

LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

(Major revision – 1998 – EKB)

(Please read these notes in conjunction with Nos 20,23,23a,55,73,74,75,79,122,123,149,150, 151,153,153a,157,162.)

Part A – Life of the Church.

The church owes its establishment, its expansion, and its continued growth, to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the life of God Himself. *Ac 2:1-47, Mat 16:18, 1Cor 3:16.*

Man's plans, organisations, methods, doctrines of church government, are no substitute for the life of the Spirit of God. All that we do in the church is to be a result of the life flow of the Holy Spirit. If this is not so, then we have an empty shell, that despite form and ceremony is unable to bring life and salvation to a dying world of sinners.

Part B – Love in the Church.

No system of church government will operate to the glory of God, and to the building up of God's people, unless the leader and support ministry are motivated and acting in love.

Different styles of church leadership will work to the glory of God and to the rich blessing of the saints where **agape** love is found. There may be one man oversight and control, or a leader and ministry team guiding the local church, but if all that is done is an expression of **agape** love, then the blessing and presence of God will abound.

Agape love is the character of God, *1Jn 4:8* "for God is love".

The result or "fruit," of the Holy Spirit's presence in a believer is love, *Gal 5:22,23.* *1Cor 13:1-3* says that all our speaking, exercising of spiritual gifts, works of faith, sacrifices for man's benefit, and for God, are futile unless they are the outworking of love.

Part C – Character in the Church.

In the church oversight the following attitudes need to be maintained in relationships.

1. Honesty and openness Willingness to be open and truthful, *Eph 4:15.*
2. Humility and servanthood Mutual respect and servanthood to one another, *Gal 5:13, Mat 20:28, Jn 13:14.*
3. Friendship and kindness Seeking fellowship together, *Heb 13:16.* Spending time as friends.
4. Loyalty and faithfulness Cover one another's weak points, *Jam 2:13.* Refuse to give or receive criticism of the other.
5. Trust and respect We will not pressurise each other, or impair the other's will, *1Cor 16:12.*
6. Seriousness and consideration We will listen carefully to one another, *1Cor 10:15.*
7. Acceptance and favour We accept each other, *Rom 15:7.*
8. Oneness and unity Moving together in God, *Eph 4:3.*
9. Prayerfulness and faith Seeking God's face together, *Ac 6:4.*
10. Fulness of the Spirit Keeping an alive, fresh relationship with God and His Word, *Eph 5:18,19.*

Part D – Church Structure

A. Elders.

The Jewish Christians were familiar with the term “**elder**” with respect to religious leaders. Elders stood with Moses, *Num 11:16*, and Joshua, *Josh 7:6*, the Sanhedrin contained elders and the local synagogues were governed by elders, led by a **ruling elder**. *Mat 26:3,57, Ac 4:5, Ac 13:15, Ac 18:8,17, Lk 13:14, Mat 24:45, Neh 11:11, Mk 5:22,35,36.*

(Refer “The New Bible Dictionary”, IVF, page 1228, under synagogue.

Editors: F.F. Bruce, J.I. Packer, R.G.V. Tasker and D.J. Wiseman.

“The Expositor’s Bible Commentary” – F.E. Gaebelin, Vol 9, page 423 under *Ac 13:14,15.*)

As the missionaries, Paul and Barnabus, raised up leaders in newly established churches, they did so following the same pattern as the Holy Spirit guided them.

Ac 14:23 “with prayer and fasting, they appointed elders in every church.”

When the Jewish apostles wrote to local churches it was natural for them to address the elders. They were mature men who had an established position and who were recognised as having the oversight and responsibility for the pastoral care of their fellow believers. The Jewish apostles wrote about elders and referred to themselves as **fellow elders**, *1Pet 5:1,2*. The writers of the New Testament took it for granted that the office of an elder was a well known and accepted institution. *Jam 2:2*, “assembly” is “synagogue” in the Greek.

The Greek word **presbuteros** which is translated **elder** means an older or mature person. It is understandable that the new churches of the New Covenant should retain the title for rulers that they were familiar with under the Old Covenant and in the synagogues.

The New Testament frequently speaks of **elders** being responsible for the local church. See *Ac 14:23, Ac 15:2,4,6,etc, Ac 20:17,28, Phil 1:1, 1Thes 5:12, 1Tim 5:17, Tit 1:5-9, Jam 5:14, Heb 13:7,17,24, 1Pet 5:1-3, Ac 11:29,30, Ac 16:4.*

There are three terms we need to identify and understand before going further.

1. **Elder** – Greek: presbuteros occurs more than sixty times in the New Testament and means an older or mature person.
2. **Bishop or Overseer** - Greek: episkopos occurs five times in the New Testament, being translated four times bishop and once overseer in KJV. Episkopos means one who oversees or superintends, eg *1Tim 3:2, Ac 20:28.*
3. **Shepherd or Pastor** – Greek: poimen occurs eighteen times in the New Testament. Once it is translated **pastor**, *Eph 4:11,KJV*, fifteen times as **shepherd**, *Jn 10:2,11,14*, and twice as *the Shepherd*, referring to Jesus, *Heb 13:20, 1Pet 2:25*. The verb form, **to shepherd**, in Greek poimaino occurs ten times in the New Testament and is translated six times **to feed** and four times **to rule**, *Ac 20:28, 1Pet 5:2, KJV*. The four times to rule refer to Jesus ruling the earth, *Rev 2:27, 12:5.*

There are **three key passages** which show that the **elders and bishops or overseers**, are the people in the local church who are responsible to do the shepherding, feeding or pastoring the flock of God. These three passages are: *Ac 20:17,28, Tit 1:5-9, 1Pet 5:1-3.*

Elder and bishop or overseer are broad general terms that do not specify a particular type of ministry.

Elder describes the man himself.

Bishop or overseer describes the office.

Shepherd, feed, or pastor describes the work.

Elders are individuals who vary in maturity, relationship with God, revelation from God, anointing, knowledge, wisdom, experience, ministries and leadership abilities.

1Tim 5:17 mentions three categories of elders:

1. Elders(implied).
2. Elders that rule well.
3. Elders that rule well and labour in word and doctrine.

B. Leadership or Headship.

The principle of **authority – leadership** is established in the Godhead among its three co-equal Persons, the **Father , the Son, and the Holy Spirit**. *Jn 5:19,30, Jn 6:38, Jn 8:28,29, Jn 12:49, Jn 16:13,14*. The Son submits to the Father, and the Holy Spirit submits to the Son, (Refer Pastor’s Notes, No 96).

God has established authority – leadership in five ways on earth for the wellbeing and ordering of mankind and society.

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| 1. | Governments – citizens | <i>Rom 13:1-7, 1Tim 2:1-4, 1Pet 2:13-17.</i> |
| 2. | Employers – employees | <i>Col 3:22-41, Eph 6:5-9</i> |
| 3. | Church leaders – church members | <i>Heb 13:7,17, 1Thes 5:12,13.</i> |
| 4. | Husbands – wives | <i>Eph 5:22-33, Col 3:18,19.</i> |
| 5. | Parents – children | <i>Col 3:20,21, Eph 6:1-4.</i> |

For example, in the home **God establishes authority** – leadership between husband and wife. There is no competition but a difference of role. God appoints one to take the place of leading in marriage. This does not signify any idea of superiority/inferiority but of different responsibilities to be fulfilled before God. The Lord spells out clearly the servanthood aspect of the husband’s leadership role in *Eph 5:25-33*, so that there can be no abuse of authority. Following the example of Jesus, *Mat 20:28, Jn 13:13,14*, everyone God calls into **leadership** in the New Testament is to express his leading through the **servanthood** of others.

In the church in Jerusalem, there were elders in oversight with authority. *Ac 15:2,4,6,22,23*. (As well as the apostles of Jesus.)

Within this eldership there was one man who exercised **the senior leadership role**, and he was James, the half brother to Jesus.

Ac 12:17 Go and tell these things to James and to the brethren.

Ac 15:13-21 After much dispute, (v7), in this first general church council, James arose to bring the matter to a conclusion, and direct it to a final resolution, bringing consensus and action.

Ac 21:18 James and all the elders were present.

Gal 1:19 James the Lord’s brother, *1Cor 15:7*.

Gal 2:9 James, Cephas and John who seemed to be pillars...

Gal 2:12 Before certain men came from James, he would eat....

Of James, Kenneth Wuest says, “He was **the Moderator** of the church in Jerusalem”

Commenting on *Ac 21:18*, “The Expositors Bible Commentary”, (see above), page 519, says, “James was the **resident leader** of the Jerusalem church.”

Paul wrote two epistles directly to Timothy who was (quote), the “**Pastor** of the church at Ephesus”. J.O. Sanders “Spiritual Leadership” p35. Timothy was “**leader** of the whole church at Ephesus” – Ajith Fernando – “Leadership Style” p 20.

Among the **twelve apostles** of Jesus, Peter was **the leader**. *Ac 1:15-22, Ac 2:14-36,38-40, Ac 3:4-6,12-26, Ac 4:8-12, Ac 5:3,4,8,9,15,29-32.*

In the initial **apostolic teams** sent out from Antioch Paul was the **leader**. *Ac 13:2,9-11,13,16-41, Ac 14:9-12, Ac 16:3,9,10,14,18,28,37.* Paul led the way for the team as he was in turn led by the Holy Spirit. *Ac 20:1-16.*

In each eldership, apostolic team, or group of mature men with a particular responsibility, **God raises up one man to be the leader.**

An eldership without a recognised leader finds itself in indecision, uncertainty, and lacks direction, purpose and vision.

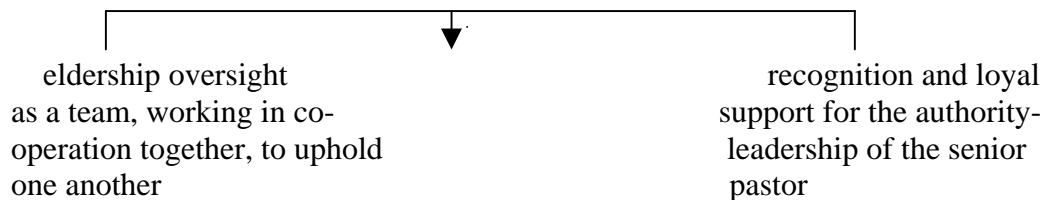
The leadership gift is a definite calling and anointing of God. It is not an elected, temporary, position.

Frequently, God raises up a church around a man He has prepared, called, and to whom He has given a clear vision and leadership ability. In time God will raise up mature men to stand with the founder leader of the church and share with Him the burden of caring for all the believers.

Leaders are men of God-given vision, and God raises them up to lead. The leadership gift is the ability in God to speak out the purposes of God to the church, and the enabling to lead the people in the ways of the Lord.

The relationships between the members of a church oversight need to be strong and close. It is important for them to meet regularly for prayer and to share what the Lord is saying to them by the Spirit. Time needs to be given to develop friendship and understanding.

In the above notes under the headings of A. **Elders** and B. **Leadership or Headship** we have two basic principles emphasised, namely, eldership team oversight and authority leadership. These two principles need to be kept in balance in a church oversight.



In the formation of any new church group it is very important to **recognise** the person to whom God has given the gift of leadership. After recognition there needs to be **acknowledgement**. After acknowledgement, there needs to be closely guarded **loyal support**, with open hearted loving honesty among the elders in the oversight team.

If there is any member of the oversight who has his own personal goal and ambition, separate from the vision held by the leader and eldership team as a whole, there are two visions, which, in time, will produce division.

Part E – Eldership Responsibility

Members of a church oversight are responsible to maintain godly attitudes and relationships between one another. Elders are required to be unselfish people and to walk in humility. They are to seek nothing for self but everything for the Lord and His flock. *Ac 20:28, Eph 5:21, Eph 4:1-3, 1Pet 5:5*. The main task of the oversight is to feed and care for the people of God committed into their charge. They are to be teachers of God's Word. They are the under shepherds for the Chief Shepherd. *1Pet 5:1-4, Ezk 34:1-16, Jam 5:14, Heb 13:17, 1Thes 5:12, 1Tim 5:17, 1Tim 3:5*.

The oversight must guard and protect the church. At times the assembly needs protection from false teachers, false prophets, and people who are living in unrighteousness. This may involve exercising church discipline to maintain standards of holiness laid down in God's Word. *Ac 15:1,2, Gal 5:12, Jn 10:12, Ac 20:29, 1Cor 5:1-13, 2Pet 2:1-22, Jude 10f*.

Elders are to oversee the corporate life of the church according to the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. They are **not to be people pleasers**. Visitation, restoration, healing, caring, seeking out the needy saints of the church is the work of the oversight. **They are to order and to guide the life of the church for the continual life flow of the Spirit through every member, so that each saint comes to full maturity and function.** In this way the whole assembly edifies itself in love. The oversight are to be constantly seeking God in prayer and in the Word of God for His way, His will, His Word, and His power for the life of the church. *Eph 4:16, 1Pet 4:10, Rom 12:4-8*. They are to be an example to the church of kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness of others. *Eph 4:32*.

Part F – Qualifications for Eldership - 1Tim 3:1-7.

Desire and willingness to accept the calling and office.

Blameless and without reproach.

All responsibilities fulfilled.

The husband of one wife, watchful, of sound mind, sensible and discreet, of good behaviour, orderly.

Hospitable and caring for others, apt to teach the Word, not given to wine, not violent but gentle, not greedy for money, patient and kind, not contentions, not covetous.

One who rules his house well, having obedient children, not a recent convert lest he fall through pride, of good report with those outside the church, *Tit 1:5-9*.