

“What is an Elder?—and why that matters”

Ordination Sunday

July 9, 2017

INTRO ... “Ordination Sunday”

- *What is an Elder? ... and why that has ever mattered.*
- *Who is Evan May ...and why he matters to you today.*

History/Context for ‘ELDERS’



Essential Ingredients to the Great Commission: *The Gospel — the Ministry of the Holy Spirit — Local Churches w/ Elders*

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

Titus 1:5 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

- Elders are part of God's Divinely Ordained Structure & Order for His Church

What is an Elder? ...

They are the doctrinal guardians of the flock and the overseers of the life of the church responsible to God for the feeding and care and ministry of the people." John Piper, "Biblical Eldership Part 1"

“Elders lead the church [1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1–2], teach and preach the Word [1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9], protect the church from false teachers [Acts 20:17, 28–31], exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine [1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:13–17; Titus 1:9], visit the sick and pray [James 5:14; Acts 6:4], and judge doctrinal issues [Acts 15:6]. In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church”. Alexander Strauch, “Biblical Eldership”

Elder = Calling by the Holy Spirit + qualifications + gifting/ability suited to the task

He is Called by the Holy Spirit

Acts 20:17, 28-32 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ...²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Jer 23:3-4 I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴ I will set shepherds over them who will care for them,

Acts 13:1-3 Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 14:23 ...Paul & Barnabas set local elders in place

He is Qualified According to Scripture

1 Tim 3:1-7 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Titus 1:5ff

He is Gifted/Enabled to serve this function - 3 interchangeable words in the N.T.

Identify the role and function of a local church elder

- An elder's role and function gets clarified by 3 biblical words: 'presbuteros' = elders; 'episkopos' = overseer; 'poimen' = shepherd

- **"Elder" - presbúteros** - an old man, an ambassador. Older, aged; an elder, a senior. ... in the Jewish and Christian usage, a title of dignity, an elder, meaning persons of ripe age and experience who were called to take part in the management of public affairs. (from The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament)
 - the O.T. Origins of this concept. (The elders of Israel were those who possessed more life experience)
 - this is in contrast to the "naive" (simple) who are described in Proverbs
 - *Age alone does not produce this dimension of an elder... he also needs study, thinking, self-examination and an ability to critique with insight and objectivity. We can become older without learning what we needed to learn, without discarding things we needed to discard, without understanding ourselves, and without having an adequate understanding of God and sound theology!*
 - ...So 'presbuteros' means more than "old"...
- **"Overseer" ('episkopos')**

epískopos; from epí, upon, and skopós, a watchman. Superintendent, overseer. The overseer of public works; of cities, e.g., a prefect. In Athens epískopoi (pl.) were magistrates sent to outlying cities to organize and govern them. In the NT, used of officers in the local churches, overseers, superintendents. The epískopoi (Acts 20:28), are charged with exercising watchful care over God's church (cf. 1 Peter 5:2). ...In 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:5,7, an elder denotes the dignity of the office, and epískopos, bishop or overseer, denotes its authority and duties (cf. 1 Peter 2:25; 5:1,2,4). (from The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament)

...this is a managerial, organizational, and idea librarian function!

o **Overseeing the Doctrine of the Local Church**

1 **Tim 3:14-15** I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.

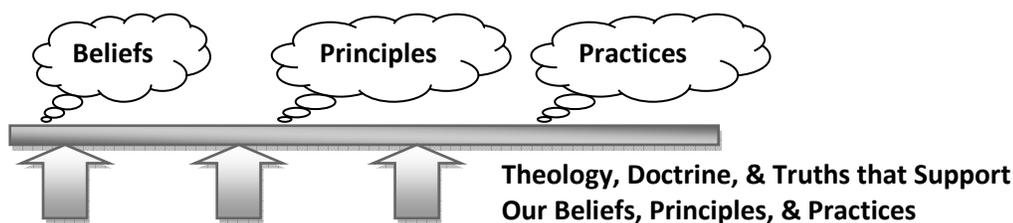
2 **Tim 1:13-14** Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

Titus 1:9 He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

1 **Tim 3:2** Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,...

"An elder must be apt to teach" ...he must have been given sufficient ability by God to communicate and transfer truth to others, at a level adequate to guard and protect and lead the church ...that's not what a Sunday School teacher needs to do or what a children's ministry leader needs to do or a small group leader needs to do ...an elder needs to understand "the ideas that uphold the ideas that we talk about in Christian conversations and basic messages in a church setting"

....**ILLUST:** Fundamental Doctrines & Truths that Uphold Basic Teachings, Principles, & Practices



- **Overseeing the Condition of People's Souls**

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.

...Elders are "soul watchers ...soul managers"

- We are praying, strategizing, equipping, and structuring the church so that it strengthens, protects, and feeds your soul!

- **Overseeing the Organizational Elements of the Church** ...Oversight in a modern church involves an ever increasing demand on administrative activities

- **"Shepherd" ('poimen')**- Shepherd, one who generally cares for flocks. (from The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament)

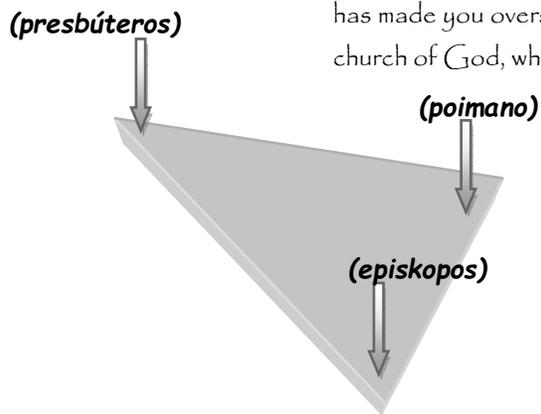
1 Peter 5:1-2 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd (**poimaíno**) the flock of God that is among you, (**poimaíno**) - shepherd. To shepherd, tend. (from The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament)

John 21:16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend (**poimaíno**) my sheep."

- “Feeding” – again making “teaching” central to an elder’s function
- Care, affection, ...Protection
- Leading and directing

3 Elements of an Elder’s Function & Role (Seen together):

Acts 20:17, 28 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders (**presbúteros**) of the church to come to him. ...28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (**episkopos**), to care (**poimaino**) for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.



The 7 Shared Values of SGC...

1. REFORMED THEOLOGY
2. GOSPEL-CENTERED DOCTRINE AND PREACHING
3. CONTINUATIONIST PNEUMATOLOGY
4. COMPLEMENTARIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE HOME AND IN THE CHURCH
- 5. ELDER-GOVERNED AND ELDER-LED CHURCHES**
6. CHURCH PLANTING, OUTREACH, AND GLOBAL MISSIONS
7. UNITED IN FELLOWSHIP, MISSION, AND GOVERNANCE

Why has that ever mattered?

- It is a vital part of the Mechanism and Strategy of the Great Commission
- Acts 20 ...Paul summoning the elders to charge them and warn them

This helps put Paul's words here in the right light. He is in a hurry to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost and is cutting it close. He is in a boat well out to sea. He seems to be in charge of the itinerary. And he orders the captain to navigate into the Miletus harbor, sends a messenger over the 20-some miles back up to Ephesus, and waits for the elders of the church so that he can say to them what we read in Acts 20:17–35.

The fact that Paul would go to this much trouble to give this message to the elders of the church personally and the fact that Luke would pause in his story and record the words for us make them very wonderful words to me. I am deeply moved by this speech. They show us so much of Paul's heart as well as his theology and his view of leadership. ...Now Why Were These Words So Important?

*One answer is that the future of the Ephesian church hangs on how its elders serve the Lord, and that's what Paul talks about here. No doubt Paul would have loved to see the whole church in Ephesus. But his strength and schedule dictated that he limit himself to the one thing that was indispensable—talking to the church elders.” **John Piper**, “Serving the Lord with Humility, Tears, and Trials”*