



Elders at Exodus Church

Edmund Clowney, in his work The Church says,

All government in the church is stewardship: i.e. its leaders are servant managers, who use their authority only to advance the interests of those they represent and serve.

Some forms of church government reflect these principles better than others, yet even the best form of church government is an empty shell if these principles do not grip the hearts of those who lead and those who follow. Better by far are the imperfect structures in the hands of devoted servants of Christ than the most biblical form of church government practiced in pride or in a loveless and vindictive spirit.¹

The Church belongs to Jesus who has appointed that Undershepherds guide, lead, govern and care for his church. These elders are to lead in a way that reflects the life of the Chief Shepherd who gave himself for the Church. They are to lead with a humility and love that is sacrificial and serving. These elders are to be men who are qualified, called and willing to fulfill their responsibilities out of joy and calling rather than compulsion and duty. These under shepherds will give an account when the Chief Shepherd comes to gather his flock from every tribe and tongue and nation.

The elders are to give leadership to the congregation in such a way that is not domineering, but seeks to bring the congregation along by creating opportunities for buy in and embracing of vision and mission. The congregation of believing Christians who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit have a role in the life of the church. They are to obey their leaders and submit to them. As they follow the leaders, they participate in the mission of Jesus. Elders who are wise know how to lead a flock in such a way that the elders and apostles did in the book of Acts (chapters 6 and 15). In this way, elders provide leadership under the Lordship of Christ allowing the congregation participates in major decisions.

Elders at Exodus Under Shepherds of Jesus

The plurality of elders given in the New Testament is to be a group of shepherds who function under the leadership and authority of Jesus. They are Under Shepherds of the Chief Shepherd. The plurality of elders in the church is to serve from a place of sacrificial leadership. When this happens, the way of Jesus is most clearly seen by His church through the leaders he has called and equipped to serve.

Qualifications

Those who would aspire to the office of elder must be men who have been redeemed by the death of Jesus in their place and who exhibit a maturing walk with Jesus. The qualifications are not to be viewed as attributes to be gained through moralistic self-effort or religious performance. Rather, they are to be the fruit of the gospel in the life of a man whose heart is fully dependent on Christ. As men work out their salvation, these qualifications are manifested in their lives and thereby qualify them to hold the office of elder. These qualifications are listed in **1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5**.

These lists are not to be viewed as exhaustive. The fruit of the Spirit as well as marks of maturing Christian faith must be evident in the life of elder candidates. One must have love and joy exhibited in their life as a person who walks with Jesus if they are to lead Christ's Church.

Responsibilities

- **Lead as a Shepherd – 1 Peter 5:1-3.** Peter is careful to say that this leadership is not to be heavy handed or domineering. It is to be sacrificial, eager and flow from a love for the Church and its Chief Shepherd. This leadership will involve oversight, leadership and care (i.e. praying for the sick, etc).
- **Manage like a Father – 1 Timothy 3:4-5.** Elders are to be men who lead their homes well. They must learn to lead the church in miniature if they are to lead the Church at large. This management would involve all areas of stewardship, guidance, direction, etc.
- **Watch Over the Church like a Watchman – Hebrews 13:17.** Elders are to watch over the souls of the Church. This means that they are to be concerned with the spiritual lives of those entrusted to them. They will give an account for the way in which they fulfill this calling. This would involve the pastoral care and community of the Church, the doctrinal purity of the church as well as the primary accountability for teaching.
- **Guard the Church like a Shepherd – Acts 20:28.** Elders are to lay down their lives for the sheep in such a way that they can protect the Church from ravenous wolves that will enter and try to devour and lead astray the sheep. Elders are called to defend, protect, guide and watch over the Church.
- **Teach to Equip – Ephesians 4:11-12.** Those who are given to preaching and teaching are to do so in such a way that will equip the saints for the work of ministry. Only when every member of the Body is growing and serving will the Church reach maturity in Christ. Elders are to multiply their ministry through the serving members of the body.
- **Teach to Train – 1 Timothy 5:17** – Not all elders would be required to hold the primary teaching ministry of the Church. However, they must be able to hold the faithful word in such a way that they are able to use it for training the people. This may be done in a counseling environment, a medium group teaching session or in the assembly. However, the Elders must guard the place of preaching and teaching in the life of the Church from error and derision.

Advisory Team

Until there are at least three men who are called, assessed and trained, Exodus Church will function under the authority of a group of men called the Exodus Church Advisory Team.

These are godly men who can help the Lead Pastor make decisions for the future ministry of Exodus Church.

Elders and the Congregation

Elders who rule well are those who govern not in a domineering manner, but as a father and shepherd who cares for those under his charge. Elders are to lead, govern, shepherd, manage, watch, protect, guide, teach and oversee. However, they are to do this as servant leaders who rule in humility. Elders who rule as servant leaders will be those who best reflect the Chief Shepherd as they carry out their ministry among those they are called to lead.

Respect their leaders -- In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Paul reminds the congregation that they are **to respect their leaders**. They are to appreciate their leaders so that they are able to act as a shepherd and not as hired hands. They are to esteem them highly because of the nature of their work. This love of the congregation for their leaders is “the divine glue that holds the leaders and congregations together through all the disagreements and hurts of congregational life.”ⁱⁱ

Provide financially for Elders who Lead and Teach -- In 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul tells Timothy that the elders who rule well are to be considered **worthy of double honor**. Certainly a portion of this honor is the respect and esteem commanded in 1 Thessalonians. However, the double portion refers to financial compensation for those elders who will commit their whole lives to the ministry of ruling and teaching God’s people through the local church.

Obey and Submit to the Elders -- In Hebrews 13:17, the writer tells us that the elders are to keep watch over the souls that are entrusted to them. For this reason, **the congregation is to obey and submit to its leaders**. This does not suggest that these leaders are infallible, but that insofar as leaders are following Christ, the congregation is to obey them so that leadership will not become a burden, but remain a delightful duty.

Congregations Role

These are not ways that the congregation rules over the elders. Rather these are ways in which the congregation works in conjunction with and submission to the elders that have been appointed by Jesus to shepherd, rule and lead His Church.

Giving Approval and Buying In to the leadership of the Elders – In Acts 6, Luke tells us that during the appointment of deacons, the leadership came to the whole gathering with a plan to appoint men to oversee or administrate the task at hand. The decision “pleased the whole gathering” (v. 5). Again in Acts 15, we see a similar principle at work when confronted with a matter of doctrinal purity. Strauch says, “From these two examples it is clear that the leadership body takes the lead for the congregation, and that the congregation participates.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Insure that leaders are leading well – In 1 Timothy 5, Paul gives guidelines concerning how the congregation should hold the elders accountable in their public leadership and

personal lives. If needed, they are able to bring a charge against an elder. This must be done with two or three witnesses to insure that elders are handled with honor, respect and esteem. Those elders who are charged in an appropriate manner are to be confronted in the presence of all (which I take to refer to the process in Matthew 18 that could at some point include the congregation) as a reminder to those who are ruling. The Congregation is to insure that leaders are leading well publicly and privately.

The Congregation will have an official vote on the following matters:

Elder appointment

When a man is put forward by the elders to serve in this capacity, the members will be given the opportunity to respond to the recommendation in writing. Any concerns must be verified by at least 2 people. These concerns will be investigated by the Elders in a biblical manner (Matthew 18). The members will cast a Vote of Affirmation to appoint the slate of elders. Following this vote of affirmation, the Elders will be appointed for their term of service.

Yearly Budget

The Elders will submit a yearly budget to the Membership. Members may ask questions about the budget. The Budget will then be voted on by the Membership seeking an approval of at least a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority.

Large Financial Decisions

Any time there is a decision to spend more than \$50,000 on an unbudgeted item, the elders will present this to the membership of Exodus Church in written form (email, brochure, etc). The members will be given two weeks to comment on the matter to the elders through various means. At the end of that time, elders will bring a final recommendation to the members of the church in a Called Members Meeting. There will be a balloted vote at this time.

ⁱ Clowney, Edmund. The Church. IVP, 1995, p. 202.

ⁱⁱ Strauch, Alexander. Biblical Eldership. p. 170.

ⁱⁱⁱ Strauch, p. 295.