

**Sermon Series:** Lengthen & Strengthen Part 2

**Sermon title:** Church Leadership (Elders)

**Scripture reading:** Titus 1:1-9

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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Some months ago, I preached on our Church Vision.  
Who do we want to be as a people called CBIBC?

We want to be people who **BEHOLD** God daily and continually.

We want to be people who **BELONG** to one another so deeply that we are building each other up with our gifts.

We want to be people who are **BEING SENT** to our family, neighbors, co-workers and friends and even the nations.

That's our vision. That's who we want to be.

That's what we all need to focus on continually.

**Beholding. Belonging. Being Sent.**

A few weeks ago we took a look at our Church Strategy, which is titled, "Lengthen and Strengthen". What are the ways that our church needs to grow so that we can BEHOLD. BELONG. & BE SENT???

Our verse for our strategy is Isaiah 54:1-2, which says...

**“Enlarge the place of your tent,  
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched  
out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords  
and strengthen your stakes.**

**3 For you will spread abroad to the right and to the  
left,**

We looked at 5 things...5 cords that we need to lengthen.

**-Prayer**

**-Proclamation of the gospel**

**-Parents and Children**

**-Planting multiplying small groups**

**-Panta ta ethne...which means, ‘All the nations’.**

I tried to lay the ground work for our vision and strategy  
but we will keep coming back to it time and time again so  
that it sticks!

Today, we continue with the second part of our strategy.

We will look at **4 Stakes to Strengthen.**

These are some things that we already have but we need  
to drive them into the ground a little deeper for the safety  
and security of our church.

**The 4 stakes are:**

- Church Leadership**
- Church Membership**
- Church Stewardship**
- Church Polity**

So, today and next week I want to simply address Church Leadership. Today we will look at what the Bible says about **ELDERS**. Next week we will look at **DEACONS**.

Let's pray together.

**My goal today is to do 2 things:**

1. I want us to see that the standard practice in the Bible is to have a group of male ELDERS leading the local church.
2. As we look, we will define an ELDER and explain their role.

\*And next week we will see how they are different from DEACONS.

So, if you have your Bible....keep it out...because you're going to need it. We are just going to walk through the Bible.

Turn to **Exodus 18**. I'll read verses **13-24**

Notice the phrases:

**verse 17-** “What you are doing is not good.” “You will wear yourselves out” “It’s too heavy for you” “You are not able to do it alone”

Sure, Moses had a million people....but the wisdom given to him is the establishment of the ELDERS of Israel..a plural leadership that is able to ‘bear the load’. A one man leader is not the best way.

This is mentioned again in Numbers 11, where God says that he will take some of the spirit of Moses and put it on these ELDERS so that they can bear the load with him.

This is the foundation the ELDERS of Israel. A body of men who share the load of leadership.

Let’s look in the New Testament. We will see it splattered all over the New Testament.

**Acts 6:1-7** is believed by most to be the prototype of the two offices of the church: Elders and Deacons. The passage doesn’t mention Deacons by name but it does call what these men do....’Deaconing’ or *service*.

**Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the**

word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

Here, we have what seems to be the beginning of a distinction of church offices. The Apostles are wanting to be freed up to do their tasks....which is in verse 4-**we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word**,....while the DEACONS are chosen to serve in this specific area; in a practical tangible way.

Well, if we walk through the pages of the New Testament, we will see that ELDERS leading the local church is the pattern they use.

**Acts 14:23 [READ]-** They appointed Elders in every church they planted.

**Acts 15-** We see that the church in Jerusalem has not only the Apostles, there but also Elders. Verses 2,4,6,22,23

**Acts 20:17-** Paul meets with the Elders of the church in Ephesus. And here he gives us some instructions as to what they are to do. **verse 28** says, “**Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God.**”

Notice here we have Elder, Shepherd and Overseer used in the same way....He tells the Elders to care for the ‘flock’, that means Shepherd. And he says that the Holy Spirit made them Overseers.

**We will see that in other places Elder, Pastor/ Shepherd and Overseer are used interchangeably. One of their tasks is to care for the church, *Literally* ‘to look over it’, to shepherd it.**

**Philippians 1:1 [READ]**- the book is specifically addressed to the whole church with the Overseers and Deacons.

Now the main passage for ELDERS is in **1 Timothy 3:1-7** where he gives specific qualifications **[READ]**.

Interestingly enough, the qualifications for ELDER and DEACON are very similar. And the things that Paul says ELDERS must be like, is likewise found all over scripture for any Christian. Except one....verse 2 says...ABLE TO TEACH. We don’t have that for everyone and we don’t have that for DEACON.

**We will see that another task, as we saw in Acts 6..is that ELDERS are to be men of the word, able to teach and give instruction in doctrine.**

**1 Timothy 5:17- Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain and the laborer deserves his wages.**

Men of the word. Preaching and teaching.

**Titus 1:5-9** says is similarly.

**5 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— 6 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. 7 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, 8 but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 9 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.**

Again, the instructions to Titus are that (1) there should be Elders and (2) they should be men who ‘hold firm to the word so that they can give instruction in sound doctrine and defend it.

**Hebrews 13:7** 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.**

**Hebrews 13:17** says **Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.**

Why do I think that he’s talking about the Elders when he mentions leaders here??

Because he says they ‘spoke to you the word of God’ and ‘they are keeping watch over your souls’. Both of those are consistent with Elders elsewhere.

The book of James, which is one of the earliest books in the New Testament is written to many churches scattered around and in **James 5:14** he assumes the churches have ELDERs when he says, **“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”**



Lastly, **1 Peter 5:1-5** says,

**5 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. 5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”**

Here again, but this time not Paul...but Peter.. says that Elders are to Shepherd and to Oversee the church.

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So, **Acts, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James and 1 Peter** all testify that the early churches had local ELDERS set up in them to care for the church, to teach the church and to oversee the church.

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So, let's clarify some things that ELDERS **are** and **are not**:

1. **Elder doesn't mean old men.** The only qualification given relating to this is 1 Timothy 3:6 which says that he must not be a recent convert. That doesn't mean

old person but that an Elder must not be a new believer.

2. **Elders are not just decision makers like a board of directors.** They are men of the word who have a stewardship from God to shepherd the church, to oversee the church and to teach and instruct the church in the word of God.
3. **Elders are not to be a one man show.** Many churches have a single Pastor/Elder like Moses. We saw in Exodus that wasn't wise. Elder is plural not singular.
4. **ELDERS are to be men.** Men and women are both equal before God and both made in the image of God, but have different roles according to scripture. God holds the man responsible to be the leader in theme and in the church. The role of Elders in the church (and the husband in the home) is one of authority and the stewardship of the teaching of the word and doctrine. 1st Timothy 2 right before the qualifications of Overseers or Elders, Paul says in **1 Timothy 2:12** that **'I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.'**

So, as a church we need to move toward ELDERS, as we need to be constantly moving toward obeying biblical truth in all areas of our lives. May God grant us the grace to do this.