

PJ Smyth

The World Needs More
ELDERS



godfirst

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CHAPTER 1

THE WORLD NEEDS MORE ELDERS

We need more Elders ... not just more leaders

The trumpet of Jesus sounds to rally all believers to the magnificent mandate of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth through planting thousands of churches across the nations of the world. For this to be done well we need armies of brave leaders at every level in the church, but for this to be done at all, we need to dramatically increase the production of Elders.

No doubt due to the excellent teaching and materials available today on the subject of leadership, there appears to be a broad and healthy understanding of, and participation in leadership by most believers. This is good. But what is not so good is the relatively slow rate of conversion of people from this broad generic band of leadership in local church life (small group leaders, ministry team leaders, etc) into the front-line leadership calling of eldership. Because we are a diverse Body with everyone playing a unique and key role, of course not everyone is called to be an elder. Eldership is not a better or higher calling than another, but we can't plant more churches without elders to lead those churches. A church can operate without a building, without tea, without all manner of ministries, but it can't operate without elders. Without these leaders of leaders we will not be able to set a sustained pace for successful world-mission through planting churches because ...

***You can't have healthy, vibrant churches
without
healthy, vibrant elders***

Elders lead the church. They set the tone and pace for everything that happens in their local church, because ...

***Whatever is embodied in the elders
will be
embodied in the body.***

Three reasons for the lack of elders

1. Lack of courage: Today's culture is cynical about leadership and responsibility-shy, and this has seeped into the church. In Zimbabwe there is a famous reply that is often given by someone who is being blamed which is "I am not the one". People are afraid to stand up and be *the one*, and this cowardice has infiltrated the Church ... starting back when Adam

said to God “I am not the one ... she is”! In his book *Preaching*, James Stewart writes: *Field-Marshal Wavell has told, in his notable lectures entitled Generals and Generalship, the story of how Napoleon, when an artillery officer at the siege of Toulon, built a battery in such an exposed position that he was told he would never find men to man it. But Napoleon had a sure instinct for what was required. He put up a placard - “The battery of men without fear”: and it was always manned!*

Eldership is an exposed position requiring men of courage to man the position. The buck stops with elders. They are the Number 1 leaders. It is not for the timid. And it takes godliness and diligence to allow the Holy Spirit to grow a man into an elder.

2. Lack of apostolic vision: A local church that holds no vision and sense of responsibility to take the gospel to the ends of the earth will seldom produce more elders.

*Where there is no call to **go further** there is no call to **raise up and send out**.*

But a biblical church, one ablaze with the Matthew 28 commission of discipling the nations, will be intentional in raising up elders to go out and plant and lead churches. Before I was first exposed to apostolic church-planting vision, I was leading a church of 1000 with a team of just 3 elders. We, with a superb staff and other leaders, were coping very well, so I thought ‘why bother with more elders’? But after embracing the truth that “the world was my parish” (Acts 1:8), I started to see many more of my people as potential leaders, and to treat them accordingly. These days the ratio of elders to people is about 30:1000 (i.e. 3:100). You may say “but that is too big an eldership team to pastor a church of that size”, and you are probably right. But we are not trying to pastor just the local church, we are trying to pastor the city and the nations, and to continuously help in planting and strengthening churches across the world. By having a swollen eldership team you can send half of them at any moment and still be okay at home base. In terms of leadership development, my rule of thumb is this:

*Work out how many leaders that you need for your local work now.
Then treble it.*

Why three? You need one batch of leaders for the local work now, another batch for the local work as it grows, and another batch for sending out to plant other churches.

3. Lack of teaching: Without clear teaching on the variety of leadership roles in the New Testament, people can remain confused and uninspired. Furthermore, “elders” to some might sound a bit stuffy and boring, conjuring up images of men past their prime in ‘maintenance mode’ over a church past its prime also in ‘maintenance mode’. But nothing could be further from the truth: God intends elders to be teams of men radically dedicated to Jesus, the local church and world mission. They are explosively dangerous menas far as the devil is concerned! But the unique calling of eldership (under the generic title of leadership) needs to be clearly explained or else men will not know what to aspire to - when you are lost in the mist it is hard to move forward!

A heart set on a noble task

I enjoy good movies: I got stirred watching ‘Gladiator’ lead his men into bloody conflict in Germania! I got excited watching ‘Braveheart’ William Wallace lead the warriors of Scotland into battle. But I get thrilled as I lead our church, with my elders, into the purposes of God! I don’t want to be a fighter pilot or race fast cars. I don’t want the fame of David Beckham or the power of President Bush. **I have made my choice. I want to be an elder.**

*If anyone sets his heart on being an elder, he desires a noble task
(1 Tim 3:1)*

What is your heart set on? On things ignoble or noble¹? On things above or below?² On the spiritual gift of leadership or on something more selfish? M.L. King, saddened by the fascination of men with technology and money said ‘*today we have guided missiles and misguided men.*’³ If your heart is set on eldering for Jesus then you are not misguided!

How this booklet may help

This booklet should be useful for men and women for any leadership position, but my guns are definitely trained on the target of envisioning and equipping current and future elders.

I have found a good way to use this booklet is to read a chapter out loud as groups of elders or future elders, and then discuss and pray around what you have read.

¹ 2 Tim 2:21-22

² Col 3:1

³ Strength to Love (1963)

CHAPTER 2

WHO'S WHO IN NEW TESTAMENT LEADERSHIP?

I feel that the best way to talk about the *who's who* of biblical New Testament leadership is to use phrases such as 'leadership layout' and avoid phrases such as 'leadership structure'. This is because the bible presents a clear framework of leadership and defines some of the key leadership functions, but leaves some room for manoeuvre in terminology and implementation.

The Headship of Jesus

Col 1:18 says Jesus is the head of the church. This truth is so obvious that it is possible to gloss over it and lose the impact. It is a mighty truth with implications that set the entire tone of New Testament leadership. Think about it: *if Jesus really is the head of the church then...*

- 1. He appoints the leaders (Acts 20:28).** If not, then we can vote & choose them ourselves!! Terry Virgo writes: "John Stott says, *"The New Testament never contemplates the grotesque situation in which the church commissions and authorises people to exercise a ministry for which they both lack the divine call and the divine equipment"* (John R W Stott, *God's New Society*, IVP, 1979). *Throughout the Old Testament, God chose whom He would to lead His people. The same principle applies in the New Testament church. Jesus, our ascended Christ, gave gifts. We cannot make people into leaders. We cannot simply vote them into office. We can observe and note the grace of God on people. We can see the anointing and respect the gift of God. A church that honours God's gifts honours God, and experiences God's ongoing favour.*"¹
- 2. His under-shepherds must imitate *his style* of servant leadership.** If not, then we are free to 'lord it over' our people.
- 3. It gives such faith and confidence to us under-leaders!** Our boss is not only Head of the Church, but "*head over all things for the church*" (Eph 1:22).
- 4. We must strive to have a biblical leadership layout, rather than our own model.** As I understand it, the biblical layout consists of Jesus the Head "giving gifts to men" (Eph 4:8). I have divided up these gifts into the categories of (1) Ephesians 4 Ministry Gifts, and (2) Local Church Ministry Gifts, but in their outworking there is considerable overlap.

¹ Newfrontiers Magazine, Volume 2, Issue 04, Sept-Nov 2003, Pg 7.

This table presents what I consider to be the simple leadership layout of the New Testament church, to help us to place ‘elders’ in the larger picture. Start reading at the bottom and work your way up:

<p>The Local Church Ministry Gifts</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Elders, Deacons, Saints</p> <p>Paul seemed to think in terms of Elders and Deacons and Saints (Phil 1:1). Saints: ‘Saints’ is a generic phrase for ‘the royal priesthood of all believers’ (1 Pet 2:9) or ‘the body’ (1 Cor 12). Within the body are all manner of other leadership gifts and a multitude of other spiritual gifts (see 1 Cor 12, Rms 12). Some will emerge as elders and deacons. Deacons: These are those who have so proven themselves in general situations of leadership that they are set apart for weightier leadership responsibility (see Acts 6, 1 Tim 3, and the later chapter on deacons). Elders: These are the men who lead local churches (see Acts 14:23, Acts 20:28, 1 Tim 5:17, 1 Tim 3, Titus 2, 1 Pet 5).</p>
<p>The Ephesians 4 Ministry Gifts</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers</p> <p>These three gifts, along with apostles and prophets, make up the five-fold team of gifts most clearly mentioned in Eph 4. These five gifts are essential building gifts that must be operating for the church to be all that God intends it to be. These 3 gifts are not lesser gifts than apostles and prophets, but there is a ‘firstness’ about the foundation laying ministry of the apostle and prophet (see Eph 2:20; Eph 4:11f; 1 Cor 12:28). These gifts will operate in their local church, and may also spill out to serve the wider body.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Apostles & Prophets</p> <p>These were originally the pre-ascension apostles with their unique calling and commissioning by Christ. They had the role of being the literal pillars of the early church (Mk 3:14; Acts 1:26; Acts 2:42; Acts 6:6). Thereafter came other ‘post-ascension’ apostles mentioned in scripture such as Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus & Junias (Rms 16:7), Timothy & Titus, and surely others not specifically mentioned in scripture (2 Cor 11:5). And from biblical times until the return of Christ we enjoy the ongoing ministry of ‘modern-day’ apostles and prophets (Eph 4:11-13). These gifts will operate in their own local churches, and will certainly spill out to serve the wider body.</p>
<p>Jesus the Head</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Jesus</p> <p>The Head of the Body (Col 1:18) The Chief Foundation (Eph 2:20-22; 1 Pet 2:4f) The Great Apostle (Heb 3:1) The Great Prophet (Mt 13:57; Mt 21:11) The Great Evangelist (Lk 19:10) The Great Pastor (Jn 10:11) The Great Teacher (Mt 23:10)</p>

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORY OF ELDERS

Elders are mentioned 127 times in the Old Testament, 24 times in the gospels, and about 40 times from Acts 1 onwards.

Elders in Israel

A crucial part of the leadership mix of Israel was groups of men called elders. In the seasons of obvious 'No 1' leaders such as Moses, Joshua, Judges, or the Kings, it appears that the elders still held a crucial role in overseeing and governing the people under the leadership of the 'set-man' leader. In the absence of No 1 leaders the elders were probably the highest authority.

Elders in Israel are first mentioned in Ex 3:16 when God instructs Moses to "*Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them...*". Following the Exodus 18 Jethro reshuffle, it seems the leadership layout was Moses the 'set man', then elders, and then other appointed officials. We might even regard this as a pre-shadow of the New Testament pattern of leadership.

There were different types of elders:

- Elders of Tribes - Dt 31:28
- Elders of Towns - Dt 19-25
- Elders of Cities - Pr 32:23, Josh 20:4

The elders worked with other leadership positions:

- Elders & Officials & Judges – Josh 8:33
- Elders & Heads of Tribes & Family Chiefs - 1 Kings 8:1
- Elders & Priests - Lam 1:19

The nation of Israel continued with this kind of leadership layout into the era of Jesus and the early church, although by this time groups such as *Pharisees, Chief Priests* and *Teachers of the Law* were now in play along with the old faithful office of elders:

*"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the **elders**?" (Mt 15:2)*

*"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the **elders, chief priests and teachers of the law**" (Mt 16:21)*

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "**Rulers and elders of the people...**" (Acts 4:8)*

Elders in the Early Church

The first apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, adopted the term *elders* from the government of Israel, and used it to designate the group of men who governed local churches. It must have been fascinating to watch the process by which they decided to adopt this name – I imagine on the ‘plus’ side was the fact that eldership was a concept already familiar to the people, but I expect there would have been the concern of not wanting to be seen as too similar to the more secular ‘elders’ of the day! But anyway, I am thrilled that elders have such a mighty heritage rooted in the Old Covenant people of God.

The early apostles led the Jerusalem local church, presumably at first doubling-up as local church apostles and elders.

In Acts 6, due to the pressures of a growing ministry **servicing leaders/deacons** were appointed to help run the Jerusalem local church. The church grew and flourished. Then by Acts 8, believers and apostles were beginning to travel, with some local church ministries spilling out into the surrounding region such as Philip, Peter and John to Samaria, Peter to Cornelius’ house, and some believers to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, and so on. **Somewhere along the way elders were appointed because Acts 11:30 mentions elders in Jerusalem.**

The sending off of Barnabas and Paul from Antioch was a crucial moment in the history of New Testament leadership, because it was the **deliberate re-designation of local men (presumably elders) to trans-local apostles**, although I doubt at the time that they would have been too concerned to get these labels right! The Holy Spirit prompted this sending out of key men from the local church rather than ‘forced’ factors such as persecution that scattered the Jerusalem church. Because the remainder of Acts is given over mostly to Paul’s travels out of Antioch, it is hard to know what local and trans-local developments occurred over the years in Jerusalem. But the basic apostolic pattern that we see emerging is **apostles planting new churches and appointing local elders to continue the local work (e.g. Acts 14:23).**

Elders in Eternity

In the book of Revelation there are a group of elders, it seems 24, which are mentioned in various capacities 12 times in Revelation. It is not clear exactly who they are, but it is wonderful seeing the progression of elders from the earliest days of Israel through to the Great Eternal Throne. What a mighty company elders are part of!

CHAPTER 4

THE THINGS AN ELDER NEEDS TO BE

This chapter and the next chapter are the 'guts' of this booklet. They deal respectively with what an elder is, and what he does.

Definition

By piecing together many of the things that are said about elders in the bible, I have arrived at the following definition of an elder:

An elder is a man who is called and gifted by God, who with other elders has the responsibility for leading a local church. Scripture portrays him as a man who is:

- *Shaped by apostolic ministry*
- *Able to lead himself*
- *Able to lead his family*
- *Able to lead his local church*

I will now unpack this definition by drawing on the following selection of scriptures from 1 Peter 5, 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, Titus 2, 1 Peter 5. Here they are:

1 Peter 5:1-4 (NIV)

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; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 Timothy 3:1-15 (NIV)

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. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Titus 1:5-9 (NIV)

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 2:1-2, 6-8 (NIV)

You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance (Titus 2:1-2)

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. (Titus 2:6-8)

Three important things to note about these scriptures

As we approach these wonderful passages, it is good to remember three things:

Firstly, the qualifications for eldership that are mentioned are not exhaustive. There are other characteristics of leadership mentioned elsewhere in the bible that are also pertinent to eldership.

Secondly, the qualifications for eldership that are mentioned in these passages are traits, not legalistic laws. None of the characteristics that are mentioned are completely quantifiable. For example, an elder must be “eager to serve” (1 Peter 5), but we are not told exactly how eager he must be, nor how this eagerness should be displayed. An elder must “manage his own family well” (1 Timothy 3:4), but it is not absolutely clear how “well” his family should be. All the qualities mentioned are things that an elder should possess in a significant and an ever-increasing manner. These lists are to be used as a plumb line, not a pedantic measuring tape.

Thirdly, our pursuit of these qualifications for eldership is primarily that we may conform more and more to the image of Christ, not primarily to attain to elder status. The reason for pursuing these characteristics is to be more sanctified. Then, as we become that, we may become eligible for leadership. This is a very important point: if our desire for sanctification is only for leadership then when we are not leading, we may retreat out of these godly characteristics into something worse. Therefore, these character traits are applicable for every follower of Jesus, whether in leadership or not, or whether desiring leadership or not.

CHARACTERISTIC 1: SHAPED BY APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

It is true that no verse explicitly declares, “an elder must be shaped by apostles”, but it is everywhere implied. And it is absolutely crucial. I have had experience of elderships that are not continually influenced by apostles, as well as elderships that are, and the difference between them is staggering. But laying experiential evidence aside, my theological argument is simple:

1. I believe in the on-going ministry of apostles today
2. Apostles foundationally shape local churches
3. Elders lead local churches
4. Therefore elders, more than any other group, need to be continually exposed to and envisioned and equipped by apostles and their teams.

***Whatever is embodied in the elders will be embodied in the body.
So...
elders on apostolic foundations will result in local churches on
apostolic foundations.***

What will a man, whose life is built on an apostolic foundation, look like?

1. He will be well-built

Apostles are foundation layers and a key element of foundations is that of completeness or wholeness. Left to ourselves, we will never attain the breadth of revelation that we need to be well founded, often drifting off in the direction of our personal preferences and bias. Many Christians seem to have their lives founded on jelly – one day they are wobbling to the left, the next to the right ... and the next on the ground – splat. But God intends us to live on Christ-like foundations that will anchor us into the Word, the Spirit, significant relationships, and his mighty plan for our lives. God wants us to be robust, balanced and secure in the face of the storms of life and the trickery of the devil. A person who is exposed and receptive to apostolic ministry will know much of this wonderful stability and joy that comes from being founded on the glorious, multi-faceted person of Christ. This is where apostles are especially gifted to help us: Paul told the Ephesian elders that he did not hesitate to declare to them the “whole will of God”¹. Apostles have the ability to see the bigger picture of God’s purposes on the earth, and to cope with the breadth of doctrine in the Word. The heartfelt desire of an apostle is “that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of

¹ Acts 20:27

God”¹. Do you see it? Apostles bring to elders fullness, breadth and stability.

2. He will have good government and peace

Secondly, he will be a man whose life is well governed and full of peace. Isaiah tells us that “of the increase of his (Christ’s) government and peace there will be no end”². Part of the role of modern-day apostles is to bring government to the church, that there might be peace. Peter and Paul never usurped the authority of the elders in local churches, but they were never shy to contend for their God-given authority in doctrine and conduct in the church³. Good government always brings peace. In terms of the individual, if Jesus is on the throne, then peace will manifest. If ‘self’ or some other contender is on the throne of an individual, then don’t be surprised if chaos and aggravation ensue. Apostles help to ensure good godly government in the individual.

3. He will be outward-looking

Thirdly, he will be a man who is outward-looking, and living for the good of others and the extension of the rule of God. The Greek word that “apostle” comes from is “apostolos” meaning “sent one”. Jesus, the apostle of apostles, is of course the ultimate ‘sent one’, leaving heaven and breaking through into the unreached region of earth. Apostles have been following suit ever since, never content to stay in one place but always working to take the gospel to the next place. An individual with apostolic foundations will also be unselfish and never clinging to his comfort zone⁴, full of a passionate involvement in the bigger picture of world mission through church planting.

Whatever is embodied in the elders will be embodied in the body.

So...

elders on apostolic foundations will result in local churches on apostolic foundations.

¹ Eph 3:19

² Is 9:7

³ Acts 15:28; 1 Cor 4:21; Gal 3:1; 1 Tim 3:15

⁴ Phil 2:6-8

CHARACTERISTIC 2: ABLE TO LEAD HIMSELF

Inside then outside

On August 28, 1963, at a Civil Rights March in Washington D.C., Martin Luther King uttered the now immortalized words:

“I have a dream ... that my four little children may one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character”.

The credibility of leadership in the church rests not on the colour of skin, nor eloquence, nor gifting and charisma, nor any other external matter – it rests on the content of the internal character of the leader. Watch how Jesus explains this to the Pharisees:

*“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees! **First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean...** You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones” (Mt 23:25-27).*

Friends, it all starts with constantly keeping the inside of your cup clean. In my three favourite passages on eldership¹, the instruction of the apostles is heavily weighted towards the character and personal life of an elder, to “cleaning the inside of his cup”. The emphasis is **character** more than **gifting**, and on **being** rather than **doing**. Once we ‘**be**’ clean, we will start to ‘**do**’ clean, because the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart². The starting point is the **internal government** of the elder, moving from there outwards into external ruling spheres of his life and ministry.

Self then others

Like Jesus, Paul’s concern is also for “*first cleaning the inside of the cup*”. He exhorts the Ephesian elders to “*keep watch over yourselves and all the flock*”³ and tells Timothy to “*watch your life and doctrine closely*”⁴ **Leading yourself comes before leading others**, and before leading in matters of doctrine. It is not only biblical leaders that agree with this principle of leadership:

¹ 1 Tim 3 & 4; Titus 1 & 2; 1 Peter 5

² Mt 12:34

³ Acts 20:28

⁴ 1 Tim 4:16

“He that would govern others, first should be the master of himself” (Philip Massinger)

“I’ve had more trouble with DL Moody than any other man alive” (DL Moody)

“Looking back my life seems to be one long obstacle course, with me as the chief obstacle” (Jack Paar)

When asked over what kingdom did he rule, Frederick the Great of Prussia replied, “Over myself, yes, over myself”.

The first responsibility a leader has is to oversee and shepherd himself. Good governance of self is a prerequisite to governing others, although let me quickly add that successfully leading ourselves is not something we complete before tackling the challenge of leading our families and churches - it is an on-going operation! In this on-going battle, a mighty weapon is the fruit of self-control.

The fruit of self-control

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness **and self-control**. Against such things there is no law.” (Gal 5:22-23)*

“Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control” (Prov 25:28)

A city with no walls is open to attack from anywhere at anytime, and it will be unable to repel these attacks. **Elders are men who are often under special attack from the world, the flesh and the devil.** If elders are going to finish the race, they need some pretty solid defensive walls of self-control! Both 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 include self-control in the list of qualifications for eldership, and it is there for both older men and younger men in Titus 2. In fact, **self-control is the only thing Paul tells Timothy to teach young men!** Learning to lead yourself is the key preparation necessary to lead others. If young men can win this battle early, then they will develop into fine leaders.

“In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victories they won were over themselves...self discipline with all of them came first” (Harry Truman)

Let us now turn our attention to our passages of scripture:

Stable

Temperate (1 Tim 3:2); Not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7)

Temperance means stable, and not prone to extremes. Temperate leaders are consistent in what they say and do. Elders might not be Mr. Flashy, but they must be Mr. Solid. Temperate elders bring comfort and stability to a church. Churchill once said of the General Tudor who resisted the great German advance of 1918: *“The impression I had of Tudor was of an iron peg hammered into the frozen ground, immovable.”*¹ Elders are to be like this. Being quick-tempered undermines temperance, and usually damages the sheep. Have you noticed that people tend to forget the 100 times that you were restrained, but remember forever the time that you lost your cool?

Of good reputation

Above reproach (1 Tim 3:2); blameless (Titus 1:6, 7); of good reputation with outsiders (1 Tim 3:7); upright (Titus 1:8)

Note that the devil has set a trap for elders². Where is he likely to lay one for you? Where are you weakest? Stop! Think about that. Don't read on until you have. Elders must have unquestionable actions in terms of their relationships, business dealings and every area of life. *Before appointing someone to leadership in the church, give his boss a call!* On debatable issues, so long as they are not pandering to the legalistic whims of others, or compromising the word of God, elders should take the safest line so as not to cause anyone to stumble – stay above reproach.

Respectable (1 Tim 3:2); worthy of respect (1 Tim 3:8)

A memorable line from the movie 'Braveheart' was “Men do not follow titles, they follow courage”. The title of 'elder' should only be given to those who have earned respect through consistent godly living.

Tested

First tested (1 Tim 3:10); trustworthy (Titus 1:7)

I love the King James Version of 1 Timothy 5:22: *“Lay hands suddenly on no man”*, and in the New International Version: *“Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands”*. Laying-on hands is easy. Laying-off hands is traumatic. Whilst the only ultimate guarantee of an elder *finishing strong* is his own walk with God, appointing elders is not meant to be an exercise in guesswork! It is not a lottery. Jesus tells us that the way to remove much of the gamble-factor is **proven track record**: When the writer of Hebrews says that the followers should *“consider the outcome of our (the leaders’) way of life”*³, the ‘outcome’ that he is referring to is proven track record.

¹ Winston Churchill; ‘The World Crisis’

² 1 Tim 3:7

³ Heb 13:7

How has his life turned out over a meaningful length of time? What is the fruit? Jesus said in Luke 16:10-12 that if man is faithful with little, then you can trust him with more, and that if he is faithful with another's, then he can have his own, and that if he is faithful in the natural things, then he can be entrusted with spiritual responsibility. This is a principle to be observed. So don't rush in. Watch for another 6 months. Let people do the job before publicly setting them apart to do the job that they are actually already doing! This can lead to some frustrations (i.e. doing the job without the increased authority and gifting that comes through the laying on of hands), but it is an important part of testing and proving.

He must not be a recent convert ... or conceited (1 Tim 3:6)

In my second year of leading a church, we were in desperate need of more small-group leaders. So I merrily promoted two recent converts into positions of small-group leadership, assuming that God would make an exception in my case. Guess what? Both became proud and fell away causing hurt and division. How much less should we rush someone through into eldership!

A novice in the faith is more susceptible to falling into pride than a maturing believer. The blindness that pride brings prevents us from walking circumspectly and can lead to abuse of authority and damage to the sheep.

An elder should not only be well founded in God's Word and the doctrines of the faith, but also will have had some practical experience in leading in the church. However, this should not be an excuse to hold people back from leadership. Jesus did quite the opposite with his disciples. In the similar passage written to Titus, Paul did not include this qualification for leadership, although he included all the others. We might conclude that in Titus' situation of pioneering a new and difficult scene in Crete, as opposed to an established church scenario (such as Timothy was involved in), there is greater licence and grace given to appointing newer Christians to leadership positions. Some of the churches that Paul planted and later returned to, to appoint elders, had only been going a very short time indeed. But beware.

Disciplined (Titus 1:8)

An ordered and disciplined life helps maximise our time and potential, and helps keep us temperate. Eldering is busy and we need to keep our lives in balance if we are to stay sane and godly. Cornelius is a source of inspiration in this regard¹. All at the same time, he held down a busy and responsible job as a centurion; he ensured that both *he and his family* were devoted and God-fearing; he was generous and prayerful, and the community respected him. Not bad going! I think we should pray for the discipline of Cornelius!

¹ Acts 10:1-2, 22

Not violent but gentle (1 Tim 3:3); Not violent (Titus 1:7); Not quarrelsome (1 Tim 3:3)

Elders should be bringers of peace. They should not have a combative spirit. Elders should live out these scriptures:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ forgave you (Eph 4:32)

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently (Gal 6:1)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph 4:2)

Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (1 Tim 2:25)

Sincere (1 Tim 3:8)

Elders are to be transparent. What you see is what you get. Their ‘yes’ means ‘yes’ and their ‘no’ means ‘no’. They ooze ‘trustworthiness’. Elders and deacons need to be people of pure hearts and open spirits who you inherently trust. The outward sign of internal sincerity is dignity. Dignity is one of the magnetic characteristics of great leaders. Dignity seems to be similar to meekness, which is ‘strength under control’. It is to do with a ‘quiet seriousness’.

Handling alcohol

Not given to drunkenness (1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7); Not indulging in much wine (1 Tim 3:8)

John Stott writes: “Paul did not require them to be total abstainers, since Jesus himself turned water into wine, and made wine the emblem of his blood. Yet there are strong social arguments for total abstinence, since much reckless, violent and immoral behaviour is due to excessive drinking. What Paul requires, however, is moderation, as an example of the self-mastery already mentioned”.¹ But clearly, in view of this specific command, if an elder chooses to drink alcohol, then in so doing he must remain absolutely above reproach and not open to any accusation of ‘tipsiness’ – let alone drunkenness! Furthermore, he should avoid stumbling those who, for various reasons, find alcohol offensive.

¹ John Stott’s commentary on 1 Timothy (IVP 1996),

Handling money

Not a lover of money (1 Tim 3:3); not pursuing dishonest gain (1 Tim 3:8; Titus 1:7); not greedy for money (1 Pet 5:2)

If the average Christian must choose whether they will serve God or Mammon, how much more must an elder choose! I would summarise Paul's teaching on money like this: **to the leaders** he explains that whilst they do actually have 'rights' which includes receiving material remuneration for their work¹, it is not something that they should fight for. They are worthy of their wages, but should, at all times, maintain a servant attitude and learn the secret of contentment.² And **to those who should look after the leaders**, he strongly exhorts them not to muzzle the ox, and even to think of them in terms of double honour (1 Tim 5:17-18). It is simple: until a person is free from the love of money, do not make him an elder. If elders love money, they may end up pedalling the gospel for gain. If they have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, do not entrust them with true riches³. Are they tithing and offering regularly? Do they respond to Gift Days? Elders should lead in giving as well as the other spiritual disciplines.

¹ 1 Cor 9:1-27; 1 Tim 5:17-18

² Heb 13:5

³ Lk 16:11

CHARACTERISTIC 3: ABLE TO LEAD HIS FAMILY

In the later chapter about personal anchors for elders, one of the anchors is *Family Time Priority* where I give some tips on leading in the home. But here are some biblical requirements for eldership pertaining to home life:

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect (1 Tim 3:4); whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient (Titus 1:6)

The 'logic' is that the church is a 'greater house', and that those who lead in the 'greater' must first succeed in the 'lesser'. The home is the ultimate discipleship forum. Your wife and kids live with you 24/7. What better proof of a man's character and godliness than his wife and kids? Help us, Lord!! The bible does not get specific about exactly how in order the home must be, nor does it give a cut-off age when children cease to be children. Therefore, in the instance of teenage rebellion I believe we need to be cautious and generous.

Husband of but one wife (1 Tim 3:2 & Titus 1:6)

Whilst scripture does not prohibit single men from being elders, the assumption is that they would be family men. In John Stott's commentary on 1 Timothy (IVP 1996), he states the 5 most common interpretations of this verse, and then concludes that Paul was certainly prohibiting polygamy, but was not prohibiting single men from being elders, and certainly not from taking on lesser positions of responsibility. Stott feels that the nature of this statement is along the lines of prohibiting those in 'marital unfaithfulness' from leadership positions. The great debate is whether it relates to past failures or current attitude and behaviour, as this has a bearing on whether divorcees and others can become elders.

Hospitable (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:8)

This is not just a simple command to be sociable; it is much deeper than that. Because the Church is primarily a family, the elders must be willing and skilled in the art of hospitality. This will set the family 'tone' of the church. If the private homes of the leaders are open and welcoming, then the public home of the church will be likewise. Don't think that good hospitality necessitates spending a great deal of money – you can be very hospitable with very little! It is noteworthy that elders should be particularly hospitable to 'strangers and foreigners'. This promotes an evangelistic, 'seeker-sensitive' and cross-cultural atmosphere in the church. The gift of hospitality is among the most important gifts for evangelism and church planting. Apart from opening our homes to people, another important out-working of hospitality is that we open our *lives* to others, and help them open their lives to us. This can be done through engaging conversation that relaxes and draws people out. A helpful technique to make people feel loved and accepted (which is the goal of hospitality) is to ask them

questions rather than rabbit on and on yourself! It is also good to be able to chat with people about different things such as hobbies and sport, rather than drying up after you have spoken about church!

CHARACTERISTIC 4: ABLE TO LEAD HIS LOCAL CHURCH

The next chapter deals further with the ‘job description’ of an elder under the headings of *embodying, praying, guarding, guiding and governing*. But here are some biblical requirements pertaining to how an elder must lead in the local church:

Examples to the flock (1 Pet 5:3)

Jesus is committed to having his bride led by authentic elders who act the same in public as they do in private, who are able to say “*be imitators of us and of the Lord*”¹ and “*consider the outcome of our way of life*”². Leaders must live amongst the people - if all the people see of the leader is pulpit - hotel room - limousine – preaching – airplane, then there is not much to consider! Let’s stay in each other’s homes; let’s do small group times that are up-close-and-personal as well as the big meetings. Like Gideon, let us be able to say to our troops: “Watch me and follow my lead ... do exactly as I do”³. Because leadership is all about modelling life so that others can imitate, your ‘walk must match your talk’. Someone who is not bearing visible fruit is not only not ready to lead, but will not succeed in leading others. For people to respect and trust you, you must “walk the talk”. Albert Schweitzer said, “*Example is not the best way to influence others – it is the only way*”.

Not over-bearing (Titus 1:7); not lording it over those entrusted to you (1 Pet 5:3)

This does not mean that we adopt a soft-and-mushy leadership style. We must lead strongly yet tenderly, and avoid being bossy, over-bearing and manipulative. The point is this: the people we lead have never been ours, they are currently not ours, and they never will be ours. They belong to the Chief Shepherd. He is their Lord. We are servant leaders who will have to give an account of how we lead⁴. You can lead the flock to the water but you can’t make them drink – even if it means that you don’t look quite so ‘successful’! Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.

¹ 1 Thess 1:6

² Heb 13:7

³ Jud 7:17

⁴ Heb 13:17

Handling the Word: Able to teach (1 Tim 3:2)

Notice that this is the first and only qualification in this passage that pertains to gifting, rather than character. But there is a significant character element to teaching in that it involves an authentic lifestyle, study and preparation. The ability to influence others in terms of 'life and doctrine' is inextricably linked to 'teaching'. Elders should ask God for this spiritual gift, and then do all in their power to fan it into flame. Whilst some elders may be less gifted than others in public preaching, I feel that with diligence and grace they can improve to at least 'hold their own' preaching on a Sunday, and certainly be able to effectively teach in a small-group setting.

Handling the Word: In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned (Titus 2:7-8). Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (Titus 1:9)

If you want to be an elder, the bare-minimum is that you have a working knowledge of the bible. Your knowledge needs to be sufficient to even argue your case to **refute** heretics! Get studying, boys!

Paul also says we must be able to **hold firmly** to the basic truths of the faith. There is something in the wicked heart of man to be always craving the 'new'. Whilst we should eagerly seek deeper revelation, we should never tire of the basic truths of our faith. This is our safeguard leading to firmly established people and churches. So don't get upset if you hear another sermon telling you what you already know. It is actually good news because now you know that you know something. Wouldn't it be terrible if all we ever heard were things we didn't know? Look at Paul's commitment to the basic truths:

"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you" (Phil 3:1)

"So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body"
(2 Pet 1:12-13)

Handling the Word: Keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a pure conscience (1 Tim 3:9)

In matters of doctrine, leaders must have a **pure conscience**. This means that the things we teach, we must honestly believe *for ourselves*. We must imitate the noble Bereans in Acts 17:11. This is why it is important to discuss and work through doctrinal issues, rather than having a 'rule-book' that everyone has to 'line-up' with. We must believe what we believe deeply, with a pure conscience.

Willing and eager to serve (1 Pet 5:2)

God wants us to be willing and eager. I love this word *eager*. It means being always ready to step up to the plate. It means being 100% involved and pumping with passion – rather like God himself is. Jonty Rhodes, one of the world's greatest cricket fielders, tells how he is eager that every ball comes to him. Similarly, elders must long for opportunities to elder people. One of the things I love about Terry Virgo is that after being an elder for several decades, he still gets a gleam in his eye and a smile on his face when walking into a church meeting. He just can't get enough!

Returning now to the commitment factor, there is no other way to build a local church than the whole team of elders and their wives giving it 100% effort. I love the passage in 1 Chron 9:22-34 that describes David's gatekeepers as being radically committed. "*They would spend the night stationed around the house of God, because they had to guard it; and they had charge of the key for opening it each morning.*"¹ Full-time elders must not be lazy, and elders who also have other jobs must be sure that they are able to give their work as an elder sufficient priority, and not fit it in as a 'hobby'.

Motivated by the crown of glory (1 Pet 5:4)

Our eagerness & commitment is fuelled by the lure of the unfading crown of glory that we will get when we die. It will happen. It is worth it. All our toil and sacrifice will be remembered and no 'debt' will be left unpaid. Can you believe how good God is? He gives us our amazing salvation totally for free, then gives us the privilege and fulfilment of serving him, and then, wait for it showers us with rewards and 'crowns' for all eternity. Thank you, Jesus! God has designed crowns and rewards as a motivation to faithfulness². If elders' eyes are fixed on eternal rewards, they will stay unattached to the fanciful delights of this world. We can endure temporary loss because of eternal gain. This sure is motivating.

¹ 1 Chron 9:27

² Mt 16:27; Mk 10:21; Rev 22:12

CHAPTER 5

THE THINGS AN ELDER NEEDS TO DO

This chapter and the previous chapter are the real ‘guts’ of this booklet in that they deal respectively with what an elder *is*, and what he *does*. I have chosen these headings to talk about what an elder does:

Embodying. Praying. Guarding. Guiding. Governing.

The following chapter elaborates a little bit more on the *overseeing* role that an elder has.

Embodying vision and values

Most of the instruction in the scriptures to elders is about their character – about the things that they should **be** rather than the things that they should **do**. And although the previous chapter (a long one!) is entirely about all the things that elders should **be**, I want to emphasize this point again at the outset of this **doing** chapter. If an apple tree is really an apple tree then it will bear the fruit of apples. If a father is sulky and aggressive, his kids will probably turn out the same. And if the elders embody the vision and values of the church then this will naturally reproduce in the rest of the church. The vision and values of a local church are not just abstract things that we aspire to as a corporate body – they are things that each living stone of the house must be soaked through with...especially the elders.

Praying

Prayer is an obvious part of *guarding* and *guiding* and *governing*, but I think that it is such a key part of an elders job that it needs a title all of its own. Jesus said that his church should be a house of prayer, so those who lead his church should be men of prayer. When elders pray it demonstrates that they truly believe that they are actually under-shepherds of Jesus, and that He is the one who is building his church; prayer is the demonstration that we really believe in the work of God’s spirit, as opposed to our own might and power”.¹ Prayer keeps us in a safe place of faith and humility. Prayer tunes us into the promptings of God and gives us a heart for the people. And if you want a praying church, then, it will flow from praying elders. One of the personal anchors mentioned in the final chapter is *prayer and fasting* where I elaborate a little more on this topic.

¹ Zechariah 4:6

Guarding

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. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears (Acts 20:28-31)

Watch your life and doctrine closely (1 Tim 4:16)

Guard yourselves: Because eldering is primarily about *being* rather than *doing*, Paul's first concern is that elders keep themselves in a good place with God. When the shepherds lower their guard, the wolves can move in easier on the flock. Assists to guarding self include:

- Cultivating deep and accountable relationships within the eldership team. We occasionally have elders meetings where we start by praying for each other and sharing how we are doing as individuals, and sometimes run out time and never get to the actual business of running the church! But guarding ourselves *is* the most crucial part of church business.
- Paying attention to the personal anchors mentioned in the final chapter.
- Having people that regularly pray for you. It is important to trust God for sensible and secure people who will see it as a joyful responsibility to pray especially for the elders.
- Having apostolic input from travelling men who are able to come in and see signs of trouble that may not be so obvious to the elders.

Guard the truth: A common apostolic theme is warning of heresy. This is because the word of God is sacred and must be protected, but also because both *truth and lies* are powerful. Wonky doctrine produces wonky lives. Dangerous doctrine produces dangerous lives. Sound doctrine produces sound lives. Elders need to be clear about the main doctrines and hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, and encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (Titus 1:9). Outright heresy will hopefully not be taught within the church because those who preach will be those known by the elders, but occasionally imbalances can creep in that the elders need to be alert to and correct.

In our context in Southern Africa, a growing number of our people are exposed to preaching from Christian channels on satellite TV, and we continually need to combat the man-centred gospel and legalistic tendencies that sometimes come through the airwaves, so beautifully dressed up to deceive.

Guard the flock: In addition to guarding the flock from themselves and from heresy, Paul mentions ‘wolves’. These are people who bring danger to the flock such as false teachers, the sexually immoral, those who are negative and gossiping, and those causing division and strife. Other wolfish activities may be people seeking position and influence for wrong motives, or men coming into the church just to “catch a babe” (Zimbabwean expression for a guy having impure intentions on women). How can elders guard the flock from wolves?

1. *By normal church life:* much guarding of the flock (prevention and cure) is done automatically through elders *living the life* themselves and simply through the accountability-mechanisms of daily church life.
2. *By preaching and teaching:* The word of God is useful for “*teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*” (2 Tim 3:16), so a good standard of preaching and teaching in a church will leave little room for wolves to operate.
3. *By a decent process of receiving new members:* The New Testament envisages local churches knowing which people regard themselves as members. The “good shepherd” in John 10 knows who his sheep are, and so should the under-shepherds if they are to oversee them effectively.¹ A decent new members course that adds people to your number², coupled with incoming new members having a good chat with one of the elders, is a good combination to ferret out incoming issues and situations that might cause harm to the flock, and to help incoming members attune themselves to the vision and values of the family that they are joining.
4. *By confrontation:* sadly confrontation and radical action is sometimes needed, and elders cannot shy away from this: Paul’s commission to Titus on Crete involved the appointment of elders “**because there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers who must be silenced**”.³

¹ Acts 20:28

² Acts 2:21

³ Titus 1:10

Church discipline can range from confrontation leading to repentance and appropriate restitution, to stepping people back from leadership, to public rebuke, through to actually putting people out of the church. Scriptures to study include Gal 6:1, Mt 18:15f, Rms 16:17f, Titus 3:9f, and 1 Cor 5:1f. The level of discipline will be determined by factors such as:

- (a) the nature of the offence
- (b) the position of the person in the church, and
- (c) their degree of receptivity to the rebuke.

Guiding

Elders guide the church like shepherds (Acts 20:28f and 1 Peter 5:1-4). Elders are out-in-front as the primary vision-bearers and pace setters. They lead their church into the likeness of Christ, and on mission into the neighbourhoods and nations.

Governing

Governing means to direct the affairs of the church¹, which needs to be done diligently². The next chapter entitled *Keeping Church Simple* elaborates on the need for elders to be bigger-picture men who oversee rather than getting bogged down in detail. Elders govern the church through:

- (a) Preaching and teaching
- (b) The setting of vision, values and vehicles (see next chapter)
- (c) The setting of strategy i.e. the pace and direction of the church in different seasons
- (d) The appointment of leaders (1 Tim 5:22)
- (e) Thorough discipleship of the believers
- (f) Performing church discipline when necessary (guarding)

¹ 1 Timothy 5:17

² Rms 12:8

CHAPTER 6

AUTHORITY OF ELDERS

Whilst elder authority has genuine 'bite', it is an authority exercised by mature men whose personal character and lifestyle are above reproach, and who feel a grave sense of responsibility and accountability before God and man.

Where does the elders' authority come from?

From God...or else we are in real trouble! John Stott writes, 'The New Testament never contemplates the grotesque situation in which the church commissions and authorises people to exercise a ministry for which they both lack the divine call and the divine equipment' (John R W Stott, God's New Society, IVP, 1971). All positions of authority derive authority from God (Rom. 13:1), especially leaders in the church. Jesus as head of the church appoints its leaders (Acts 20:28, Eph. 4:7-13). For example, Paul's only defense for his authority and apostleship was that God had authorised him (Col. 1:1).

How is this authority recognised and established?

An elder is recognised and appointed when three different groups acknowledge eldership gifting and character on a man. The groups are apostles (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5), other elders (1 Tim. 4:14), and the local congregation.

How do the elders express this authority?

By being convinced of their God-given authority to guard, guide and govern: Acts 20:28 contains a helpful summary of how elders should express their God-given authority. First, they must engage with the truth that God Himself has made them overseers of a precious people whom God Himself has purchased with His own blood. Elders who marinate in this dynamic duo of truth will remain tender in their dealings with those who follow them. They will be strong in their sense of calling and authority to lead, but also humble, reverent and respectful in their serving of the church, as is appropriate to those who are looking after another man's wife...the Bride of Christ!

By governing themselves: They must give primary concern to governing themselves...even before governing the flock (Acts 20:28). Leadership of self precedes leadership of others; cleaning the inside of the cup precedes all externals (Matt. 23:25). Elders must 'watch their lives and doctrine closely' (1 Tim. 4:16). Leadership is not only about being skilled in doctrine,

but also about exhibiting godly lives that reflect sound doctrine. Just as Jesus, the Living Word, lived amongst us, so a local flock should be able to witness godliness in their elders' character.

By guarding doctrine: Since God's Word is our final authority, elders will express their authority by teaching and preaching the Bible, refuting heresy and protecting the church from false teachers (1 Tim 3:15).

By governing the flock: To govern the flock means to guide and guard the affairs of the church (1 Tim. 5:17). Therefore, elders set the vision and strategy, and pace and priorities of the local church. They will recognise and release the saints into ministry, appoint other deacons and leaders, and be responsible for the raising and spending of funds. In short, elders are responsible for all areas of church life, but must never slip into hyper-shepherding the individual lives of the people, always respecting each believer's liberty and conscience in Christ.

How should people embrace this authority?

With respect and obedience: Many Scriptures teach appropriate submission and obedience to leaders, for example Hebrews 13:17, 'Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.' This is not merely because of their self-sacrificing and challenging work, but because they will one day be called to account by God for how they have cared for the souls entrusted to them by the Good Shepherd Himself.

With honour and generosity: 'The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages"' (1 Tim. 5:17-18). The meaning of 'double honour' is not crystal clear but at least Paul's point is that they need to be sincerely appreciated, supported, encouraged and rewarded.

With participation not passivity: Submission does not imply passivity! Although not all lead and teach, every member is vital and must be vigilant that the affairs of the church are conducted in a Biblical manner. Any eldership that didn't involve the participation of others in decision-making would be guilty of violating the principle of the priesthood of all believers.

Alexander Strauch summarises, 'The eldership must always seek the counsel and mind of those they lead. No clergy-laity division exists between elders and congregation. Instead, there is a tightly knit, delicate, and reciprocal relationship. All are equal brethren. However, there are leaders and followers in a horizontal relationship...In the end, no ultimate cures, formulas, or constitutional procedures for decision-making will safeguard

the church's peace and unity. Only humble, wise, servant shepherds can lead the flock through decisions and conflict in love, peace, and unity. Both the elders and congregation play a vital role in this process, and neither should ever be down-played, overlooked, or elevated beyond the biblical design' (Alexander Strauch, Biblical Eldership, Lewis & Roth Publishers, Colorado; Pg 362-364).

CHAPTER 7

KEEPING CHURCH SIMPLE

Of course, much of the detail of church life cannot be kept simple, and a vibrant, growing church will have various and challenging complexities. My plea in this chapter is *not* for us to become minimalist in our leading of churches, nor for us to cease to try and engage our community and disciple people with all the relevance and diversity that we can. Rather, it is for us to **keep a basically simple and reproducible form of church** that is accessible to future elders and church plants.

In view of their calling to **oversee**, elders must not get bogged down in one area of church no matter how vital or exciting it may be. The elders must ensure that the ‘wineskin’ of the church is made of the right stuff to ensure that the ‘wine’ of the church is free to expand. To use an analogy from art, elders must ensure that the basics are in place such as the frame, the canvas and the background colours. These are the apostolic foundations on which all the important ‘detail’ of church can in due course be painted in.

I consider the ‘frame, canvas and background colours’ of a local church to be the **vision**, the **values** and the **vehicles** of the church.

*The **vision** is where you are trying to go, and the **values** are the principles that you will adhere to in order to get there, and the **vehicles** are the practical ways that the vision and the values can be ‘done’.*

These 3 V’s can make a good outline for a new members course.

Vision

The vision is where you are trying to go. It is the goal that you are shooting at. It needs to be *simple* (so people can get a grip on it), and *expandable* and *enduring* (so it can still work for you as you grow in numbers and revelation). And it of course needs to be *biblical*. Don’t go for the latest fad or trend or preference. Work out what you feel the call of God on his worldwide church is, and go for that, applying it to your context.

Values

The values are the biblical principles that you will pursue en route to fulfilling your vision. We currently have about 20 values that we feel represent our understanding of a biblical local church, most of them drawn from the early chapters of Acts. They act as a plumb line to help us stay on track.

Vehicles

These are the practical things that you do to 'do' your vision and values. I think they include the basic meetings, courses, events and projects in the church. So we should only do these things if they are effective in forwarding our vision. That is the test. And when we do them they should be *soaked through* with our values.

CHAPTER 8

APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS

“The main way to regulate and consolidate the life of a church is to secure for it gifted and conscientious pastoral oversight”¹

Early on in the life of a new church, there will probably be an apostle and his team helping the church get established. In the early stage of a new church, it is likely that the generic term “leaders” (Heb 13:7, 17) will be used to describe anyone in leadership. But after a while, those amongst the leaders with *elder potential* need to be acknowledged and set in place. This is what Paul and Barnabas did in maturing churches in Acts 14, and what Paul commissioned Titus to do in Crete.

Four parties involved in appointing elders in the bible

The appointment of elders seems to involve the following 4 parties:

God: Paul reminds the elders in Miletus that it was the Holy Spirit that made them overseers (Acts 20:28), and of course all pastors and teachers have been given by Christ himself (Eph 4:11).

Apostles: On their first apostolic trip the apostles Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23), and we may assume that the Jerusalem apostles did the same in their region of churches (Acts 11:30). Paul commissioned Titus to appoint elders in every town in Crete (Titus 1:5), and he told Timothy and Titus the characteristics that would qualify leaders for oversight of local churches (1 Tim 3 and Titus 1).

Other Elders: Timothy probably became an elder when the company of elders laid hands on him (1 Tim 4:14), and common sense tells us that fellow elders play a key role in approving and accepting a new man into their team.

The Local Church: Due to the emphasis on an elder’s good reputation & respect, clearly the local church itself needs to approve the appointment of their elders.

¹ John Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, IVP, 1996, Pg 173.

Four steps to appointment

There is no rigid process of appointment, but here is a scenario incorporating the above four groups:

1. Identified: *Apostles* particularly, seem to have a God-given 6th sense for identifying future elders, and existing *elders* certainly need to develop a 'nose' for potential elders. Usually the local elders will choose and the apostles confirm, but the apostles (or a wide-awake church member) may initially alert the elders to someone. What kind of things should we look out for in a potential elder?

- Emerging character, gifting, and love for Jesus.
- A humble spirit and a servant heart.
- The gifting to 'oversee' – the ability to preside over a broad and diverse ministry without getting tripped up by detail.
- The personality and people skills to get on well with the other elders, people of the church, and people outside the church.

Terry Virgo says that for a man to join the eldership team he must evidence character, gifting and relationship – i.e. he must be able to get on really well with the other elders. Bill Hybels agrees calling these three elements *character, charisma and chemistry*.

2. Tested, proven and disciplined: Once the man and his wife (assuming that he is married) are identified, they then need to be disciplined and tested and proven. This will probably happen by him spending more time with the elders, and him doing more 'elder-type' ministry, and as a couple spending increasing time with the other elders and wives. Maybe a wife of one of the other elders will especially try to get along side the potential elder's wife.

I love the King James Version of 1 Timothy 5:22: "*Lay hands suddenly on no man*", and in the New International Version: "*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands*". Laying-on hands is easy. Laying-off hands is traumatic. Whilst the only ultimate guarantee of an elder *finishing strong* is his own walk with God, appointing elders is not meant to be an exercise in guesswork. It is not a lottery. Jesus tells us that the way to remove much of the gamble-factor is ***proven track record***: When the writer of Hebrews says that the followers should "*consider the outcome of our (the leaders') way of life*"¹, the '*outcome*' that he is referring to is ***proven track record***. How has his life turned out over a meaningful length of time? What is the fruit?

¹ Heb 13:7

Jesus said in Luke 16:10-12 that if man is faithful with little, then you can trust him with more, and that if he is faithful with another's, then he can have his own, and that if he is faithful in the natural things, then he can be entrusted with spiritual responsibility. This is a principle to be observed!

So don't rush in. Watch for another 6 months. Let the man keep doing the job before publicly setting him apart to do the job that he is actually already doing. This can lead to some frustrations (i.e. doing the job without the increased authority and gifting that comes through the laying on of hands), but it is an important part of testing and proving.

3. Presented: Once the apostles and elders are satisfied that he is ready (not perfect, just ready), they will need to inform the local body of believers of their intention to make this man an elder in the near future. Hopefully, there will be an instant murmur of approval, but a week or two should be given to allow people to raise any objections. During the week leading up to his appointment, all concerned should do some dedicated **prayer & fasting** which is the biblical pattern for these massive leadership appointments (Acts 13:3, Acts 14:28).

4. Set-apart: Assuming that there is a satisfactory sense of approval from the body, then the man is ready to be appointed an elder of that local church. The way I do it is to preach into the role of elders during a Sunday meeting, and speak about the hand of God on the man and his wife. I then invite him and his wife forward and lay hands on them and pray for them – him for becoming an elder, and her for the new role as wife of an elder. After I have prayed, I will invite the elders of the church to join me and gather round and also lay hands on him and pray and prophesy. After that, I will invite the entire church to gather round and do the same. I think this '3 stage process' honours the roles of apostles, fellow elders, and the saints.

Plurality of Elders

Plurality of elders is the New Testament pattern. In the event of only one appointed elder, it is all the more important for this elder to work closely with an apostolic team, and with his leadership team in the church. And obviously the 'race is on' to ordain another viable elder as soon as possible.

CHAPTER 9

TERMINOLOGY FOR ELDERS: WHAT DO WE CALL THEM?

What does the bible say?

Acts 20: Paul asked the Ephesian *elders* to join him in Miletus (:17), but in :28 describes them as *overseers / bishops and shepherds*.

1 Peter 5: Peter writes to *elders*, charging them to be *overseers / bishops and shepherds*.

The words 'presbuteros' (elder / presbyter) and episkopos (bishop / overseer) refer to exactly the same office. The words are used interchangeably in scripture, and biblically it is not possible to make a distinction between the role of an elder and a bishop, as some churches have done. Maybe part of the reason for the inter-change was to capture something of their dignified *position* (elder) as well as something of their *function* (overseers, shepherds).

It is noteworthy that from the book of Acts onwards, 'elder' is used at least 25 times more often than any of the others words designating the same office (pastor, shepherd, bishop, overseer).

How can we apply it?

The application that I am most comfortable with (for now!) is as follows:

An elder *must* be able to oversee and pastor the flock – this is what eldering is all about. Therefore it is **not incorrect** to refer to an elder as a *pastor or shepherd or bishop or overseer* because they *do* all those things, and are called those things in scripture. But, in view of the following reasons, unless there are strong situational reasons to the contrary, I think it is probably best to call them 'elders' as opposed to pastors, shepherds, bishops or overseers or any other term:

- Because *elders* is the **most frequent and accurate biblical phrase** used to describe those who lead a church.
- Because the very concept of *eldership* highlights the biblical model of **plurality of leadership**, whereas "pastor" today can imply a one-man model of leadership.

- Because exclusively referring to the leaders as pastors can lead to an **unbalanced perception of the church** as an introspective pastoral community, rather than a mobile, mission-minded people who are *going*.
- Because overuse of the title '*pastor*' can have the effect of over-emphasizing the pastoral gift and so **minimizing the other gifts**. It may also mean that you have to make every pastor an elder, whereas I prefer to have room for pastors to exist who are not actually elders.
- Because 'elder' is such a lovely term declaring more about what the man *is* than the function that he performs. Also, it leaves the way open for the **elder to excel in other gifts**, rather than limiting him to the role of a pastor.

However, because New Testament language for leadership positions is not absolutely clear, there is some room for differences in 'titles' so long as the biblical form and spirit is maintained.

How old does an elder need to be?

In all probability, the New Testament concept of eldership was derived from the elders of the Jewish synagogues. Both the original Hebrew word for elder (*zagen*) and the translated Greek words (*presbuteros and episkopos*) all carry the connotations of age. Furthermore, common sense tells us that a man will need a reasonable number of years behind him if he is to attain to the rigorous character qualifications necessary to be an elder, and to be able to lead the full range of people in the church. But the bible gives no minimum age for an elder.

So factors to consider are:

- The stage of the church - often a raw pioneering situation will tolerate younger elders
- The average age of the people in the church
- The cultural view of age and leadership
- The maturity of the man
- How strongly you believe an elder should have a wife and children. Whilst scripture does not prohibit single men from being elders, the assumption is that they would be family men.

So, for a man to be an elder, I think we conclude that he needs to be ...wait for it ... old enough!

CHAPTER 10

TREATMENT OF ELDERS

Here are some pointers on how the local church should treat their elders from 1 Timothy 5, 1 Thessalonians 5 and Hebrews 13:

*The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of **double honor**, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an **accusation** against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning. (1 Tim 5:17-19)*

Double Honour: It is difficult to know exactly what Paul means by double honour ... but it sounds like we should treat them pretty well! It certainly reminds us that elders need appreciation, support and encouragement, and that they actually do work jolly hard – and not just on Sundays! And that hard work, especially of this nature, should be well rewarded financially. A summary of Paul's teaching on money might be like this: *to the leaders* he explains that whilst they do actually have 'rights' which includes receiving material remuneration for their work¹, it is not something that they should fight for. They are worthy of their wages, but should, at all times, maintain a servant attitude and learn the secret of contentment. But, whether the elder is paid by the church or not, he should not be greedy, and should follow the advice of Hebrews 13:5 of: *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'. So we say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?'"* God is our source!

And to those who should look after the leaders, he exhorts them not to muzzle the ox, and even to think of them in terms of double honour (1 Tim 5:17-18).

Accusation and Discipline: Having dealt with appreciation and remuneration of good elders, Paul now deals with ones who may not be doing quite so well. He is especially concerned that an accusation against an elder is well substantiated so that elders are not falsely maligned, especially because, depending on the situation, it may result in public rebuke. I recently read a worrying passage in a book by a respected Christian leader in which an argument is presented for keeping serious moral sins of elders' secret from the body.²

¹ 1 Cor 9:1-27; 1 Tim 5:17-18

² Kenneth E. Hagin, *He gave gifts to men*, Faith Shield, 1994, Pg 254-255

The writer made no reference to this scripture in which Paul's instruction cuts across such 'cover-up' operations calling instead for high standards of purity and honesty in leadership. Help us as leaders, Lord!

*Now we ask you, brothers, to **respect** those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in **love** because of their work. Live at **peace** with one another (1 Thess 5:12)*

Respect: This is due to elders firstly on the basis of their hard work, and then on the basis of their weighty responsibility of overseeing and admonishing the people of God. The implication is that we should receive their admonition!

Love: And this respect is to flow from heartfelt love and not some cold, corporate motive of fear.

Peace: These mutual attitudes of hard work and loving respect will enable the leaders and followers to live at peace with each other.

Remember** your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and **imitate** their faith (Heb 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 (Heb 13:17)

Remember: This means 'stop' and think about them. Pray for them. Phone them. Encourage them. Bless them.

Watch and Imitate: We are not just to listen to their sermons, but we are to imitate their godly lifestyle.

Obedience and submission: This must not be watered down ... but relax, because it is beautifully offset by the ominous responsibility that elders have of giving an account to God for how they lead you. Submission to elders should always be freely and joyfully given and result in health and freedom; if submission is forced then it becomes abusive. One of the responsibilities of apostolic ministry is to ensure that in church life there is healthy obedience by the flock and not abuse by the shepherd.

Make their work a joy: Happy leaders make happy followers.

A final thought

Dave Holden¹ helpfully stresses the humanity of leaders – it is *because* we are human that followers need to be exhorted to honour us, pray for us and obey us. If we were these *super-human-worthy-of-a-pedestal-types* then these exhortations to obey and follow and honour would not be necessary!

¹ Dave Holden is part of the Newfrontiers Apostolic Team.

CHAPTER 11

ELDERS AND TEAMWORK

What is team?

It is difficult to give a sleek biblical answer to this question: although the concept of team is demonstrated everywhere (e.g. the trinity, marriage, Moses in Exodus 18, David in 1 Chronicles 11, Jesus and the disciples, and Paul and his apostolic team, etc), the actual word 'team' is never mentioned nor an unequivocal model of team described. The bible presents concepts and principles allowing room for a number of different ways that 'team' could work in practice. Furthermore, the bible definitely presents God working through individuals, some of whom worked with clear teams, and some who clearly worked solo. And to make a definition of team even more elusive, teams are evolving organisms that usually operate rather differently at different stages of their existence. ***So, it is hardly surprising that 'team' means different things to different people!***

So where does it leave us today? I think it leaves us with some scope for different teams to operate in different ways depending on such situational factors as the gifting of the individuals involved and particularly the team leader, and the context that the team finds itself in. There is a mass of good literature and courses available today on teams and teamwork, and I feel any time and money that an eldership spends along these lines is valuable. My intention in this chapter is to share some principles and ideas to help elderships on towards being effective teams.

One of the best definitions of a leadership team that I know is by John Lanfermann:

“A leadership joined together in true friendship, comprising complementary gifted people. These people are connected with compelling vision, with clearly defined goals, for which they share ownership as they hold themselves mutually accountable.”¹

¹ John Lanfermann; Newfrontiers Magazine; 2003

Why bother with team?

1. To reflect the Godhead: God, the three-in-one, is the ultimate leadership team, and we are made in his image. John Lanfermann teaches that 'Team Trinity' is:

- *Social:* relationships in a team are vitally important. Loving friendships are the glue that holds a team together.
- *Missional:* a team is also to be joined by shared purpose.
- *Complementary:* teams should consist of complementary giftings working together in harmony and mutual submission, under the authority of the Father. ¹

2. Because of the lessons of history: *The advancement of the cause of Christ through history has come as a result of a repeated rediscovery of the apostolic model of team. Conversely, the stagnation of the church is evident to the degree that it has moved away from this model to institutionalism. The apostolic model of team, which was focused on mission, led to the propagation of the gospel throughout the known, civilized world. However, by the third century a priestly, hierarchical model of church leadership emerged. There was a shift from the New Testament leadership of 'gifted abilities' empowered by the Holy Spirit and dynamically working among the people. Hierarchy, rank and role replaced gift and charisma. In general the church became institutionalised and static².*

3. To imitate biblical leaders: Moses built a team (Exodus 18). So did David (1 Chron 11). So did Jesus (Mk 3:14). Paul was so committed to team that he would sometimes hold back from ministry opportunities until he had his team with him (Acts 17).

4. Because we are a body: God intends that his people work together like a body (1 Cor 12) with every member playing their part (Eph 4:16).

5. Because the job is so huge: We are commissioned to go to the ends of the earth. This requires more than a solo act.

6. Because of common sense: Teams minimize the weaknesses of the members and capitalise on their strengths. Teams have more resources, ideas, and energy than would an individual. Teams provide multiple perspectives and wisdom.

¹ John leads the Newfrontiers apostolic team in the USA

² John Lanfermann; Newfrontiers Magazine; 2003

Teams share the credit for victories and the blame for defeats, which fosters genuine humility and minimises pride and feelings of failure. Few burdens seem heavy when everyone lifts. Freckles make a nice tan when they get together.

How can we build 'team' in an eldership?

- 1. Team members should honour the role of the leader:** Jesus was full of initiative but always honoured the Father. No matter how mature and effective a team is, don't get so excited about your role and 'the team' that you forget to honour the role of the leader. Team members must be free to speak out but they should be at pains not to steam-roll over the unique contribution that the leader brings. If the leader is not convinced then don't take the decision. More about the role of the lead elder later in the chapter.
- 2. Leaders should honour team members:** The Father honoured Jesus giving him the name above all names. Just as the team is at pains to protect the role of the leader, the leader in turn is at pains to honour the team and draw all he can out of them. I love hearing leaders promoting and boasting about their team, and I love hearing teams promoting and honouring their leader! There must be a dynamic of mutual submission, but like in marriage, the leader has the 'final say'. The beauty of godly teams is that they require each and all to walk humbly before God and each other with mutual respect for each other's role and gifts. Team life is one of God's tools to keep the flesh crucified. *The section in Chapter 14 on 'godly authority structures' expands on this theme.*
- 3. Every member should be a mighty man:** the description of David's team in 1 Chronicles 11 is "mighty men". In this chapter we see a team of men who are mighty in their own right (many who had done exploits greater than that of David) make a pact together under God to serve David's vision. Their own callings and desires found freedom and expression under David's over-arching leadership. These were **mighty men** who were **mighty submitted**. In turn, David treats their loyalty with reverence and humility, refusing even to drink the water that The Three fetched him, recognising their labour as a service to God.

- 4. Leaders must not control ... and members must reciprocate by taking initiative:** My favourite verse in 1 Chronicles 11 is verse 4: *David had said, "Whoever leads the attack on the Jebusites will become commander-in-chief." Joab son of Zeruah went up first, and so he received the command.* No member wants a pushy leader, but no leader wants to have to be pushy! I love David's style – through setting clear and inspirational parameters (clear delegation) he throws open the door for great exploits but allows each man to get his own faith and take the initiative. **Paul seemed to run his team with a similar spirit.** Sometimes he would ask his team to do jobs (e.g. sending Titus to Crete), and other times the team members initiated the action themselves (e.g. Apollos in Acts 18:27 and Titus in 2 Cor 8:17).
- 5. Have a 'squad' mentality not a hierarchical attitude:** The bizarre thing about the description of David's team in verses 12-25 of 1 Chronicles 11 is that it is not possible to work out exactly who was who in terms of hierarchical leadership. Until David starting grooming Solomon, he didn't seem to have a designated "No. 2". It appears that David's team flowed together deferring to each other as was appropriate. And it was the same with Paul's team: he would send the right guy to the right situation at the right time. These biblical teams look quite like modern day soccer teams where there is no longer a clear team of 11 with the poor old substitute on the bench, but rather larger squads of players who roll on and off the field as the circumstances unfold. This 'squad' style of team makes for secure, mature men who are flexible enough to adjust to ever-changing challenges.
- 6. Clear delegation and commissioning:** The concept of squad does not absolve the leader from giving the most helpful delegation possible to his players. Without clear delegation and releasing it is possible for the team members to become frustrated and insecure. Delegation is a biblical pattern: the Father commissioned Jesus, who sent the Spirit. God gave clear parameters to Adam, to Moses, Joshua, Gideon and all the Old Testament heroes. Jesus gave the 12 and the 72 a clear commission, and Christ's commission to the church is by no means hazy – see Matthew 28 and Acts 1. Paul's various commissions to Titus and Timothy were well thought out and highly motivating. Failure to delegate and release team members into clear spheres of operation usually exasperates the team¹. The other way to exasperate is to give *over-detailed* commissions, so leaders need to give parameters to their team members who can work out the detail themselves. This honours the leadership and creative gifts of each member. When two members are working in close proximity to each other it is especially important to clarify spheres. But remember to have a squad mentality too!

¹ Eph 6:4

7. **Get the mix right:** 'A team' is not simply the 'top 5' people. Size and mix is important.
8. **Think reproduction:** In the movie *Grease 2* there is a song called 'Reproduction' in which the chorus goes "*Reproduction! Reproduction! Is it all you think about?*" Our answer to that question should be "Yes, mostly." Always try to have some not-yet-elders in your squad. Not only do they get trained up quickly but also they keep the older guys on their toes and in a reproductive mind-set.
9. **Cultivate friendship:** pray and eat and laugh and play together.
10. **Cultivate a sense of team destiny:** pray and brainstorm and dream together.
11. **Be diligent in communication:** poor communication and misunderstandings are team killers.
12. **Be diligent in meeting together:** Be disciplined. Regular team meetings are a non-negotiable priority and the key to good communication.
13. **Sharpen each other:** speak the truth to each other in love. The 'wounds' of a friend are a sign of true love.
14. **Entrust team members with meaningful responsibilities:** this will create shared ownership.
15. **Work really hard and enthusiastically:** Don't be too noble to work!
16. **Be quick to apologise to each other.**

Transitioning from ‘Leader monopoly’ to ‘genuine team’

Colin Baron writes¹: *“It is interesting to note how often Paul left a church and allowed leaders to come through, going back to appoint elders. When you are not itinerant, you have to provide creative ways to provide space for men to emerge to stand along side you. Here are some things that will help the transition:*

- 1. The leader must not feel threatened when the team members start speaking out.*
- 2. There will be seasons of dramatic advance, and periods of consolidation.*
- 3. The team leader must not hog the public setting.*
- 4. Other team members must be given the opportunity to chair meetings and set the agenda.*
- 5. Team leaders must allow space for individuals to blossom in their own giftings.*
- 6. We must give time and opportunity for team members to think things through theologically (and in terms of Vision & Values) and become convinced of things themselves.*
- 7. Develop true friendship.*

Colin also cites Bryn Hughes² as describing the common development of a team in the following way:

- 1. LEADER – VISION – TEAM**
- 2. LEADER – VISION – TEAM**
- 3. LEADER – VISION – TEAM**

A team may well start being leader-centred, then the team will gradually forge together around the leader’s vision, and thus gradually develop into a healthy team that honours the leader, the vision and the team.

The role of the lead elder

There is not a clear biblical picture of the differing roles within a team of elders, but the indicators that we receive imply that the lead elder is ‘first among equals’ who leads the team that leads the church. The bible, common sense and experience tell us that leadership (even of a leadership team like an eldership) is vital. Leading a team of leaders is no easy task, and the lead elder requires a pronounced leadership gift and a healthy understanding of team to do the job well.

¹ Newfrontiers Magazine, 2003

² Writer and member of North Kent Community Church, UK

I see three aspects to a lead elder's role that distinguishes him from the other elders on the team:

The Visionary aspect: The lead elder is the visionary elder who normally takes the lead in setting the direction and pace for the elders, and consequently for the church. This is probably the most important contribution that the lead elder makes.

The Decisionary aspect: Most decisions are reached by consensus, but there are sometimes occasions when this does not work, and the lead elder needs to make the decision.

The Delegatory aspect: The lead elder is the one to coordinate who does what, and help hold each elder accountable to his tasks.

How do you identify who should be the lead elder? Within the generic band of *leadership*, there are a variety of leadership gifts with a variety of capacities. Some have a leadership gift that operates best in a No.3 or No.2 position. In the context of eldership, these would be men who are most effective and content following the lead of another man and skilled and content to implement the vision. They will usually be more cautious than the No.1 leader but don't think of these men as pushovers – they are mighty men in their own right who will help to shape and create the vision, yet if they were thrust into the No 1 position they would actually flounder. Those with No.1-type visionary leadership gifting will have the following four main characteristics:

- They will be *inspiring* men who easily motivate others.
- They will thrive on being *out there* ahead of the others in terms of vision and daring.
- They will be comfortable and effective when they are *up front* in terms of leading meetings and preaching.
- Their leadership gifting will have the *capacity* to lead the elders and the church.

Full-time and Non-full-time and Part-time elders

Some elders will be 'full-time' – i.e. available to the work of the church without the pressure of another job. Others may be 'non-full-time' - i.e. not as available as the full-time elders are due to other work commitments. And others may be part-time – i.e. available for a day or two per week to the church. Usually, full-time elders are salaried by the church, whilst non-full-time elders are salaried by their job, and part-timers may receive some salary from both.

A team of full-timers: This 'tidy' model has the strengths of:

- Having much time available to be together for prayer, fellowship, discussion and training.
- Carrying a greater load of church work.

The weaknesses of this model are the reverse of the strengths of the non-full-timer model below:

A team of non-full-timers: The strengths of this model are:

- That no salaries are required.
- That the elders are setting a compelling example to the members of the church in terms of radical commitment to building the local church whilst holding down a full-time job.
- That the elders have maximum exposure to the unsaved.
- That it is easier to draw in men to eldership (or to some lesser involvement with the elders) because they are not required to forfeit all or part of their jobs.

The weaknesses of this model are the reverse of the strengths of the full-timer model above.

A mixed team: Whilst combining the strengths of the above two models, the major challenge to this model lies in keeping this kind of team sufficiently unified and effective as a team of genuine *equals*. If you are going to have an eldership team comprising both full-time and non-full-time elders then God needs to give you special wisdom and grace to have sufficient time together and stay unified.

Conclusion 1: The church must be *shaped by mission*, and not the other way around. Therefore, we should not necessarily take the line of least resistance in these matters, but rather take the line that can best facilitate our apostolic mission of raising up and releasing more and more elders with the goal of planting healthy churches.

Conclusion 2: Factors such as the culture of society, the culture of church, the gifting of the leader, the availability of other elders and potential elders, all play a role in deciding on the model to go for. Be flexible.

Conclusion 3: There is nothing more irresistible to follow than a unified team of elders, led by an anointed and secure lead elder. Don't deprive the people of this mighty combination. Go for it!

CHAPTER 12

ELDERS AND WIVES

Can women be elders?

I will take a slightly circuitous route to answer this question (acknowledgements to Wayne Grudem for much of the following):

Men and women are equal: Gen 1:26-28 declares men and women as equal beneficiaries of divine image and earthly rule. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit and gifts were poured out on *all flesh*. 1 Cor 12:7 stresses the giving of gifts to *each*. Gal 3:28 says there is neither male nor female in Christ.

But men and women have different roles: Equality and identity must not be confused. We are equal but we have different roles. Having different roles does not mean we are not equal. The trinity is a beautiful example of this being equal in personhood and importance, but different in role and authority.

The problem with society today: Imagine a man striving to gain identity, self-worth and honour by achieving things. He would need to learn that his worth does not come from *doing* but from *being*. Similarly, pressured by the same fallen society, and confusing identity with role, some women strive to attain equality - *which they already have* - by aspiring to male roles sometimes saying, "I can do anything a man can do". God has not created men to do everything that women can do. And he has not created women to do everything men can do. But he has created us both 100% equal.

A role unique to men is headship: Eve sinned, yet God came to Adam. The bible speaks of the "sin of Adam". This was not because woman bore no responsibility, but that man bore primary responsibility for all things in the garden, including sin. Ephesians 5 speaks of the husband as the head of the family. And in the family of the church, we certainly see women leading and influencing and exercising their gifts, but we do not see them playing the role of the primary leader.

Elders are the headship of a local church: Because the team of elders constitutes the primary headship of a church, I do not believe in women elders. I also do not believe in women apostles, because that is another role of primary headship and government. But I think that all other gifts and roles are open to women, although the context in which those gifts are used would be influenced by this principle of male headship.

What role does the wife of an elder play?

An absolutely vital one! In fact, for it to be possible for your husband to be made an elder, then you need to be a maturing woman who loves and follows Jesus in your own right. **So what changes in your life when your husband becomes an elder?**

In one sense nothing does: In terms of what your 'role' is, I believe that your primary role is to keep loving and serving Jesus as you have been doing, and keep being a wife to your husband, and generally keep on being your wonderful self! Once your husband becomes an elder, just carry on being who God has created you to be. You don't need to dress differently, or start doing prophetic dances in church, or start leading the 'women's ministry' in the church (unless of course you would like to). Some wives of elders are called to a higher profile ministry than others. That is fine. So wives, you are free to be *you*. Don't feel pressured to do the "elder-wife thing". Being the wife of an elder means being the wife of that guy you married ... who now happens to be an elder!

In another sense something does change: because you and your husband are a one-flesh team, changes in *your* life are changes in *his* life, and vice-versa. Isn't it wonderful to be such a close team together? So, although he is the one who became an elder, there is a real sense that it happened to both of you. In the spiritual realm you both entered into a new thing, and in the practical realm, he can't be an effective elder without you being on mission with him. So you will probably find yourself living with a new sense of destiny and gravity, and *practically* you will find that there are some new responsibilities that you have, such as times of friendship and prayer with the other elder couples, an increase in pastoring together, and cheerfully running the home when your man is out eldering more than he used to!

On mission together

Generally speaking, I think that elder teams need to work harder at being a team of couples. We want and need our wives to be part of the action and to bring their God-given life and wisdom and gifts to the party. ***The very fact that we are so clear that our wives are not actually elders is the very truth that frees them to play the key role that God has given them to play amongst us as elders.*** Elderships that are successful in this area seem to have regular times together with just the elders, and less regular times together as couples. These times together as couples can be a mixture of fun and fellowship, prayer for each other and the life of the church, and discussion on the main things that are happening in the church.

CHAPTER 13

ELDERS AND DEACONS

Deacon means *servant*. The origin and role of deacons is not crystal clear, but the following scriptures cast some light on the matter.

What does the bible say?

Phil 1:1

- Paul legitimises deacons by referring to 3 groups in the church: Saints & Elders & Deacons.

Rms 16:1

- Some regard this verse (and 1 Tim 3:11) as meaning that women can be deacons because here Phoebe is described as a 'deaconess' meaning *servant*. However, where the bible gives its clearest instructions about deacons it seems to have men in view. This is an issue that each local eldership will have to determine for itself.

1 Tim 3:8f

- Verse 8-9 & 12 speak of deacon characteristics which include being worthy of respect, sincere, not mastered by alcohol or money, having an ordered home, and being sound in faith (i.e. personally convinced of biblical truths).
- Verse 10 is a protectionist verse calling for them to be well proven before they are appointed.
- Verse 11 means either 'wives of deacons' or 'deaconesses'. Whichever it means, I do not believe that all wives of deacons automatically become deacons as well.
- Verse 13 says that the result of deaconing is 'excellent standing and great assurance in the faith'. What a reward! People who give & serve seem to quickly mature in the faith.

Acts 6

This is the likely origin of deacons. Things to note are:

- The ***spiritual & character qualifications for these 7 men was*** exceptionally high, similar to that of elders.
- Deacons were appointed for pragmatic rather than theological reasons, i.e. they were ***appointed to do a job*** / respond to a ministry need, rather like the appointment of assistants to Moses in Exodus 18.

- They are **good with all sorts of people & problem solving**.
- Their duties were both **practical and spiritual**.
- Their duties **released the elders** to prayer, the word, and their growing governing responsibilities.
- Deaconing can be a **preparation ministry** for an enlarged sphere of service. Deacons are **not necessarily home bound**, being available to also help trans-locally where their gifting allows (e.g. Stephen & Philip).
- Deacons have **clearly delegated responsibilities, shaped by & accountable to the elders**.
- Apostles/ elders publicly set deacons in place.
- Deacons produce **increase & success**.
- It seems their **appointment was some kind of combination** between the leadership (in this case the apostles who were also the elders of this church) and the people. I think it is flexible – sometimes the elders will take the initiative with a person and ‘clear’ it with the people, and at other times the people may recommend a person to the elders.

Some conclusions

1. Deacons did exist. They seemed to emerge out of the ranks of leadership and were publicly set apart to serve a specific role. Putting these scriptures together, we can summarize that appointment occurs at the place where a **man’s (or woman’s – depending on your interpretation of scripture) proven leadership character & gifting collide with an area of specific responsibility in the church**. However, a deacon should not regard himself as limited to just one area, but be willing & available to solve problems & serve in ‘one-off’ needs. A deacon does not seem to be a *governmental* leadership position, although of course elders commission deacons with authority for their area of responsibility. It is primarily a *servicing* leadership position.

2. They served in both the practical and pastoral: 1 Timothy 3 and Acts 6 present deaconing as a serious and weighty task. Deacons seem to be people of significant character and gifting appointed by the elders to help and represent them in both practical and pastoral matters.

3. They were explosive and effective: Deacons are not presented as stodgy old men giving out tatty leaflets at the door on Sunday. Chris Weinard of New Covenant Ministries International writes “*Deacons are not a maintenance group, a ‘B’ Team, or a holding tank for future elders. In a nutshell, deacons are appointed to facilitate growth and increase. Deacons are to be explosive and effective*”.

Do we have to have deacons?

It would be hard to imagine a local church operating to her potential without people fulfilling the *function of deacons*, but not all churches choose to *call them deacons*, often simply opting for the term 'leader' or 'Cell Leader' or 'Cell Supervisor' or 'Ministry Team Leader' and so on. But whatever you call them, they are certainly necessary.

I am personally in favour of calling them deacons because:

1. This is the word the bible uses – let's be biblical not trendy. And if people don't understand the word then what a great chance to preach into servant leadership!
2. It is an office used along side elders. So if you use *elders*, you might as well use *deacons* or else people may get confused.

If you choose to use another word for those fulfilling the function of deacons, ensure that this is made clear to the church, and that these precious 'leaders' are not deprived in any way of the above-mentioned benefits of deacons. For example, make sure you pray them in publicly and properly with the laying on of hands, and that the elders pay them the attention that they are due.

CHAPTER 14

ELDERS AND APOSTLES

It seems that the bible gives some guiding principles about how elders and apostles relate, but we are left with reasonable scope (and challenges!) in terms of implementation.

The relationship between apostles and their churches

I feel that the most accurate description of the wider New Testament church scene is something like this:

“Local churches that are governed by their local elders, who relate to / are involved with apostles and their teams.”

In view of their involvement with apostles and their teams, these churches develop a corporate sense of *family* and *mission*.

I think the best way to answer the question “what does it mean to relate to / be involved with apostles?” is to look at what the bible says about the role of apostles, and where they interact and overlap with elders. But before that, a word needs to be said about godly authority ‘structures’.

Godly authority structures

Fallen man is naturally denominational, hierarchical, ‘lording it over’, and generally two-dimensional in his understanding of authority. Fallen man likes to know exactly who is No. 1 and who is No. 2 and so on. Despite his whining about red tape, it makes fallen man feel secure, and it removes most of the crucial godly components out of relationships with our ‘seniors and juniors’. We like to have a crystal clear pyramid diagram on the wall that removes all doubt as to who is in charge of whom. This corporate view of authority has influenced much of the church, possibly illustrated by our departure from biblical titles such as *elders and apostles and deacons*, to worldly titles with worldly connotations such as *presidents, chief executives, and treasurers*. This ‘corporate’ 2-D model of authority is a lesser wineskin that cannot sustain and contain the intended glory of God in the church, and not easily allow for successful relationships between apostles and elders – both of whom the New Testament presents as having significant authority over local churches.

But God's ways are higher than our ways, and his authority structures are multi-dimensional:

Think of the trinity: this is the leadership team of the universe that is both 1 in 3 and 3 in 1. The father is the leader, but the father has given Jesus the name that is above every name, but Jesus defers to the father.

Think of David's team of mighty men in 1 Chronicles 11: here is another authority structure that is impossible to understand through a corporate lens. One of the most vivid portrayals of this is verse 24: *"Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty men. He was held in greater honor than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard."* Fallen man complains, *"So if he was as famous as The Three then he should be placed on the same level as The Three, but you are telling me that he wasn't even included among The Three? This is not fair! And tell me, is his new position of head of the body guard lesser or more important than the other thirty chiefs?"*

Application: Whilst not suggesting that the bible is void of clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities, least of all when it comes to elders and apostles, there is more to authority structures in the church than can ever be represented on paper. ***They require a maturity, authority, humility, mutual submission and inter-dependence that are only possible to achieve through the mighty power of God working within all concerned.*** God refuses to allow us to become automatons – he wants us to rely daily on his spirit to walk in peace and effectiveness together.

With this in our hearts and minds, let us now turn to the roles and relationships of apostles with churches and their elders:

The role of apostles

The apostles Paul and Peter both considered elders to be the ones that God had appointed to lead local churches¹. Simple as that. Elders are in charge of the local church. But it is not actually the end of the story, because the apostles operated in a role of genuine authority *over and into* the churches and their elders. The following *brief mention of some of the ways that apostles relate to churches* illustrates the authoritative nature of apostles into the churches and lives of the elders:

¹ Acts 14:23, Acts 20:28, 1 Tim 5:17, 1 Pet 5:1f

Apostles plant churches: ‘Apostle’ means ‘sent one’ and so apostles are gifted to open up new territory to the gospel. Jesus, our great apostle, was always eager to move on to unreached regions (Mk 1:35-38), and Paul was also relentless in moving ahead to new towns and cities. Apostles will start churches, either themselves or via an appointed delegate.

Apostles lay the foundations of churches: Apostles are wise master builders and foundation layers.¹ This is not just a role they play at the outset of a church (although they will probably need to be more ‘hands-on’ in that season), but it is also an on-going role. Foundations are key elements that keep a church on course in matters of doctrine, leadership and church life. The chapter on *Keeping Church Simple* speaks of how elders must think foundationally – something they can learn much about from apostles.

Apostles appoint elders: The appointment of an elder through the public laying on of an apostle’s hands demonstrates the primary role an apostle plays in confirming the rightness and readiness of a man to become an elder, and then in setting him in place. By extension, it this implies the on-going role apostles have of input into the elders.

Apostles envision and equip elders in an on-going manner: Paul and Peter evidently saw a very part of their role as keeping up apostolic input into the lives of elders. Some of the epistles are addressed to the *elders* and the church, and in Acts 20 Paul gathers the elders of the region of Ephesus together to deliver some mighty parting instruction to them. 1 Peter 5 is of course one of the prime apostolic exhortations to elders.

Apostles regard themselves as *fathers*: Paul clearly considered himself to be the father of churches and individuals. This speaks of a loving relationship not void of authority².

Apostles also speak into the detail of church life: As well as teaching the broad apostolic doctrines, Paul also gave input into the detail of church life. He was concerned with marriages, matters of discipline, obedience to civil authorities, and everything else that was believed and practised in the churches. These areas of detail are obviously ‘elder areas’ but Paul and Peter, as fellow elders³ and apostles, wanted to help shape every aspect of life in the church.

¹ 1 Cor 3:10f

² 1 Cor 4:14f

³ 1 Peter 5:1

Apostles are known by the members of the church, and not just by the elders: Just like Jesus divided his ministry between his core of leaders and the crowd, so also did Paul. He lived amongst the people and was known by them,¹ and he addressed most of his epistles to the church. It is not always possible for an apostle to spend all the time that he would like getting to know the people of the church, but it is essential for the people to feel that they know him. A mutual 'knowing' is especially important in a case where the apostle has to bring correction or rebuke to an elder or the church as a whole.

Apostles often interfaced with churches and elders through delegates: Paul released Titus and Timothy and others to represent him in the churches, and he asked the churches to receive these brothers as they would receive him.

How then can we conclude?

We conclude that apostolic men and ministry are a gift to elders and their churches, given to equip and mature the church. Elders should acknowledge and welcome genuine apostolic authority, and should soften themselves to receive the imprint of God through these men. Elders should understand their autonomy within the context of their apostolic covering. They and their churches are caught up with other churches on apostolic mission! Hallelujah!

Attitudes of mutual respect and acknowledgement of gifting and calling, under-girded by genuine affection and friendship, will pave the way for a beautiful and effective partnership between elders and apostles.

¹ 1 Thess 1:5 and

CHAPTER 15

HOW CAN WE DEVELOP MORE ELDERS?

Get your vision right

A local church that holds neither vision nor sense of responsibility to take the gospel to the ends of the earth will seldom produce more elders.

*Where there is no call to **go further** there is no call to **raise up and send out**.*

But a biblical church – one ablaze with the Matthew 28 commission of discipling the nations – will be intentional in raising up elders to go out and plant and lead churches.

Get your heart right

Hindrances to raising up and releasing others into leadership can include

- **Selfishness:** A preoccupation with ‘me and my ministry’ will stunt the reproduction of more leaders.
- **Laziness:** it often takes more work to involve and mentor others than it does to do it yourself.
- **Lack of faith:** we need to have *faith in God* for people.
- **Insecurity:** if we fear that the up-and-coming leaders will out-shine us and even take our jobs, then that is a sign of insecurity and sinful attitude. If they shine brighter than you it is an indicator of success to you. If they take your job it is so that you can move on to something greater in God.

Get your strategy right

Once your vision and heart are in the right place, you then need a plan of action to help develop more elders. The following principles should help for raising up any type of leader:

1. Get your priorities right

Jesus was very intentional when it came to raising up leaders. In Mk 3:13-19 he ruthlessly withdrew from crowds to raise up a core. In Mt 9:35-38 his response to the huge crowds was ‘we need more leaders’.

You may need a change of mindset. After your personal time with God and with your family, I believe that everything else that we do can and should incorporate the development of leaders. Think about when Jesus fed the 5000: he could quite easily have done it all himself, but instead he

painstakingly involved the disciples at every stage of the process. As the lead elder of a church, I have 3 P's to keep me on track:

- Prayer
- Preparation (study of the bible and preparation of messages)
- People (raising leaders)

When most of my time is going into these three areas then I feel that I am living effectively for God.

2. Attract through Big Vision

Big Vision attracts Big People. Right at the outset Jesus called the disciples to be fishers of men – not boring, ineffective “happy-clappers”. If you want to attract elder-calibre men, then have a far-reaching vision to plant many churches that will need many elders. Vocalise your vision!

3. Be bold but not pushy in recruiting them

Without intentionally recruiting, it will happen at a snails pace. Don't hope for it to happen, make it happen. Walk along the beach, look Peter and his friends in the eye, and say 'I want you to leave your boats, come follow me and I will turn you into something!' Call people. Don't hint at it – call them. When I am calling someone into something, I usually explain to them how I have watched their character and gifting grow, and then talk to them about how I believe they are called and suited to the thing that I am calling them into. And I explain how I see this new role developing and fulfilling them, and how it will serve the body. Then I ask them to pray about it and get back to me in a few days time. Be adaptable because different people need different calls: Paul needed a knock-you-off-your-horse approach, whilst Peter needed more of a series of nudges & then a definite call.

4. Develop them through developing yourself

Rather dauntingly, we reproduce after our kind. One of the most dramatic biblical images of this is found in 1 Sam 17:11 where Saul feared giants, and consequentially his followers feared giants. It took a boy *not from* Saul's army to break the mould and do the deed. Then, in 1 Chron 20:4-8 we see David's followers killing giants. The point is this: if you kill giants, so will they. If you are strong in the Word and Spirit then so will they be, and so on. So, an essential element of discipling others is to keep growing in God yourself.

5. Develop them through sharing your life with them

Paul said to the Thessalonians *“We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well”* (1 Thess 2:8). Have them in your home. Eat together. Play sport together. Laugh together. Share some of your trials and weaknesses with them. Have

times away together. Impart to them a sense of destiny and a love for Word, the Spirit, and the Church.

6. Develop them through praying *with* them

Praying with them is probably the best way for them to catch your heart. Part of the supernatural nature of prayer is that it causes those who pray to be joined in heart and purpose.

7. Develop them through praying *for* them

“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out labourers into the harvest field” (Mt 9:38). Prayer is our greatest tool for raising up leaders. Some years ago I heard Colin Baron preach on this verse, and since then I have been actively asking God to raise up leaders. And he is answering this prayer by working in their lives in the secret place that only he has access to, and by giving me and others growing ability to help fan their potential into flame. Pray for them to develop in character, gifting and relationships. Pray that they would become mighty in leading themselves, their families and their churches. Pray for unshakable apostolic foundations in their lives. To help you pray accurate prayers for them, use some of the mighty apostolic prayers in the bible such as Col 1:9-14; Eph 1:16; Eph 3:16-21; 1 Cor 1:4-9; Jn 17:15-23.

8. Develop them through giving them ministry assignments

It is best to disciple an individual or group who is actually involved in some form of hands-on ministry. Avoid discipleship in a vacuum. People with shiny armour don't listen so well and have no grid to process what you are teaching. Special meetings and services 'to train leaders' are not the ideal. Whilst there may be some specific 'leadership training events', the ideal is that normal church life is itself a continuous leadership-training event. For example, try to have 'elders in training' at most of your elders meetings, and properly involved in the leading of Sunday meetings. Be bold.

9. Develop them through exposing them to other contexts and leaders

I find that money spent getting future leaders to conferences or onto mission teams to other places is money well spent. It broadens them and makes your job easier because others are giving them excellent input too.

10. Share the 'full gospel' with them

In Acts 20:20 Paul says *“I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you”* and in :27 that he proclaimed to them *“the whole will of God”*. In discipling people we must be willing and able to help them with the full breadth of life issues rather than just doctrine and churchmanship.

Changing the culture within your church

Remember that our style and structure of church must adjust to better facilitate our mission. Church is in response to mission. If your church culture is currently *'the elders are the only ones at elders meetings and who lead the Sunday meetings'*, then you will probably find that the church will only tolerate ministry done by potential leaders if it is at least 80% of the quality of the elders. But if you get them to catch the vision for raising up and sending leaders, then they will quickly jump to supporting the up-and-coming guys, and be happy settling for 50% of the quality of ministry of the elders. And no one will leave the church! In fact, the church will become an exciting place to be, with pew-warmers beginning to feel *"if they can do it maybe I can too!"*

A suggested action plan for an existing eldership

At your next elders meeting:

1. Start by asking how you are doing in terms of raising up and releasing other leaders, especially elders. If you are not doing too well, ask the difficult question "why are we not doing too well?" The answer may be selfishness, laziness, lack of instruction, lack of faith, lack of exposure to apostolic provocation and vision, insecurity, a controlling spirit, or other reasons. Talk and pray through whatever the reason is before going any further.
2. Then, read out aloud together Chapter 1 and this chapter (Chapter 14) and the next chapter (Chapter 15) to get the juices going.
3. Then write down the names of those in your ranks with elder or leader potential.
4. Then decide on initiatives to develop them through:
 - Sharing your lives with them
 - Teaching and training them
 - Giving them opportunities to 'do'
5. Relentlessly pursue these specific initiatives.
6. Gradually convert your whole church to a *leader producing machine*, so that 'doing church' becomes synonymous with 'raising leaders'.

Using this booklet

I have found this booklet to be a useful tool to stimulate and sharpen existing elderships, and also to train future elders. I use it by reading a chapter out loud as a group, and then pausing to discuss and pray around what we have just read. This seems the best way to combine the written material (this booklet) and the living material (people).

CHAPTER 16

HOW CAN I DEVELOP INTO AN ELDER?

I am anxious that no one finishes this booklet feeling that if you are not an elder then you are somehow a 2nd class follower of Jesus. If you think that then the devil is lying to you. Don't think such silly and sinful thoughts. God has a unique role for each of us to play.

Eldership is not a calling for every man, and it might not be a calling for you. But if as you read this book you find yourself desiring it, then I would suggest that you ***pin your ears back and pursue it with all your heart.*** But enjoy the journey – don't make becoming an elder your god and goal. Your goal is to glorify and serve Jesus every hour of every day. And whether or not you end up becoming an elder, your pursuit of elder qualities will give you an excellent standing for whatever leadership role God gives you to play.

Desire

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote a poem called 'My bed is a boat'. It is about how boys lie in bed dreaming of adventures – of slaying dragons, of winning maidens, of digging for treasure. Do you still dream dreams for Jesus? I want to ask you the same question that Joseph's father asked him: ***“What is this dream that you have?”*** Turn back on your dream-machine and dream again about ***exploits in Christ, through Christ and for Christ!***

You need to want to become an elder, and want it badly (1 Tim 3:1). Desire to lead people deeper into God. Desire to guard them and guide them and govern them as a servant leader. Desire to be at the sharp end of the scepter of God on the earth. Desire to be a band of warrior brothers with your fellow elders. Desire to first conquer yourself. Desire to lead your wife and children as a meek and mighty man of God. Desire to lead your church into the neighborhoods and nations. As the American military says, desire to go into *harm's way* for the sake of the gospel. Desire the crown of glory on that Great Day.

Daring

Desire needs to be converted to *daring*. The buck stops with elders. They are the Number 1 leaders. It is not for the timid. It takes guts to allow the Holy Spirit to grow you into an elder. Being an elder is a risky business. Even desiring to be an elder is risky. Have you noticed how in the movies the enemy always tries to pick off the officers in the first volley of fire?

It is the same in our spiritual war. But fear not, God issues Kevlar body-armour to elders that adequately resist the fiery darts of the evil one. Elders also need *daring* to continually walk in obedience to the promptings and leadings of the Holy Spirit. Elders must be God-fearers not man-pleasers.

Diligence

Desire and *daring* need to be harnessed to *diligence*. Desire without diligence can lead to frustration and unfulfilled dreams, and daring without diligence can result in a car-crash – remember that whole ‘zeal without knowledge’ thing? Becoming an elder is of course a work of God (Acts 20:28), but you need to co-labour with the Holy Spirit. Training yourself in character and gifting requires a great deal of hard work and sustained commitment. I find 1 Tim 4:12-16 a superb passage for directing and motivating me into diligence:

*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. **Do not neglect your gift**, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. **Be diligent in these matters**; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Tim 4:12-16)*

On a practical note, I suggest the following as a game plan for godly development:

1. **Pursue strength in each of the personal anchors** that are mentioned in the next chapter of this booklet. **Pray daily** that you would grow in them. You will find that you are naturally stronger in some and weaker in others. I suggest that you work on your weaknesses because elders need to be well-rounded warriors.
2. **Soak yourself in scriptures about the characteristics of elders** mentioned in Chapter 4 of this booklet. **Pray daily** that you would grow in them.
3. **Serve your local church with your whole heart.** Be faithful with what God has given you *now*.
4. **Draw close to an elder** in your church to disciple you.

CHAPTER 17

TWELVE PERSONAL ANCHORS FOR ELDERS

In calm water with no wind, anchors are not necessary. But, when the wind and waves are contrary we need anchors to hold us in position. Here are 10 'anchors' that will help hold us faithful to Jesus and our calling, enabling us to finish the race. They are foundational anchors useful for the development, protection and effectiveness of all believers, and will assist a man to prepare for eldership and remain a strong and effective elder all his days:

ANCHOR 1: PROGRESS MOTIVATED

We must not get inappropriately driven, but we must be progress motivated. This means that we should make an actual written plan to ensure that we grow in maturity, character and gifting as the months go by. Have a look at these inspiring verses:

*Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, **so that everyone may see your progress.** (1 Tim 4:14-16)*

*We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though **by this time you ought to be teachers**, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again... therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ **and go on to maturity** (Heb 5:12 & 6:1)*

*For if you **possess these qualities in increasing measure**, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ...**be all the more eager** to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, **you will never fall...**" (2 Pet 1:8 & 10)*

ANCHOR 2: CONTINUALLY SHAPED BY APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

Much of this booklet about eldership has dealt directly with the essential role of apostles in the lives of churches and elders and individuals. Rather than repeat myself, I draw the reader's attention to Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 14 to unpack this crucial anchor.

ANCHOR 3: PERSONAL HOLINESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

God, who is holy¹, is in pursuit of a holy people², made up of holy individuals³. We must deal ruthlessly with personal sins. Run away from them. Our battle against sin is the only battle that I know of that if we run away we win! Just how radical should we be in our fight against sin?

*For sin shall **not be your master**... (Rms 6:14)*

*... **abstain** from sinful desires, which war against your soul (1 Pet 2:11)*

*And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God (Eph 4:30)*

***Put to death**, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature ...now you must **rid yourselves** of all such things as these (Col 3:5&8)*

***Flee** the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness (2 Tim 2:22)*

*...therefore I **hate** every wrong path (Ps 119:104)*

*Streams of **tears** flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed (Ps 119:136)*

***Hate** what is evil; cling to what is good (Rms 12:9)*

*And if your right hand causes you to sin, **cut it off** and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell (Mt 5:30)*

That is pretty radical! In terms of tackling sin, be like the American footballers who tackle the man before he even has a chance to move! Don't let sin increase its hold on you. Small lions become big lions and big lions eat people.

¹ Is 6:3 and Rev 4:8

² 1 Pet 2:9 and 1 Cor 1:2

³ 1 Pet 1:15

Accountability

In addition to personal relationship with Jesus and personal disciplines such as prayer and bible reading and fellowship, accountable relationships are vital in helping us in our war against sin. In his book *Wild at Heart*, John Eldredge writes:

Thanks to men's movements the church understands now that a man needs other men, but what we have offered is accountability groups. Ugh. We don't need accountability groups, we need fellow warriors, someone to fight alongside, someone to watch our back ... We don't need a meeting of Really Nice Guys; we need a gathering of Really Dangerous Men. That's what we need. I think of Henry V at Agincourt. His army has been reduced to a small band of tired and weary men, many of them wounded. They are outnumbered five to one. But Henry rallies his troops to his side when he reminds them that they are not mercenaries, but a 'band of brothers'.

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother ...
And gentlemen in England, now a bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhood's cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us.¹*

What a mighty quote! This helps us as elders, doesn't it? We need to re-programme our identity to **Bands of Brothers of Really Dangerous Warriors**. Warriors share a bond of trust and love like no other. Confessing sin and sharing fears and weaknesses to one another is natural for bands of warrior brothers, but not for Really Nice Guys. Talking about the strategy of the enemy and a counter-strategy of our own is regular soldier talk. And Satan is a **common** enemy! Our Commander in Chief was tempted in every way, and is able to sympathise with our situation. We can approach him with confidence in our hour of need!² Also, no temptation has seized us except that is common to our fellow elders.³ We can approach each other too!

¹ John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 2001, Pg 175

² Heb 4:15

³ 1 Cor 10:13

With this arrangement, it becomes the hunter who is hunted! Watch out sin! I love the passage in Acts 19 where ‘sins’ are burned in public in Ephesus resulting in the word of the Lord spreading and growing in power¹. Now we are the ones on the attack!

***Be ruthless with small sins.
Confess your sins to one another.
Pray with one another.
Stand shoulder to shoulder.
Fight side by side.***

ANCHOR 4: STRONG IN GRACE

*“You then, my son, be **strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus**” (2 Tim 2:1)*

There is no power on earth like that of the gospel. An elder who stands in grace through faith² will have a durability and strength that is supernatural. We are not just saved by grace³, but we are to live by grace⁴. Here are some of the ways that grace should affect our lives and leadership:

Grace makes me secure: I know that I am totally acceptable to God. I am holy, without blemish and free from accusation!⁵ I have been made perfect forever⁶, and can approach Him with confidence!⁷ I can’t gain more favour or more righteousness. To use the words of Jesus “It is finished”. Therefore, I don’t have to perform or achieve to please God. I can live and lead out of a place of absolute security. Secure leaders breed secure churches.

Grace makes me approachable and down-to-earth: Just as I can approach God as I am, so also can the precious people I lead approach me. They don’t have to approach me on the basis of their good work in the church – they can come just as they are.

Grace makes me transparent: I know that whether I lead well or badly, make mistakes or do well, God delights over me.⁸ Why hide difficulties and failings when their exposure will not cause rejection by God or man? If you are accepted as you are, why put on a façade?

¹ Eph 19:17-20

² Rms 5:2

³ Eph 2:8

⁴ Gal 3:3

⁵ Col 1:22

⁶ Heb 10:14

⁷ Heb 10:19

⁸⁸ Zeph 3:17

Grace eliminates my fear of failure: I do not fear failure because grace has taught me that come failure or success, I am 100% loved by God! Knowing this truth makes me quick to say 'sorry' when I blow it because grace has taught me that forgiveness is always there.

Grace keeps me off the pedestal: Grace has seated me in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,¹ so what need have I for human propping up? Also, I know that grace has made every member a priest, so I will work to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. Let's promote God and his Royal Priesthood of All Believers, not ourselves.

Grace keeps me serving: Grace has taught me that my salvation, sanctification and ministry opportunities are all because of Jesus. Gifts that I have are for the service of the body.

Grace keeps me kind and tolerant: In the parable of the unforgiving servant, he that gets pardoned from a huge loan refuses to pardon another from a minor loan. Grace teaches me that God has pardoned me from my monstrous sins; therefore I am strengthened to forgive those who sin against me.

Grace keeps me hard-working and committed: 1 Cor 15:10 *"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."* Paul rejoices that he is accepted just as he is but he is quick to add that grace motivates him to strive for Christ.

Grace keeps me righteous: Grace teaches me to say 'no' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live a self-controlled, upright and godly life in this present age.² I am motivated & tutored to live holy by grace.

Grace keeps me passionate for the lost: Those who have come to know this amazing grace are desperate to share it with others!

Grace keeps me giving money cheerfully: In 2 Cor 8:1-7, Paul speaks about "this grace of giving". This means that God had divinely enabled them to give, but it also carries the idea that those who have freely received boundless, eternally grace have little difficulty in passing on limited, temporary money.

Grace helps me be cross-cultural: Where there is grace there is the ability and desire to accept others, just as we, once 'aliens', have been accepted by God.

¹ Eph 2:6

² Titus 2:11-12

Grace keeps me fun: Why? Because there is no need to be religious! We can enjoy God fully! No fear! The atmosphere in our elderships can be one of laughter and fun, with people able to laugh at themselves, because we are secure.

ANCHOR 5: A SERVANT HEART

*Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. **For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**" (Mk 10:42-45)*

Servanthood is the essence of leadership. Nehemiah 3:5 speaks of the nobles from Tekoa refusing to put their shoulders to the work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Elders are builders of the New Jerusalem, and whilst eldering is a noble task¹, true nobility is *servi*ng. Stay involved with the 'bump and grind' of building people and the church. This will keep you anchored in Jesus and effective in leadership and good works.

ANCHOR 6: PRAYER AND FASTING

Prayer is one of the purest acknowledgements that we really believe that Jesus is building his church not by *our* power or might, but by *his* spirit. 'Praying elders' is like 'wet water'. We have the wonderful privilege of *having* to pray as part of our job description – isn't that great? And what a blessing it is. Look at this Spurgeon quote about the 'double blessing' **privilege** of prayer:

"If we were not constrained to pray, I question whether we could even live as Christians. If God's mercies came to us unasked, they would not be half as useful as they are now when they have to be sought for. Now we get a double blessing – the blessing in the obtaining and the blessing in the seeking. To pray is to bathe in a cool swirling stream to escape the summer sun. To pray is to mount on eagle's wings above the clouds and get into clear heaven where God dwells. To pray is to enter the treasure house of God. To pray is to grasp heaven in one's arms, to embrace deity with one's soul, and to feel one's body made a temple of the Holy Spirit. To pray is cast our burdens, to tear away our rags, to be filled with spiritual vigour, to reach the highest point of Christian health."²

¹ 1 Tim 3:1

² Charles Spurgeon, *The Power in Prayer*, Chap 3, Whitaker House.

And the Lord invites us to be **bold & relentless in prayer**. *Is 62:6-7* says “*You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth”*. We are free to pursue him with relentless stamina and perseverance for the glory of the church in the earth.

I usually find it best to **praise God before I petition him**. Worship sets us up for faith-filled, God-centred prayer in his presence, and delivers us from ‘worrying-out-loud-*me*-centred-prayers’.

David Yongi Cho of South Korea explains that when the first missionaries came to Korea, they held early-morning prayer meetings as a matter of habit. He believes that this set the pattern for the spirit of prayer that South Korea enjoys today. The point? **Prayer paves the way for more prayer**, and the leaders set the pace for the church.

Fasting

Fasting is a key spiritual discipline to maturing in holiness, revelation, power and zeal. Fasting is one of the most difficult spiritual truths to explain, but it is undeniably powerful. It is a gift from God to lead us into those attitudes of heart and the power of God that we long for, but struggle to attain any other way. Some reading this page will have never fasted before: give it a go! Your physical hunger will be channelled into pure spiritual hunger. Your stomach (that somehow represents the carnal nature¹) is lessened and your spirit-man soars! Go for it!

ANCHOR 7: THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

We should strive to be mighty in both the Word and the Spirit. You may have a natural bias towards one which means you will probably have to work hard on developing the other.

*“**Just Word** and you dry up. **Just Spirit** and you blow up.
Word and Spirit you grow up”²*

Jesus himself is both the living word³ and the one who came to pour out the Spirit⁴, and as these verses illustrate, he intends his body to be a people of the word and of the spirit:

*“And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives **by His Spirit**” (Eph 2:22)*

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles **teaching**” (Acts 2:42)*

¹ Phil 3:119

² Author unknown

³ Jn 1:1

⁴ Jn 14:18

*“...because our gospel came to you not simply **with words**, but also with power, **with the Holy Spirit** and with deep conviction (1 Thess 1:5)*

How do you become strong in both? By *praying and fasting and studying and doing*.

A word on daily devotions

The whole point of a devotional life is connecting with God. This is our primary antidote to the counterfeits the world holds out to us. If you do not have God, and have him deeply, you will turn to other lovers¹. In my daily devotional times, I usually spend time worshipping and thanking Jesus, then praying, then reading the word, and finally writing down gems useful for me personally, or to use in future messages.

How important are daily devotions?

Elders need to have daily devotions for the myriad of reasons that any Christian needs to: he needs to imitate Christ²; he needs to worship and enjoy Jesus; he needs to eat daily ‘bread’³; he needs to submit himself to the creative power of God’s word and allow himself to be taught, rebuked and trained so that he may be thoroughly equipped for every good work⁴. He needs to rest in the privilege of presenting prayers and petitions, with thanksgiving to Christ⁵; he needs to soak daily in the undisputed grace of God. What a privilege to freely approach Jesus! But there is a graver compulsion upon an elder to secure authentic, regular, personal time with Jesus. The reason is leadership. The nature of leadership is influence. The nature of Christian Leadership is Christian influence. In the elder’s life, the absence of authentic, regular, personal time with Jesus now impacts not just himself, but many others. The stakes have been raised. Remember the warning of James 3:1 *“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly”*. In Mark 1:32-39, we see the priority that Jesus set on his own times with the Father, never letting a busy and successful ministry schedule interfere with them.

¹ John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 2001, Pg 172

² Mk 1:35

³ Lk 4:4

⁴ 2 Tim 3:16

⁵ Phil 4:6

The Private Purpose

The purpose of your daily devotional time is *not* to prepare sermons or bible studies. It is concerned with your personal worship, enjoyment and growth in God. It keeps you anchored daily into Christ as your personal Lord and Saviour, rather than your 'employer'. It keeps you pure and unstained by spiritual professionalism. The moment you begin to regard your time with Jesus as a passport to better public ministry, you are sliding into deep trouble. Ministry has become your idol. Ministry has become the intermediary through which you relate to Jesus.

The Public Blessing

However, it is *because* of the authentic nature of your daily devotions that your devotional life will *of course* be the primary source of your public ministry effectiveness! It was *because of* Jesus' frequent withdrawals that he chose the right leaders, and that the words he spoke were so mighty.

*"Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?
The words I say to you are not my own" (Jn 14:10)*

Elders also need to bring the words of the Father to the people.

ANCHOR 8: A ROBUST THEOLOGY OF LIFE

It is very important that we know what 'time' we live in, or else we may become disillusioned when tough times strike us. Triumphalistic theology is faulty and fragile theology. Correct theology is robust theology. There are so many New Testament warnings of trouble, and encouragement in the face of it.¹

Paul wrote to the Corinthians explaining that we live now in the era of perishability and mortality² where we *will* encounter suffering & loss. Only on the other side of death, or when Jesus returns, is the era of imperishability and immortality. **John wrote something similar to the believers** that although we *are* children of God, all that we shall become has not yet happened³. John elaborates further on this in Revelation looking forward to that great day when there "*will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away*".⁴

Jesus said to the disciples "*in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*".⁵ I call this the "robust theology sandwich". The top and bottom of the sandwich are

¹ Acts 20:23-24; Rms 8:18-27; Rms 8:35; 1 Cor 4:11; 2 Cor 4:8; 2 Cor 11:23-27; 2 Cor 12:10; Phil 1:12; Col 1:24; 2 Thess 1:4; 2 Tim 1:8; 2 Tim 2:9-12; Heb 10:32-39; Heb 11; Heb 12:3-4; 1 Peter 4:1; 1 Jn 3:1.

² 1 Cor 15:50-54

³ 1 Jn 3:2

⁴ Rev 21:4

⁵ Jn 16:33

wonderful promises of how we can reign in life through Jesus, but let's not forget the 'filling' of the sandwich - *in this world you will have trouble*. This is the era of trouble. But, this truth is sandwiched between the promise of *peace* and *overcoming*. We can be shipwrecked in our faith if we only believe the *peace* and *overcoming* aspects of this verse, and ignore the promise of *trouble*. This would lead to an unbiblical and insufficient theology that will leave us fragile in the face of hardship. Of course we don't go looking and praying for trouble, but if it does come we are not surprised and disillusioned.

Peter wrote to the believers that they should not be surprised at the painful trial they were suffering, as though something strange were happening to them.¹ This does not mean that we should mope around with a sense of inevitable calamity. No! Let us live confident, faith-filled lives that extend the King's rule of righteousness, peace and joy. What it does mean, however, is that we have a balanced theology that accommodates both the great victories of this life, and the traumas of suffering, hardship and death.

Conclusion: Although there are frustrations and groanings and pain in this era, and although we eagerly await our release from it, we are fortified with the knowledge that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed. Hallelujah! And we must wait PATIENTLY.²

“Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Give yourself wholly to the work of the Lord because you know that your labour is not in vain.”
(1 Cor 15:58)

ANCHOR 9: FAMILY TIME PRIORITY

“I believe the family was established long before the church, and my duty is to my family first” (DL Moody)

The Great Commission starts at home. Our families are our primary disciples. They need *us*. No amount of *presents* makes up for *presence*. The more time we spend with our wives & kids, the more they will want to be like us in knowing Jesus. Do as much ministry together as possible: *“Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord, and Peter do?” (1 Cor 9:5)*

Use your leadership gifting to the maximum at home ... and not just at work in the church.

¹ 1 Peter 4:12

² Rms 8:18-25

I suggest that time with your family is scheduled into your diary. Put in holidays, weekends and even family time each day. Make sure that you are up & leading your family in the mornings. If you get them off to an up-beat and happy start, fitting in a few minutes of prayer together, then it makes a huge difference to their days ... and lives.

Towards the end of his book *In pursuit of His glory*, RT Kendal writes a chapter entitled 'If I could turn the clock back'. It is a hauntingly honest chapter about the things that he wishes he had done differently. Lesson 2 is 'I would spend more time with my wife and children'. He writes:¹

"Oh how I wish I could have a second chance to spend more time with our children. To read with them, to play with them, to tell stories to them. To be less harsh in discipline and to cry with them when they were hurting. I write these lines to emphasise this matter again with the hope of saving some younger person's family – or perhaps that of a church leader. If you read these lines, here is my recommendation:

- 1. Listen to them when they talk to you; they will never turn to you at a convenient time.*
- 2. Do not dismiss their feelings of being hurt over the way their friends or teachers treat them.*
- 3. Make the meals at the table last longer – and encourage them to talk.*
- 4. Don't leave them when they are afraid to go to sleep or need a bedtime story.*
- 5. Set time to be with them and keep your appointment as you would for the most important person on earth.*

ANCHOR 10: INVOLVED IN EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5)

Isn't this interesting? In the middle of giving Timothy nuggets of important pastoral advice, Paul throws in 'and keep up your personal evangelism'. You would have thought that saying '*discharge all the duties of your ministry*' would cover it, but staying involved in evangelism is important enough to get special mention. Winning the lost is the heart of God. It is why Jesus came.

As elders, we need to be involved in some form of evangelism because it keeps us **excited** (there is nothing so invigorating as personally winning a soul), and it guards us from professionalism, and keeps our preaching, our meetings and ourselves **relevant** to the lost.

¹ RT Kendall; Pg 266; In Pursuit of His Glory; Hodder & Stoughton 2002

Discipleship

Evangelism is the beginning of the greater goal of *discipleship*. We are called to make disciples¹. Our churches are supposed to be disciple-making machines. As the crowd increases, so does the urgency to draw away and focus on discipling a small group.² I believe every elder should know who his “Peter, James and John” are, and then who his ‘12’ are. When we work like Jesus, it works. Elders should be up-close-and-personal disciplers, not detached, professional managers.

ANCHOR 11: FINANCIAL INTEGRITY AND GENEROSITY

“Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be ... not pursuing dishonest gain” (Titus 1:7)

“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10)

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Heb 13:5-6)

Simon Pettit writes³: *The Bible is very clear that money is not neutral but is a ‘power’ that makes a rival claim on man’s affections and devotion (Mt 6:24). ‘Mammon’ is not morally neutral; it is a power that seeks to dominate us. Leaders are not immune to the subtleties of these spiritual forces.*

He goes on to teach six ways by which a leader can keep himself free from the love of money:

- a. Learn “godly contentment” with what we have (1 Tim 6:6-8; Heb 13:5; Phil 4:12).
- b. Try and make sure that we are adequately paid (1 Tim 5:18).
- c. Keep open, accountable relationships with our wives and our fellow leaders about our finances.
- d. Regularly examine your own heart and motivation in leadership.
- e. Be open to apostolic correction (1 Peter 5:1-4).
- f. Make sure you are generous in your giving to the church, to other people and particularly to the poor.

This is a vital anchor:

“If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ... No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. The Pharisees, who love money, heard this and were sneering at Jesus.” (Lk 16:11-14)

¹ Mt 28:18-20

² Mk 3:7-19

³ Church Planting and Leadership Manual, 2003.

Don't sneer at this anchor. I am yet to meet a person who is being well used by God in leadership in the church, who hasn't first settled in his heart, that he will serve God alone, and continually nullify the influence of mammon in his life through regular giving.

Here are some bible principles on giving:

- Maintain a joyful, disciplined life habit of tithes & offerings (Mal 3)
- Give purposefully (2 Cor 9:7)
- Give so that it costs you something (2 Sam 24:24)
- Give beyond your ability (2 Cor 8:3)
- Give so that it requires faith (Heb 11:6)
- Sow bountifully to reap bountifully (2 Cor 9:6)
- Give as a sure investment (Lk6:38)
- Stay out of inappropriate debt (Rms 13:8; Pr 22:7)

***Go for it.
Be radical.
You can never, ever out-give God.***

ANCHOR 12: RISK-TAKING OBEDIENCE & HEROIC COURAGE

I nearly called this anchor simply "obedience", but I have opted for this longer title because obeying God involves a sense of risk, and consequently requires courage.

"Saul died because he was unfaithful to the Lord; he did not keep the word of the Lord and even consulted a medium for guidance, and did not enquire of the Lord. So the Lord put him to death and turned over the kingdom to David son of Jesse." (1 Chron 10:13-14)

When we disobey, something in us will die. Continued instances of disobedience will eventually lead to God having to relieve us of things we were designed to rule in. But this need not be the case. The route to reigning in Christ is the route of obedience. Obedience is precious to God. Jesus was exalted to the highest place **because he became obedient** to death – even death on a cross!¹ **Obedience is better than sacrifice**². It is better than saying "Lord, Lord"³. And teaching others to be obedient is right at the heart of the Great Commission!⁴ Obedience will anchor you into God's call for your life, and keep you permanently 'on the cutting edge' for Jesus. Obey straight away in small things and big things. Be obedient not just when you are young and reckless, but all of your days. Don't ever let

¹ Phil 2:8

² 1 Sam 15:22

³ Mt 7:21

⁴ Mt 28:20

that something 'die'. When God speaks, make the change in your life immediately. Give that gift immediately. Adjust the direction of your church immediately. Plant that church immediately. Delayed obedience is disobedience. Partial obedience is disobedience. Great leaders have always been ruthlessly obedient to Jesus in the big matters and the small. Great leaders have always been risk-takers:

Abraham was a risk-taker. He spent his life under canvas continually moving into new territory, risky territory.

Joseph risked interpreting the dreams of some very powerful men. If you interpreted wrong, these were not the kind of guys who would have thanked you for your time, and given you a gift voucher in appreciation of your efforts. They simply called in Big Tony to relieve you of your life.

Moses risked challenging Pharaoh. He risked striking the red sea ... with an audience of 2 million people, and the Egyptian death squad a couple of miles behind.

David risked taking on Goliath. He is visiting his brothers and has a prompting to take on a giant that no other man in Israel was prepared to. Risky.

Esther needs to go and see the king to try and dissuade him from ordering the genocide of the Jews. But there is a catch here: most people, if you catch them at a bad time, just ask you to reschedule. But this king handled his diary slightly differently: if you showed up at a bad moment he ordered your execution. I think it is fair to say that this added a sizeable dimension of risk to Esther's mission. Her parting words as she left for the palace were,

"If I perish, I perish"
'If' never stops the obedient.

Jonathan was tired of his Dad and the other experienced soldiers simply sitting around under the pomegranate tree in fear of the Philistines. Their default option was to "play it safe". Jonathan's default option was:

"Let's go up and fight the Philistines, for maybe the Lord will fight for us"
(1 Sam 14:6)

Did you see it? Maybe. *Maybe. Maybe.* Jonathan moved on a *maybe*.
Maybe never stops the obedient.

Paul's default setting for church planting was "Just do it" to the extreme. Take a look at these verses:

"Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:6-10)

God had to run around *stopping* them from planting churches. Today, it seems that God has to run around trying to get us **to start** planting churches! After being thwarted by God from entering Asia, Paul's attitude is "Never mind, let's try Bithynia". Once again, God moves fast and blocks them. So how does Paul respond? Does he conclude that church planting isn't really for him? No! They just **kept moving** down to Troas.

Then that night, Paul has a dream about being invited to start a church in Macedonia. He wakes up, concludes God is definitely calling them to Macedonia, and they leave *at once*! One guy has a dream and hours later and they're off! It just takes a nudge to get them moving. God's only problem was holding them back when they were moving too fast. What a great problem for God to have! What great assurance for **risk takers** who are genuinely looking to God, that God *will* block any initiative that isn't in His will.

How many prophecies will it take to get you going? Try turning it around and say, "Lord, you had better send a prophecy to STOP me going!"

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly ... who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself on a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have neither known victory nor defeat. (Teddy Roosevelt)¹

**Remain an obedient risk-taker all your days.
No regrets. Not ever.**

¹ From John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 2001,

CHAPTER 18

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

Having young kids, I have got to know the Winnie the Pooh stories quite well. One of my favourite quotes is:

Christopher Robin was sitting outside his door, putting on his Big Boots. As soon as he saw the Big Boots, Pooh knew that an adventure was going to happen, and he brushed the honey off his nose with the back of his paw, and spruced himself up as well as he could, so as to look ready for anything. (AA Milne)

My prayer is that this booklet has served as a pair of 'big boots'. I pray that you see more clearly the great adventure that God has for your life. I pray that this booklet will help provoke legions of men and women to 'brush the honey off their noses' and spruce themselves up for leadership – especially men for eldership.

APPENDIX A

ELDER EXPECTATIONS AT GODFIRST

The Lead Elder of a Godfirst Site will talk a potential elder (a guy who he is inviting to join the elders for a few months) through this document. We all know that unclear expectations is the reason behind most strain in any relationship, and this is nowhere truer than when it comes to inviting people into an eldership dynamic. So make sure you are candid and thorough.

1. Heart Expectations

Sitting with the elders vs. Being an elder

Within the generic phrase 'eldership team' we actually have two groups of guys, although it should never feel like two groups of guys:

- **Elders:** The bible seems clear that an elder is an appointed and set-apart position. It is done publically through the laying on of hands. Thus, there is a definite moment of being set in place or becoming an elder.
- **Those sitting with the elders:** There are three reasons why we have a group of guys 'sitting with the elders': **(a) Training:** being with the elders is one of the fastest ways to grow in maturity and leadership **(b) Testing:** the bible warns against premature laying on of hands and cautions elders and deacons to be 'first tested' before setting them in place (1 Tim 3). Being with the elders for some months or years is a great way to test to see if a man has the character, competence (gifting) and chemistry to be set in place as an elder. **(3) Perspective:** a wise and secure eldership team will know that they are not the fountain of all knowledge and recognise that the input of respected others strengthens and invigorates the team.

There are two essential expectations to clarify and agree on up front:

- (1) If you are asked to sit with the elders, you must realise that this does not necessarily mean that you will become an elder, and that if you do, it might take years, not months. And, you may sit with the elders for a season and then that season will end. 3-6 months is often a good opening 'season'. You need to settle this in your heart and release the Site Leader from the expectation of making you an elder. And, if he doesn't, you need to be 100% okay with that decision, and not hold a grudge.
- (2) If you are asked to sit with the elders, you must throw yourself into it 100%, and act like an elder. Once asked to sit with the elders, it will be a rare occurrence for the elders / elder couples to do anything without you. You are not a 2nd-grade citizen. Also, we will almost always use the phrase 'eldership team' to denote both proper elders and those sitting with the elders, and thus many people will assume that you are a set-in-place elder. No problem. But you are clear that you are actually living in the now-but-not-yet...or not ever!

2. Practical Expectations

A. Meetings

The following are the bare minimum commitments that every elder needs to maintain in order for eldering to be a reality for all concerned:

- **Weekly Governing Meeting.** Men only. Usually a weekday 4-6pm.
- **Weekly Prayer Meeting.** Men only. Usually a weekday 5.30-7am.
- **Monthly Couples Event.** Couples. Usually a weekday evening.
- **Visible attendance at Sunday Meetings.** Couples. Make sure you are both there 30mins before and 30mins after the meeting so you can connect with lots of people. If your Site has multiple Sunday meetings, you will need to work out attendance expectations that usually differ between full-time, part-time and market-place elders, and often the wife/kids will attend less than their husband/dad.
- **Visible attendance at other Site and Godfirst events** e.g. Camps, Conference, Prayer Nights, Social Events.

B. Couples together

As you can see, a philosophy of 'couples together on mission' undergirds being an elder. Although the elder is the man, we are in it together as couples, heart and soul. To this end, willing and joyful forward planning and innovation in terms of getting kids baby-sat, or bringing them along to meetings, and taking leave is encouraged to ensure we can be at events together as couples.

C. Kids

This extends to 'families together on mission'. We expect our elder kids to be at kids / youth events. This pre-supposes a combo of good parenting and running events that our kids actually want to be at – help us Lord! Once in their teens, our hope is that our kids will keep supporting and benefiting from our G1 Youth activities, but we are increasingly sensitive to unique personalities and situations.

In addition to these basic expectations, you will express your eldering via your areas of gifting, passion, capacity and need in the church. For example, you may lead a Life Group, or oversee some Life Groups, Be involved in worship, Parenting Groups and so on.

APPENDIX B

ELDER DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS AT GODFIRST

What?

An Elder Development Review is an exercise that each Eldership Team does two to three times per year. It deals with Character, Chemistry, and Competence.

Why?

To help foster brotherly love, accountability, guarding of oneself (Acts 20:28), and personal development.

How?

The **Character** section is taken from one of the three main passages of scripture about eldership (1 Peter 5, 1 Tim 3, and Titus 1) and is done one-elder-to-another. (1) Read through the text together, then (2) Read through each elder characteristic in the notes and ask each other the questions. Encourage, sharpen and challenge one another. Be honest and humble. Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and sometimes pause to pray for each other.

The **Chemistry** section is also done one-elder-to-another. The aim of this section is to help protect and promote great relationships in the eldership team.

The **Competence** section is done Leader Elder to each individual elder. The aim of this section is to ensure that each elder is actually being productive because eldering is a function more than a title. It also ensures that the elder is being productive in *the direction* that the lead elder wants him to be productive.

Feedback

Feedback orally to the Lead Elder, or to the whole team is even better, as it promotes love and knowledge of each other across the group. When feeding back on the character section, to save time, only mention areas of great success or great failure.

How the next few pages work

The 3 different Character sections are given all in a row (but only use one of these for each review), and after these come the Chemistry and Competence sections, both which are the same for every review.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT FROM 1 PETER 5:1-4

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; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

A witness of Christ's sufferings.

Mindfulness of Christ's sufferings means a perpetual awareness and deep gratitude for the suffering and victory of the Cross. This mindfulness provokes him to perpetual gratitude to, and awe of, Jesus. **Q. Do you find yourself sufficiently mindful of Christ's sufferings? How could you increase this elder characteristic?**

One who will share in the glory to be revealed...receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

Our eagerness and commitment is fuelled by the lure of the unfading crown of glory that we will get when we die. It will happen. It is worth it. All our toil and sacrifice will be remembered and no 'debt' will be left unpaid. Can you believe how good God is? He gives us our amazing salvation totally for free, then gives us the privilege and fulfilment of serving him, and then, wait for it Showers us with rewards and 'crowns' for all eternity! What an amazing added motivation to faithfulness!¹ If elders' eyes are fixed on eternal rewards, they will stay unattached to the fanciful delights of this world. We can endure temporary loss because of eternal gain. This sure is motivating. A mindfulness of heaven creates a man whose entire life on earth is shaped by eternity, effecting the way he handles money and spends his time and energy. He will be a man who mulls on heaven, prays and prophecies about heaven, is clearly excited about heaven, and has an inner drive to live and elder in such a way as to gain this lasting 'crown of glory' and eternal rewards (1 Cor 3:11-15; Rev 22:12). **Q. What areas of your life are most shaped by eternity? What areas of your life are not sufficiently shaped by eternity? Let's apply eternity to those areas now to reshape the way that you live...**

¹ Mt 16:27; Mk 10:21; Rev 22:12

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care...and when the Chief Shepherd appears.

This awareness gives him a sense of passion and privilege about being an elder. It makes him peaceful rather than driven because he knows that this is ultimately God's flock. It also makes him patient and gentle because he knows that he is looking after another man's wife. And finally, it makes him confident in his God-given commission to under-shepherd God's flock. **Q. How aware are you to the reality that you are eldering God's flock? Do you find this protects you from driveness and promotes confidence?**

...as overseers.

Although the New Testament words for elder, pastor, shepherd and overseer essentially describe the same thing, Peter's use of this word highlights the importance of an elder being able to give wide-reaching oversight to a church, avoiding over-emphasis or hobby-horsing on any one particular arena of church life. It is of course fine to have some areas of particular interest and involvement, so long as they are not queering your oversight of the whole. For example, a particularly pastoral elder must ensure this strengthen of his does not dilute his passion for the church to be highly missional, and visa-versa. **Q. Any areas that you might be inappropriately emphasising that might be compromising your oversight of the whole?**

Serving...not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be...eager to serve.

An elder's prime identity is that of a servant, because we imitate our great Shepherd who's only agenda was to serve, not be served (Mt 20:28). A willing and servant-hearted elder oozes a sense of privilege about being an elder, and the way he orders his life and fulfils his eldering responsibilities with eagerness and joy. He never makes the eldership team or the church feel like he is doing them a favour...rather he makes you feel that it is the other way around! I love this word eager. It means being always ready to step up to the plate. It means being 100% involved and pumping with passion – rather like God himself is. Jonty Rhodes, one the world's greatest cricket fielders, tells how he was eager that every ball came to him. Similarly, elders must be eager for an opportunity to elder people. There is no other way to build a great local church than the whole team of elders and wives giving it 100% effort, which sometimes means pulling all-nighters like in 1 Chron 9:22-34: "They would spend the night stationed around the house of God, because they had to guard it; and they had charge of the key for opening it each morning."¹ **Q. Honestly, does eldering feel like a privilege? What arenas of service are you currently finding it hard to do with a servant heart? What can be done to remedy that?**

¹ 1 Chron 9:27

Not greedy for money.

Whether his income comes from the church or from another source, he is not greedy for money. This doesn't mean that he should be either poor or entrepreneurially unimaginative, but it means that he will not be trying to get rich quick (Prov 20:21), neither will there be a sense that he is elderring for gain (2 Cor 2:17; 1 Tim 3:8; 1 Tim 6:5. Titus 1:7). He will be free from the love of money, content, and trusting God (Heb 11:5-6). He will demonstrate his lack of greed by being a consistent and generous giver and seek to set an example to the flock in the spiritual discipline of giving as well as every other spiritual discipline. **Q. Are you happy with our theological and practical position on the expectation on members and leaders to giving 10%+ gross each month? Do you give a minimum of a full 'gross' tithe each month? Do you give offerings on top of that? How have you done on the last couple of Gift Days? What debt are you carrying?**

Not lording it over those entrusted to you.

He does not come across as holier-than-thou, or a know-all. He is not overbearing, controlling or manipulating in his leadership. On the contrary, he tries to persuade people using the Word to win their conscience, rather than coercion. But he is not a push-over, and shows discernment knowing the issues and people on which he must give no ground. **Q. Are you being persuasive without manipulative or heavy handed?**

But being examples to the flock.

Jesus is committed to having his bride led by authentic elders who act the same in public as they do in private, who are able to say "be imitators of us and of the Lord"¹. Leaders must live amongst the people - if all the people see of the leader is pulpit - hotel room - limousine – preaching – airplane, then there is not much to consider! Let's be in each other's homes; let's do small group times that are up-close-and-personal as well as the big meetings. Like Gideon, let us be able to say to our troops: "Watch me and follow my lead ... do exactly as I do"². The writer of Hebrews tells followers to consider the outcome of the lives of their leaders (Heb 13:7) not the words of their leaders. Because leadership is all about modelling life so that others can imitate, your 'walk must match your talk'. Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the best way to influence others – it is the only way". **Q. Are you aware of any areas that you feel you are either a terrific good or terrifically poor example to others? What can be done to remedy the latter?**

¹ 1 Thess 1:6

² Jud 7:17

Some other helpful questions to ask: Have you looked at any porn over the last 6 months? Are you carrying any offence or unforgiveness in your heart?

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT FROM TITUS 1:5-9

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.

Blameless.

Before honing in on some possible areas of life that could be open to blame, Paul casts the net wide simply saying that an elder should be blameless. Paul is not calling for perfection, but he is setting the bar for an elder high, saying that there should be a trend of godliness 'across the board'. **Q. Are you aware of any areas in your life that might not be blameless? Any areas where the devil could gain a foothold?**

The husband of but one wife.

Whilst scripture does not prohibit single men from being elders, the assumption is that they would be family men. John Stott believes that Paul was certainly prohibiting polygamy, but was not prohibiting single men from being elders, and certainly not from taking on lesser positions of responsibility. Stott feels that the nature of this statement is along the lines of prohibiting those in 'marital unfaithfulness' from leadership positions.¹ Interestingly, after a couple of general 'must be's', the first specific 'must' that Paul focuses on is concerning marriage. The importance of a healthy marriage and sexuality is huge for elders. Being the 'husband of but one wife' means that an elder should (a) avoid polygamy (b) avoid divorce (c) avoid homosexuality (d) avoid adultery (e) avoid pornography because that is adultery - anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt 5:27) (f) avoid fantasy and lustful thoughts as both are a form of adultery because you are drinking from a well other than your wife (Prov 5:15). (g) Pursue and cherish a healthy sex life in the elder's marriage. **Q. Is there any polygamy in your life? Do you have any homosexual tendencies? Is there any adultery in your life? Is there any woman with whom you sense a connection or potential connection that might lead to trouble? Have you look at any porn in the last 6 months? Do you struggle with fantasy or lustful thoughts about other women? How is your sex life in your marriage? How is your marriage going generally?**

¹ John Stott; Commentary on 1 Timothy (IVP 1996)

A man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

The home is the ultimate discipleship forum. Your wife and kids live with you 24/7. What better proof of a man's character and godliness than his wife and kids? The bible does not get specific about exactly how in order the home must be, nor does it give a cut-off age when children cease to be children. Therefore, in the instance of teenage rebellion we should be cautious and generous.

Raising believing children: The tension is that the bible places the responsibility on the parents to raise believing children, but we also know from scripture that the nature of salvation is that the individual needs to respond himself direct to God rather than via his parents – God has no grand-children. Therefore, whilst our children are children, we need to be diligent in laying into our children godly habits and beliefs that will one day be fully owned by them as individuals before God. **Q. How are things going in terms of your kids believing? What can be done to assist that?**

Raising obedient children: The primary biblical instruction to children is to obey their parents, and so raising obedient children is of prime importance to parents. Paul echoes this in writing about elders in 1 Timothy 3, and writes to the Ephesians, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right' (Eph 6:1-3). Obedience in children is something that God feels passionately about, so much so that he modelled it himself - Jesus was obedient to his parents (Lk 2:51). **Q. Are your kids obedient? What can be done to help in that area?**

Entrusted with God's work.

The awareness that he is about 'God's work' gives him a sense of passion and privilege about being an elder. It makes him peaceful rather than driven because he knows that this is ultimately God's flock. It also makes him patient and gentle because he knows that he is looking after another man's wife. And finally, it makes him confident in his God-given commission to under-shepherd God's flock. **Q. How aware are you to the reality that you are entrusted with God's work? Do you find this protects you from drivenness and promotes confidence?**

Not quick-tempered.

Quick-temperedness undermines temperance (1 Tim 3:2), and usually damages the sheep. Have you noticed that people tend to forget the hundred times that you were restrained, but remember forever the time that you lost your cool? **Q. In what situations are you prone to lose your temper? What idol is in play? How can you bring the gospel to bear to topple the idol and reduce this sin?**

Not over-bearing.

This does not mean that we adopt a soft-and-mushy leadership style. We must lead strongly yet tenderly, and avoid being bossy, over-bearing and manipulative. The point is this: the people we lead have never been ours, they are currently not ours, and they never will be ours. They belong to the Chief Shepherd. He is their Lord. We are servant leaders who will have to give an account of how we lead¹. You can lead the flock to the water but you can't make them drink – even if it means that you don't look quite so 'successful'! We should persuade people using the Word to win their conscience, rather than bulldozing them with a strong personality. **Q. Are you able to be persuasive without being over-bearing, manipulative or heavy handed?**

Not given to drunkenness.

John Stott writes: "Paul did not require them to be total abstainers, since Jesus himself turned water into wine, and made wine the emblem of his blood. Yet there are strong social arguments for total abstinence, since much reckless, violent and immoral behaviour is due to excessive drinking. What Paul requires, however, is moderation, as an example of the self-mastery already mentioned".² But clearly, in view of this specific command, if an elder chooses to drink alcohol, then in so doing he must remain above reproach and not open to any accusation of 'tipsiness' – let alone drunkenness, and being sensitive to stumbling those with weaker self-control or conscience in this area. **Q. What is your theological position on alcohol? How much alcohol do you drink? Do you know your limit? What is it?**

Not violent.

Physical or verbal violence, unless in a legitimate context of self-defence or defending the weak, is inappropriate for an elder. **Q. Is he ever physically or verbally violent with his wife, children, work colleagues, or anyone else?**

Not pursuing dishonest gain.

If the average Christian must choose whether they will serve God or Mammon, how much more must an elder choose! **Q. Are you involved in any immoral, questionable or unlawful (breaking either the spirit of the law or the letter of the law) financial enterprise? Do you pay your taxes in full? Are you happy with our theological and practical position on the expectation on members and leaders to giving 10%+ gross each month? Do you give a minimum of a full 'gross' tithe each month? Do you give offerings on top of that? How have you done on the last couple of Gift Days? If any, what debt are you carrying?**

¹ Heb 13:17

² John Stott's commentary on 1 Timothy (IVP 1996),

Hospitable.

The call to hospitality is everywhere in scripture (1 Pet 4:8, 1 Tim 5:9, Rom 12:9-12, Rom 16:23, Acts 16:14, Titus 1:6, Acts 2:43f), and so keen is Paul to preserve the family nature of the church that he says hospitality is a 'must' for all elders, because elders set the tone for the entire church, and if the private homes of the leaders are open and welcoming, then the public home of the church will be likewise. Hospitality is a bulletproof way of keeping leaders down-to-earth and engaged with those that they lead, and, so long as it is deliberately inclusive of outsiders and newcomers then it is a key to keeping the church evangelistic. There are two elements to hospitality. Firstly, hospitality is words, actions and attitudes of love and acceptance towards others. It involves taking initiative in chatting to those that you don't know and generally being warm and pro-active in friend-making, literally making people 'at home' around you. The opposite of hospitality is coming across aloof, cool or unfriendly. Elders should ooze warmth and interest in people thus making them feel 'at home' in their presence. Secondly, hospitality involves having people into your home regularly. **Q. Do you feel that you are social warm and that people open up to you because you have a hospitable spirit? How often do you open your home to people, and is it to both churched and unchurched people?**

Self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

The credibility of leadership in the church rests not on the colour of skin, nor eloquence, nor gifting and charisma, nor any other external matter – it rests on the internal character of the leader. “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean... You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones” (Mt 23:25-27). It all starts with constantly keeping the inside of your cup clean. The issue is character more than gifting, and on being rather than doing. Once we 'be' clean, we will start to 'do' clean, because the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart (Mt 12:35). The starting point is the internal government of the elder, moving from there outwards into external government his ministry as an elder. Like Jesus, Paul's concern is also for “first cleaning the inside of the cup”. He exhorts the Ephesian elders to “keep watch over yourselves and all the flock” (Acts 20:28) and tells Timothy to “watch your life and doctrine closely” (1 Tim 4:16). Leading yourself comes before leading others, and before leading in matters of doctrine. It is not only biblical leaders that agree with this principle of leadership:

He that would govern others, first should be the master of himself. (Philip Massinger)

I've had more trouble with DL Moody than any other man alive. (DL Moody)

Looking back my life seems to be one long obstacle course, with me as the chief obstacle. (Jack Paar)

When asked over what kingdom did he rule, Frederick the Great of Prussia replied, "Over myself, yes, over myself". (Frederick the Great)

In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victories they won were over themselves...self discipline with all of them came first. (Harry Truman)

Successfully leading ourselves is not something we complete before tackling the challenge of leading our families and churches - it is an on-going operation! In this on-going battle, a mighty weapon is the fruit of self-control: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23). Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control (Prov 25:28). A city with no walls is open to attack from anywhere at anytime, and it will be unable to repel these attacks. Elders are men who are often under special attack from the world, the flesh and the devil. If elders are going to finish the race, they need some pretty solid defensive walls of self-control! Both 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 include self-control in the list of qualifications for eldership. In fact, self-control is the only thing Paul tells Timothy to teach young men (Titus 2:6).

Q. In terms of self control, what areas are you particularly strong and particularly weak? What can be done to help armour plate you in the weak areas?

In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned. Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (Titus 1:7-9).

If you want to be an elder, you need more than just a basic working knowledge of the bible because your knowledge needs to be sufficient to argue your case to refute heretics by presenting sound doctrine. Get studying, boys! And the manner in which we teach individuals, small groups and congregation should show integrity, meaning being well prepared and correctly handling God's word rather than taking verses out of context. We should also be serious, meaning that whilst humour and a light touch is vital, there must be a gravity and reverence in terms of handling of scripture. Soundness of speech that cannot be condemned means avoiding inappropriate language and humour that can cause the listening to be stumbled.

Paul also says we must be able to hold firmly to the basic truths of the faith. Whilst we should eagerly seek deeper revelation, we should never tire of the basic truths of our faith. This is our safeguard leading to firmly established people and churches. So don't get upset if you hear another

sermon telling you what you already know. It is actually good news because now you know that you know something. Wouldn't it be terrible if all we ever heard were things we didn't know? Look at Paul's commitment to the basic truths: Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you (Phil 3:1). So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body (2 Pet 1:12-13). **Q. Do you feel confident in your position on the basic doctrines? Do you feel able to argue your case? What can be done to strengthen you theologically?**

Some other helpful questions to ask: Have you looked at any porn over the last 6 months? Are you carrying any offence or unforgiveness in your heart?

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT FROM 1 TIM 3:1-15

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. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.

Whether an elder for many years, or just beginning in his pursuit of eldership, he is whole-heartedly 'set' on eldering. Eldering is not just another aspect of his busy life, rather it is one of his top priorities. He clearly holds the role of eldering as something sacred and noble. **Q. Is your heart genuinely set on eldering, and why?**

The overseer must be above reproach.

Before honing in on some possible areas of life that could be reproachful, Paul casts the net wide simply saying that there should not be any area of an elder's life that is reproachful. Paul is not calling for perfection, but he is setting the bar for an elder high, saying that there should be a trend of godliness 'across the board'. **Q. Are you aware of any areas in your life that might not be above reproach? Any areas where the devil could gain a foothold?**

The husband of but one wife.

Whilst scripture does not prohibit single men from being elders, the assumption is that they would be family men. John Stott believes that Paul was certainly prohibiting polygamy, but was not prohibiting single men from being elders, and certainly not from taking on lesser positions of responsibility. Stott feels that the nature of this statement is along the lines

of prohibiting those in 'marital unfaithfulness' from leadership positions.¹ Interestingly, after a couple of general 'must be's', the first specific 'must' that Paul focuses on is concerning marriage. The importance of a healthy marriage and sexuality is huge for elders. Being the 'husband of but one wife' means that an elder should (a) avoid polygamy (b) avoid divorce (c) avoid homosexuality (d) avoid adultery (e) avoid pornography because that is adultery - anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt 5:27) (f) avoid fantasy and lustful thoughts as both are a form of adultery because you are drinking from a well other than your wife (Prov 5:15). (g) Pursue and cherish a healthy sex life in the elder's marriage. **Q. Is there any polygamy in your life? Do you have any homosexual tendencies? Is there any adultery in your life? Is there any woman with whom you sense a connection or potential connection that might lead to trouble? Have you look at any porn in the last 6 months? Do you struggle with fantasy or lustful thoughts about other women? How is your sex life in your marriage? How is your marriage going generally?**

Temperate.

Temperance means stable, and not prone to extremes. Temperate leaders are consistent and dependable in what they say and do. Temperate elders bring comfort, stability and a sense of security to a church. Churchill once said of the General Tudor who resisted the great German advance of 1918: "The impression I had of Tudor was of an iron peg hammered into the frozen ground, immovable."² This is what elders are to be like. **Q. Under what circumstances are you prone to lack temperance?**

Self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

The credibility of leadership in the church rests not on the colour of skin, nor eloquence, nor gifting and charisma, nor any other external matter – it rests on the internal character of the leader. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean... You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones" (Mt 23:25-27). It all starts with constantly keeping the inside of your cup clean. The issue is character more than gifting, and on being rather than doing. Once we 'be' clean, we will start to 'do' clean, because the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart (Mt 12:35). The starting point is the internal government of the elder, moving from there outwards into external government his ministry as an elder. Like Jesus, Paul's concern is also for "first cleaning the inside of the cup". He exhorts the Ephesian elders to "keep watch over yourselves and all the flock" (Acts 20:28) and tells

¹ John Stott; Commentary on 1 Timothy (IVP 1996)

² Winston Churchill; *The World Crisis*

Timothy to “watch your life and doctrine closely” (1 Tim 4:16). Leading yourself comes before leading others, and before leading in matters of doctrine. It is not only biblical leaders that agree with this principle of leadership:

He that would govern others, first should be the master of himself. (Philip Massinger)

I've had more trouble with DL Moody than any other man alive. (DL Moody)

Looking back my life seems to be one long obstacle course, with me as the chief obstacle. (Jack Paar)

When asked over what kingdom did he rule, Frederick the Great of Prussia replied, “Over myself, yes, over myself”. (Frederick the Great)

In reading the lives of great men, I found that the first victories they won were over themselves...self discipline with all of them came first. (Harry Truman)

Successfully leading ourselves is not something we complete before tackling the challenge of leading our families and churches - it is an on-going operation! In this on-going battle, a mighty weapon is the fruit of self-control: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23). Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control (Prov 25:28). A city with no walls is open to attack from anywhere at anytime, and it will be unable to repel these attacks. Elders are men who are often under special attack from the world, the flesh and the devil. If elders are going to finish the race, they need some pretty solid defensive walls of self-control! Both 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 include self-control in the list of qualifications for eldership. In fact, self-control is the only thing Paul tells Timothy to teach young men (Titus 2:6).

Q. In terms of self control, what areas are you particularly strong and particularly weak? What can be done to help armour plate you in the weak areas?

Respectable (:2)...worthy of respect (:8)

He is worthy of respect in terms of his character and the way that he conducts his life. There is a nobility and godliness evident in his life choices and priorities that attract the respect of others. **Q. What areas of your life do you (or others) feel might be unworthy of respect? What can be done to remedy that?**

Sincere.

Sincere means to be genuine. With an elder, what you see must be what you get. Their 'yes' means 'yes' and their 'no' means 'no'. They ooze trustworthiness. They don't exaggerate or misrepresent people or situations. They are quick to give sincere apologies when necessary. Elders have pure hearts and open spirits and are easy to trust. **Q. Would you and others regard you as being sincere? Are you prone to exaggeration or half-truths?**

First tested...He must not be a recent convert ... or conceited.

The King James Version of 1 Timothy 5:22 says, "Lay hands suddenly on no man", and in the New International Version: "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands". Laying-on hands is easy. Laying-off hands is traumatic. Whilst the only ultimate guarantee of an elder finishing strong is his own walk with God, appointing elders is not meant to be an exercise in guesswork. It is not a lottery. When the writer of Hebrews says that the followers should "consider the outcome" of the leaders way of life (Heb 13:7), the 'outcome' that he is referring to is a proven track record. How has his life turned out over a meaningful length of time? What is the fruit? Jesus said in Luke 16:10-12 that if man is faithful with little, then you can trust him with more, and that if he is faithful with another's, then he can have his own, and that if he is faithful in the natural things, then he can be entrusted with spiritual responsibility. This is a principle to be observed. So don't rush in. Watch for another 6 months. Let people do the job before publicly setting them apart to do the job that they are actually already doing! This can lead to some frustrations (i.e. doing the job without the increased authority and gifting that comes through the laying on of hands), but it is an important part of testing and proving.

Recent converts may have bags of zeal, but being an elder is also about having bags of wisdom, and wisdom only usually comes with time and experience. Whilst many things in the bible are 'black and white', as one grows as a believer you gradually become aware of the very real tensions of areas of doctrine and discipleship that are not crystal clear, or require a 'both/and' approach to fully honour the teaching of scripture. Correctly handling these areas and avoiding extremes or hobby-horses can often be a huge challenge for a recent convert, and one usually needs many years to come to a place of personal conviction and stability in doctrine and philosophy of ministry. It is possible to feel very convinced about a certain belief or approach without realising that the fruit that this position produces down the road is not quite as brilliant as you anticipated it would be! Thus, the possibility of recent converts becoming conceited and dogmatic is very, very real, and prematurely elevating them to eldership can not only reinforce conceit, but can also be dangerous for those that they would lead.

Q. For ordained elders: Do you feel you were properly tested before being ordained as an elder?

Q. For not-yet-elders: Are you happy with the track that you are currently on to test whether you should be set-apart as an elder? Are you ok with the possibility of not being ordained and elder?

Q. For both: Are there any areas of doctrine or philosophy of ministry where you feel healthy conviction might be straying into conceit or unhealthy dogmatism?

Of good reputation with outsiders so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Here Paul presents both a missional and character issue, and up's the ante on this one by saying that the devil is actively working to soil the reputation of God's people by wanting to disgrace an elders reputation with unbelievers. Elders must have a good reputation in terms of their relationships, business dealings and general conduct with unbelievers. This is appropriate for a man of character, and to protect the reputation of the Church, and to help win unbelievers to Christ. Before appointing someone to eldership in the church, give his boss a call, or better still go round and visit his place of work and meet with his boss, explain your situation, show him this verse, and ask his advice. And once an elder, it is obviously important to continue having a good reputation with unbelievers. The whole issue pre-supposes that elders are actively and regularly interacting with unbelievers. **Q. Are you aware of any relationships with unbelievers where you have a bad reputation? What is the story there? who are some unbelievers that you are actively engaging with, with the intent of winning them to Christ?**

Hospitable.

The call to hospitality is everywhere in scripture (1 Pet 4:8, 1 Tim 5:9, Rom 12:9-12, Rom 16:23, Acts 16:14, Titus 1:6, Acts 2:43f), and so keen is Paul to preserve the family nature of the church that he says hospitality is a 'must' for all elders, because elders set the tone for the entire church, and if the private homes of the leaders are open and welcoming, then the public home of the church will be likewise. Hospitality is a bulletproof way of keeping leaders down-to-earth and engaged with those that they lead, and, so long as it is deliberately inclusive of outsiders and newcomers then it is a key to keeping the church evangelistic. There are two elements to hospitality. Firstly, hospitality is words, actions and attitudes of love and acceptance towards others. It involves taking initiative in chatting to those that you don't know and generally being warm and pro-active in friend-making, literally making people 'at home' around you. The opposite of hospitality is coming across aloof, cool or unfriendly. Elders should ooze warmth and interest in people thus making them feel 'at home' in their presence. Secondly, hospitality involves having people into your home regularly. **Q. Do you feel that you are social warm and that people**

open up to you because you have a hospitable spirit? How often do you open your home to people, and is it to both churched and unchurched people?

Able to teach.

Notice that this is the first and only qualification in this passage that pertains to gifting, rather than character. But there is a significant character element to teaching in that it involves an authentic lifestyle, study and preparation. Elders should ask God for the spiritual gift of teaching, and then do all in their power to fan it into flame. Whilst some elders may be less gifted than others in public preaching, all elders must be able to teach effectively in a small-group setting, and one-on-one which presupposes doctrinal maturity and pastoral skill. **Q. Do you feel competent to teach others biblical principles? Do you feel most comfortable doing that one-on-one, in a small group, in a seminar situation, or from a Sunday pulpit? Are you comfortable with the amount of opportunities you have to teach in various contexts?**

He keeps hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.

Deep truths of the faith are essential, non-negotiable doctrinal absolutes or core beliefs. An elder must be able to distinguish between these and the less essential peripheral aspects of doctrine about which there may be several respected interpretations. It is vital for an elder to know what he believes and to keep hold of the deep truths of the faith, not swayed by the latest fad or distracted by peripheral less essential aspects of doctrine. And, like Paul is concerned that these deep truths are believed with a clear conscience. This means that we must believe what we believe for ourselves rather than to tow the party line. This is why it is important to discuss and work through doctrinal issues, rather than having a 'rule-book' that everyone has to line-up with. **Q. Are there any doctrines in which you feel vulnerable, either because you do not yet have personal clarity and conviction in them (clear conscience), or because you feel at odds with the position of the church?**

Not given to drunkenness...not indulging in much wine.

John Stott writes: "Paul did not require them to be total abstainers, since Jesus himself turned water into wine, and made wine the emblem of his blood. Yet there are strong social arguments for total abstinence, since much reckless, violent and immoral behaviour is due to excessive drinking. What Paul requires, however, is moderation, as an example of the self-mastery already mentioned".¹ But clearly, in view of this specific command, if an elder chooses to drink alcohol, then in so doing he must remain above reproach and not open to any accusation of 'tipsiness' – let alone drunkenness, and being sensitive to stumbling those with weaker self-control or conscience in this area. **Q. What is your theological position**

¹ John Stott's commentary on 1 Timothy (IVP 1996),

on alcohol? How much alcohol do you drink? Do you know your limit? What is it?

Not violent but gentle.

Physical or verbal violence, unless in a legitimate context of self-defence or defending the weak, is inappropriate for an elder. Gentleness is an essential fruit of the Spirit for an elder in terms of discipleship. Elders should live out the following scriptures:

- Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ forgave you (Eph 4:32).
- Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently (Gal 6:1).
- Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph 4:2).
- Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (1 Tim 2:25).

Q. Is he ever physically or verbally violent with his wife, children, work colleagues, or anyone else?

Not a lover of money.

It is simple: until he is free from the love of money, do not make him an elder, and once an elder, fight to stay free from the love of money. If elders love money, they may end up pedalling the gospel for gain. If they have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, they must not be entrusted with true riches (Lk 16:11). Whether his income comes from the church or from another source, he must not be a lover of money. This doesn't mean that he should be either poor or entrepreneurially unimaginative, but it means that he will not be trying to get rich quick (Prov 20:21), neither will there be a sense that he is eldering for gain (2 Cor 2:17; 1 Tim 3:8; 1 Tim 6:5. Titus 1:7). He will be free from the love of money, content, and trusting God (Heb 11:5-6). He will demonstrate his lack of greed by being a consistent and generous giver and seek to set an example to the flock in the spiritual discipline of giving as well as every other spiritual discipline. **Q. Are you happy with our theological and practical position on the expectation on members and leaders to giving 10%+ gross each month? Do you give a minimum of a full 'gross' tithe each month? Do you give offerings on top of that? How have you done on the last couple of Gift Days? If any, what debt are you carrying?**

Not pursuing dishonest gain.

If the average Christian must choose whether they will serve God or Mammon, how much more must an elder choose! **Q. Are you involved in any immoral, questionable or unlawful (breaking either the spirit of the law or the letter of the law) financial enterprise? Do you pay your taxes in full?**

Not quarrelsome

You can check that he doesn't have a quarrelsome nature by asking him the following questions:

Q. Does he always seem to need the final word in an elder's discussion? Does he overdo playing 'devil's advocate', always feeling the need to state the other side of the argument? Does he give off the vibe that his contribution to a discussion is actually more about being heard than serving the debate? Is he prone to being pedantic, picky or critical of what other elders are saying?

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?

Paul couldn't be clearer: if a man can't lead his own family well then he should not be an elder because leading God's church family requires a similar character and skill set. The 'logic' is that the church is a 'greater house', and that those who lead in the 'greater' must first succeed in the 'lesser'. The home is the ultimate discipleship forum. Your wife and kids live with you 24/7. What better proof of a man's character and godliness than his wife and kids? The bible does not get specific about exactly how in order the home must be, nor does it give a cut-off age when children cease to be children. Therefore, in the instance of teenage rebellion I believe we need to be cautious and generous. The word 'manage' translates from the word *proistamenos* meaning to lead, and combines the virtues of ruling with love, with authority and with gentleness. And, Paul regards obedient and respectful (well-mannered) children as the prime indicator of a well-managed family. Paul echoes this in writing about elders in Titus 1, and writes to the Ephesians, 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right' (Eph 6:1-3). Obedience in children is something that God feels passionately about, so much so that he modelled it himself - Jesus was obedient to his parents (Lk 2:51). **Q. How are you doing on managing your family well? What are the areas/people of challenge? How are things going in terms of your kids believing? What can be done to assist that? Are your kids obedient? What can be done to help in that area?**

CHEMISTRY DEVELOPMENT

For elders

- Are you feeling comfortable and connected within the eldership team?
- Which team members do you have the best chemistry with?
- Which team members, if any, do you have strained chemistry with? Briefly explain.
- Comment on your relationship with the Lead Elder of your site.

For wives

- Are you feeling comfortable and connected within the eldership team?
- Which team members do you have the best chemistry with?
- Which team members, if any, do you have strained chemistry with? Briefly explain.
- Comment on your relationship with the Lead Elder of your site.

COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

For the Site Leader to fill out and talk to him about

What are his main areas of responsibility?

For each area, grade him 1-5, with 5 being outstanding, and then give one or more 'do less of' and one 'do more of' for each area.