

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

January 15, 2023

S.C. Brown, Pastor

Series: Basics of the Church

Sermon title: Church Roles/ Elders

Scripture reading: Titus 1:5-9

We are taking a few weeks here in between Christmas and Chinese New Year to take a look at Church Roles. We said last week that there are 2 church roles, Deacons and Elders.

Our church has been talking about for years how we need to shift/transition to a group of Deacons and Deaconesses who lead out in serving in various areas and then have a group of Elders who shepherd, oversee and teach the congregation.

Last week we looked at Deacon. Today we will look at what an Elder is.

Now, I might add that one of the reasons that we have taken a slow approach to this transition is because I personally didn't think during the pandemic with us meeting online, face to face, online, face to face and so much going on.....that it was good time to make this major change.

I hope and pray that the church will make these changes in the future.

What does Elder mean?

The terms Elder (presbyteros), Overseer (episkopos) are used interchangeably in Titus 1.

In 1 Peter 5 and Acts 20, Elder, Overseer & Shepherd (poiman) are all used in the same passage.

So, an Elder is an Overseer, a Shepherd.

Where do we see Elder leadership in the Bible?

- Exodus 18:13-17/ Numbers 11:16-25-

Moses was going at it alone and Jethro, his father in law, shows him a better way.

The reason he gives is that the work is too much for one man. Surely this is true of shepherding a church.

In Numbers, God puts some of Moses' spirit onto these other men. This is exactly what you want: a group of multiple men balancing the load in one accord.

Acts 6- Here we see a prototype of the two offices of the church; Elders and Deacons.

We saw this last week.

The Apostles appoint some men to serve these practical needs while they served in the word and prayer.

This is the beginning of 2 groups who lead out in serving in the church.

This becomes the model in all the churches.

Elders who are word focused and Deacons who are serving in practical ways.

Just about all churches have these two types of offices but many will confuse the two or use various terms to describe them.

Acts 14:23- When they had appointed Elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 15- (verses 2,4,6,22,23) We see here in the Jerusalem church that they have both Apostles and Elders. The task of Apostle was to be an eyewitness to Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The Apostles were 'sent ones' who went out to proclaim. The Elders were to stay and shepherd the sheep.

Acts 20:17-28- The Ephesian Elders come to Paul.
Notice that the church in Ephesus has Elders.

In this beautiful passage, he will give us some instructions for Elders.

-“Pay careful attention to yourselves”- Not just workers but are also to be examples; to watch their own lives closely.

-“Pay careful attention to the flock”- Again, the job description is to watch over and care for.

-“The Holy Spirit has made you overseers”- Not a job you choose but called of God. You don't make yourself one, God does. -“Overseer”- again used interchangeably with Elder and Shepherd (flock) in this passage.

-“I commend you to the word”(v.32) - we will see more in Timothy but here we see that Paul points them to the word. Elders are to be men of the word.

Ephesians 4:12- Greek lends toward “Shepherd-teacher” and not ‘Shepherd’ and ‘Teacher’.

Shepherds are teachers. They are to feed the flock.

Philippians 1:1- Paul is writing to the 'Overseers and Deacons'. These offices are not the same thing. They are distinct. One group serves by 'looking over' and the other group serves in practical ways.

- 1 Timothy 3:1-7 gives us a long list of qualifications of Elders.

This saying is trustworthy: if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into the snare of the devil.

- Titus 1:5-9 Here is another list.

This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

A few things to notice: what sets Elders and Deacons apart are a few things....

1. Elders must be able to teach and give instruction in the word of God. Not a gifted teacher but 'able to'. Deacons are not required to do that.
2. Elders are not to recent converts. Nothing about that in the Deacons list.
3. Elders are men. Deacons can be men and women. Just before the Elders list in 1 Timothy, Paul says he doesn't permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. Since Elders

job is to exercise authority and teach, they are to be men.

Also, there is not mention of the Elder's wives having some qualification but there is a qualification for Deacons' wives or Deaconesses. 3:11, "their wives".

The absence of a list for Elder's wives is another indication, along with the masculine pronouns, that Elders are to be men.

- Hebrews 13:7,17- Here, the writer of Hebrews uses the word for 'Leader' and not Elder, Overseer or Shepherd.

That said, once we see the text you will see that the terms mean the same thing because their task is the same.

Verse 7 says, "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."

Now, he could mean missionaries or evangelists who shared with you, but if we read on it will be clearer. Verse 17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them (be subject to them/ 1 Peter), for they are keeping watch (like Shepherds on the hillside?) over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."

It is clear and consistent that what the author means by 'leader' is the same type of person we are looking for elsewhere in an Elder.

- 1 Peter 5:1-5 "Elders among you" we know from 1:1 that Peter is writing to many churches scattered around. He assumes they have Elders.
 - "As a fellow Elder"- Peter, though he is an Apostle doesn't seem to think that being a local Elder is beneath him.
 - "Shepherd the sheep"- Herein we have the first of the job descriptions. They are to shepherd people. This can involve many things.
 - "The sheep among you"- They are to shepherd those that are theirs, not someone else's sheep. This highlights their stewardship and accountability. This is one reason why churches have some kind of 'church membership'. We must know who our flock is and the shepherd needs to know who he is accountable for.
 - "Exercising oversight" - Another job description. The first was shepherding people. The second here is Overseeing, looking over /looking after

and paying careful attention to.

-Not because he HAS to but because he wants to.

-Not for money but from a heart of eagerness.

-Not bossing people around but being an example for others to follow. (Remember Jesus' example)

- "Chief Shepherd"- Elders are to remember that they are under the authority of Jesus, the Senior Pastor. It's HIS church.
- "unfading crown of glory"- This receiving means they will be judged and are accountable for how they lead.
- *"be subject to the Elders"- It says 'you who are younger' and can mean that either it is assumed the Elders will be older men or it could mean 'younger' in the faith. Better to have a young godly Elder than an old ungodly one.*

A Summary:

- There are 2 offices of the church. Elders and Deacons.

They aren't to do all the work but equip or lead out in the work and mobilize others to come along side of them and help.

- Elders are a group of men who are called by God and accountable to God, to oversee and shepherd the local church with, by and through the word of God.

Jeramie Rinne says, "Elders are Jesus's assistants for shepherding his churches."

- Deacons are a group of men and women chosen by the church to serve the church in practical ways.

Deacons are Jesus's assistants (under the authority of the Elders) for serving his churches.

Application:

Corporately, the application is that our church needs to press on in pursuing and putting into place the leadership structure that the Bible gives us.

We need Elders. A plurality of Elders.

We need to shift from a singular Pastor and Deacon led church with ministry leaders....to Elders, of whom the

Pastor is one and the ministry leaders being called Deacons and Deaconesses.

Personally, an application for each one of us is this....What role do you have to fill in God's church? You have a role. You have gifts. What is your role? What are your gifts?

How can you use your gifts to build up the body of Christ?

Maybe some of you need to be Elders. You need to stop being Deacons and start teaching and shepherding the flock alongside of the Pastor.

Maybe some of you need to start Deaconing/ leading out in serving in a particular area.

We need someone right now to do the roster for Sundays....lining up the Offertory prayer person and the Scripture readers....and we need someone to do the bulletin each week.

What is your role?

What are your gifts?

How can you use your gifts to build up the body of Christ?