicated just to serve coffee. At Starbucks, we have 19,000 choices!

How has this "consumer is king" mindset affected the church? Our culture has trained us to think that our desires are what matters most and that the church exists to serve us rather than the church exists to serve God's purposes in the world. We have been trained to look at everything through a consumer lens—from goods, to services, to relationships, and now to church. Christians now choose churches that fit their desires. And if a church does not cater to their desires, then they move to a different church.

We certainly believe, on the one hand, that a church exists to provide grace to all of its members. And leaders are to serve with compassion and humility, in a way that blesses each individual in the church. Still, God intends a church to be a place where Christians will think about pleasing God—where instead of thinking of their own needs first, they respond to the suggested direction of their pastors as the church advances the Kingdom of God. If a special meeting is called, or the church makes outreach

plans, God desires believers to make a good faith effort to rally behind the leadership.

*“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”* (Hebrews 13:17).

The Greek word *hupeiko* is translated “submit.” The word paints a picture of two combatants fighting, and one of them yields and the fight ends. Honestly, submission can be a struggle. There are often two or more ways to look at a decision. People have different views of the world. These different views can be valid. However, when differing views and opinions come face to face, the responsibility of a follower is to yield.

Yielding can be especially difficult for men. Men tend to be competitive and more combative. Men would rather fight than yield. Men would rather push their own agenda than to accept someone else’s agenda. Men would rather live out their view of the world than to live out someone else’s view of the world. Maybe this is why God directs young men to submit.

*“Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble’”* (1 Peter 5:5).

The Greek word translated “be submissive” in this passage is a slightly different word. *Hupotasso* is a Greek military term meaning “to arrange (troop divisions) in a military fashion under the command of a leader.” Literally it means, “to rank yourself under.” In non-military use, it was “a voluntary attitude of giving in and cooperating.” Other important passages where this word is used include Luke 2:51, 1 Corinthians 16:16, Romans 13:1, 1

Peter 2:13,18, 1 Peter 3:1, Titus 3:1, and Ephesians 5:21.

It is important to reiterate that the authority of the church is not in just one man, but in the elders as a community. And that community of elders is to submit to Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church. Further, each individual elder is to be an example of humility, submitting himself to that community of elders, just like the other church members are to do.

What about churches with only one elder? In Great Commission churches it is required of all member churches that they have some form of accountability. The standard for churches with only one elder is that they have a legal board made up of men in his church who provide accountability for that elder. In addition, the single elder is in a submissive plurality with the other leaders in the association. By working with other elders regionally each GCC church is able to have the kind of protection and accountability that a local church plurality of elders provides. This emphasis on plurality has helped give church members in Great Commission the confidence to follow the leadership of their local church.

Of course, God's people should not follow blindly. God has made each believer a priest of God. All believers relate to God directly and each believer can discern God's will individually. Our first allegiance is to God. We must obey God, not men. And no person should allow themselves to be led into sin. Submission does not suggest that pastors are above questioning, or immune from public discipline (1 Timothy 5:19 ff). Wise pastors will also include as many people as possible in the church to help make those big decisions.

Another key aspect of the relationship with elders is the use

of a godly appeal:

*“Do not sharply rebuke an older man but rather appeal to him as a father...”* (1 Timothy 5:1).

A godly appeal enables the church member to be honest about concerns in a way that is honoring to the elders and to the church. There are so many times the church has benefited because a member in the church took the time to give some honest and honoring feedback about where the church was headed. Pastors in Great Commission appreciate the humble spirit of church members who have graciously and courageously appealed to the elders for a change in the direction of the church. Elders need the members’ input! And when the direction for the church has been set, we need members’ support. God uses this mature involvement in the church by members to give clarity to the elders as they make decisions in the church.

Still, although church members’ participation is critical in the decision making of the church, the location of authority, delegated by God, is found in the body of pastors:

*“The New Testament does not indicate that the congregation governs itself by majority vote, and there is no evidence that God has granted every member one equal vote with every other member. Rather, the New Testament congregation is governed by its own congregational elders. The elders, according to the express instruction of the New Testament, have the authority to shepherd the congregation.”<sup>xi</sup>*

Final Point: God calls His people to set aside their personal plans, their selfish agendas and desires, to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. He and He alone is the Leader of our lives. At the same time, Jesus has established the local church. The church is filled with people who, as priests before God, are to be empowered by

the Holy Spirit. And, the church is to be led by qualified elders.

The local church is God's vehicle for fulfilling His purposes on this earth. As Christians, we are called to follow God—and we are called to follow the vision of leaders of the local church that God has put us in. The church is not to cater to the consumer-driven desires we see in society. The church is to be led by leaders who have God-given vision for expanding the Kingdom of God in a dying world. It is a battle for human souls.

So when leaders issue the call to battle and people follow—praise the Lord! When leaders lead and people follow, and then churches can move forward.

## APPENDIX 2

# Questions & Answers About Elders in Great Commission Churches

JOHN HOPLER

## **What term is used most commonly in Great Commission churches—elder or pastor?**

The term “pastor” is used primarily, since it is a term that is more acceptable to our culture. However, the term “elder” is used often as well, since the term is used so often in the Scriptures.

## **If someone wants to be a pastor in Great Commission churches, what steps does he take?**

A man who desires to be a pastor will begin by becoming a Great Commission Christian. This means learning to walk with God, having a devotional life, serving in the church, learning how to share his faith, and disciple people. Eventually he might take on more responsibility in the church by leading a small group or leading a ministry. Then if he aspires to be a pastor, another pastor will mentor him. He mentors him in doctrine (using the Great Commission Leadership Institute program), character, and ministry skills.



## **How do you determine whether a person has met the character qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9?**

We use a tool called the Elder Qualification Test, which asks specific questions about the elder candidate as to each character quality listed in Timothy and Titus. The candidate answers the questions about himself, as do the elders in the church, the man's wife, and other close associates of the man who are in his church.

## **What is the formal process for appointing an elder by Great Commission churches?**

In Great Commission churches, a man must demonstrate the character qualities of an elder. For this, the GCC Elder Qualification Test is used. This test is taken on behalf of the elder candidate by the candidate himself, his spouse, close associates, and the elders.

In addition, he must agree with and defend the GCC Statement of Faith. For this the GCC Doctrinal Test is used, that tests a man's ability to exhort in sound doctrine and refute wrong doctrine. Another step in the process is that the congregation must be consulted as to whether the man is a qualified elder.

In addition, a representative from the association must be consulted before he is appointed. Finally, elders in GCC complete the Great Commission Leadership Institute (GCLI) material, an orientation for elders in our association. Overall, elders in member churches in our association are ones who agree with the GCC Covenant (See Appendix #3) and who support the GCC

Core Values as described in the GCC Core Values paper (for a copy of the GCC Core Values paper, contact the GCC office at [www.gccweb.org](http://www.gccweb.org)).

### **Can a man who is divorced be appointed as an elder in Great Commission churches?**

Yes, if there was a biblical basis for his divorce. Our understanding is that the requirement that an elder be the “husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2) means a “one woman kind of man.” If he was divorced before becoming a Christian or if his former wife committed adultery and he has been faithful to his new wife, we would not see his divorce as a disqualification (for more detailed information about Great Commission’s views on divorce and re-marriage, contact the GCC office at [www.gccweb.org](http://www.gccweb.org)).

### **Do pastors go to seminary or Bible school?**

Some do, but most have not. For those who have a Bible or seminary degree, it is more common for pastors to get that degree after they are appointed and on staff of a church. The training they get from the school is viewed as a supplement to the character, doctrinal, and ministry training they have already received in the local church.

### **Are pastors in Great Commission churches employed by the church?**

Most are on staff with the church, either full-time or part-time, but not all are employed. Many are working a secular job, serving the church as “tentmakers.”

## **Does a church ever hire a staff person from outside of the church?**

Yes, but not very often. Because our desire is to build leaders from within the church, almost all staff within Great Commission churches comes from within that local church. There are some exceptions. If there is someone hired from outside the church, usually pastors will first look for someone within the association. If not successful, then they will typically look for someone outside the association who shares similar ministry values and beliefs.

## **If a pastor is raised up from within the church and appointed, does he have the ability to perform weddings?**

Yes. Each state gives a minister's license to any individual who is ordained by their church.

## **What if a pastor has a character flaw that becomes apparent after he has been appointed?**

If a pastor has a character area that would have prevented him from being appointed initially, usually the other pastors will work with him to help build him in that character quality. Many pastors have strengthened weak areas while still in the position of an elder. Others have chosen to take a sabbatical from pastoring while they developed in that character area. If there was a flagrant character violation that would cause the congregation to disrespect him (such as committing a crime or committing adultery), the pastor would be removed from his position.

## **Do elder-pastors have a set term of years that they serve?**

Generally pastors serve perpetually, unless the Lord leads to a different calling. Some churches have a process of re-affirming the elders annually, as a way of providing input to help elders grow in their effectiveness. For those who are on staff, their job performance and salaries are approved annually.

## **How is the plurality of elders model demonstrated publicly to the people in the church?**

This is worked out differently from church to church. Here are some examples:

- Elders “team teach” with different elders taking turns sharing at the Sunday morning meetings.
- Elders take a public role in the Sunday morning meeting (teaching, giving announcements, praying, sharing a devotional, etc).
- In New Member Classes and in public communications (bulletins and websites), the plurality of elders model is emphasized.
- If there is a lead elder, there are times when he will be in the minority on an issue and will submit to the other elders. These instances are highlighted in the church.
- Decisions are made and communicated as coming from the community of elders, not just one man.

## **What if there is a disagreement between the elders on an issue?**

If there is a disagreement, the elders will wait until there is unanimity on a decision. If there is a point where a decision needs to be made, typically the minority will yield to the majority when they see that postponing the decision will hurt the church. If there is a deadlock on a major issue, the church will usually ask for help from the association of churches to help bring a unity of mind on the matter.

## **What happens when there is a significant disagreement among the elders on philosophy of ministry?**

If after a long period of time a disagreement persists, it is usually a sign a change needs to be made. Perhaps one of the pastors needs to go to a church that shares his philosophy of ministry or he needs to start a new church (as someone once said, sometimes a church isn't sick—it's pregnant!). However, if a new church does start it is important that the disagreeing pastors have a commitment to one another as brothers in Christ and as co-laborers in the gospel.

## **What if a church does not have a plurality of elders?**

There are situations in Great Commission churches, particularly in the early stages of a church, where there is not a plurality of elders. Typically, the pastor will work with a representative of the association to mentor some elder candidates. In the meantime, the church will usually have on its legal board or advisory

board men who are the most likely candidates for being appointed as elders in the future.

## **Does a man's spiritual gift play a part in his appointment as an elder?**

We all realize that we are what we are by the grace—the spiritual gifts—of God. As stated earlier, a man is appointed as an elder if he has the character qualities in 1 Timothy and Titus, not if he has a certain gifting *per se*. However, some have argued that if a man has these qualities, and if he aspires to be a pastor, that this would indicate he has the pastor-teacher gift described in Ephesians 4:11. So, in that sense, gifting —i.e., God's grace—is instrumental in the appointing of elders. Also, a man's spiritual gift does affect the role he will have in ministry. Those elders with administrative gifts will be more likely to play that role in the church, whereas those with a teaching gift will devote more time to teaching.

## **What are elders' meetings like in Great Commission churches?**

They vary from church to church. As an example, here is how one church conducts weekly elders meetings. The elders begin with prayer for the church and for individuals in the church. They then discuss their personal lives since we are instructed in Acts 20:28 to watch over ourselves (first) and then over all the flock. The elders then review the Sunday service, talking about how to improve it. They then talk through programs and events upcoming in the church, as well as needs with individuals in the church, particularly ministry leaders. Elder candidates are in-

cluded in elders' meetings, as part of their elder training.

### **Do the elders' wives meet together?**

Yes. Our experience is that the relationship between elders' wives is very important for the health of the church. So, we encourage elders' wives to meet together—at least monthly if not more often.

### **What about the children of elders?**

We put a high priority on elders raising godly children. If an elder's family needs attention, we insist that he make that the focus, rather than ministry in the church. Also, we encourage elders to be actively involved with their children in ministry situations. For example, elders and their children together attend youth-focused conferences (such as High School Leadership Training and Faithwalkers). Finally, elders will work together to watch out for and build each other's children, like an uncle would with a nephew or niece.

### **Do the elders in Great Commission churches have a relationship outside of church activities?**

Very much so. Social times and playing sports together are considered very important in building relationships amongst the elders. We have found that pastors enjoying each other, as brothers in Christ, are foundational for the health of the church.

**If a church does not have a plurality of elders model, or if a church wants to make a change in its leadership structure in line with what is described in this book, how would you recommend that the change be made?**

Very carefully! Jesus said not to put new wine into old wineskins. If a change is going to be made, it is important that the leadership team of the church and the congregation as a whole be given time to be educated on the proposed change. Also, the church needs to be given the opportunity for input and interaction before it moves to a plurality of elders model.

**Are there any other books on this topic that you would recommend?**

Yes. We recommend these two books: *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* by Alexander Strauch and *Elders and Leaders* by Gene Getz.



## APPENDIX 3

## The Great Commission Covenant

**As a pastor in Great Commission churches, I commit to:**

1. Love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.
2. Believe and follow God's Word at all costs.
3. Love and honor my fellow believer in Christ as Jesus Christ has loved and honored me.
4. Uphold the following core values of the Great Commission churches: (These core values are further defined in the Statement of Core Values.)

**G** *Grace of God* - God's grace through Jesus Christ is the basis and power, not only of our personal lives, but also of our ministry.

**C** *Commitment to God and His Word* - Our aspiration is that our ministries will be marked by a wholehearted devotion to God, through prayer, and by studying, obeying, and teaching His Word.

**A** *All Nations Reached With The Gospel* - Our ultimate goal and mission is to reach the whole world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to make disciples of all the nations.

- C Church** - The local church is God's vehicle for accomplishing the Great Commission. The church is the place for winning people to Christ, building them to maturity, raising up leaders, and for preparing church planting teams to be sent out for the expansion of God's Kingdom.
  - C Church Leadership** - We place a priority upon raising up pastors and other leaders of Christ-like character within the local church.
  - O Oneness (Love and Unity)** - We desire our ministry to be marked by a Christ-like, selfless love, loyalty, and unity with fellow believers.
  - R Raising Godly Families** - Strong families are the foundation for strong churches. Therefore we make it a priority to equip members and pastors in building their marriages and families.
  - E Every Member A Minister** - All Christians are empowered through the Holy Spirit to be workers in the church, not just the pastors. Therefore we seek to equip each member to utilize his/her spiritual gifts to serve others.
5. Strive to believe the best about any who make this covenant, to support them with a loyal tongue, and to be quick to defend them. I will be slow to accept an accusation against them and will not accept such an accusation unless it is supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If an accusation should prove to be valid, I will seek to gently and lovingly confront and restore my wayward brother to a faithful walk with Christ.

6. Love all those who make this covenant and to unite with them as fellow team members, believing in them, serving them sacrificially and holding them accountable to this covenant, as we unite together to bring glory to our Lord and to accomplish His work on this earth.

## Footnotes

- i. Charles Colson, Kingdoms in Conflict (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 274
- ii. Strong, J. (1996). *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible: Showing every word of the text of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order* (electronic ed.) (G2233), Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.
- iii. Alexander Strauch, Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership, (Lewis and Roth Publishers), pg. 28
- iv. Charles Colson, Kingdoms in Conflict (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), pg. 274
- v. Robert Greenleaf, Servant Leadership (New York: Paulist, 1977), pg. 63
- vi. Errol Hulse, "The Authority of Elders," *Reformation Today* 44 (July-August, 1978): 5
- vii. Alexander Strauch, Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership, (Lewis and Roth Publishers), pg. 28
- viii. Alexander Strauch, Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership, (Lewis and Roth Publishers), pg. 282
- ix. Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology (Baker Academic), pg. 1079-1097
- x. John Chrysostom, "Homilies on Hebrews," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, 14: 518.
- xi. Alexander Strauch, Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership, (Lewis and Roth Publishers), pg. 293