

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

CHRIST IS HEAD

- The church is built by Him and upon Him as its chief cornerstone

Matthew 16:18 ~ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Ephesians 2:20 ~ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone

- The church submits to Christ as its head

1 Corinthians 11:3 ~ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23 ~ And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Colossians 1:18 ~ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

- The church is under Christ's care as its Chief Shepherd

Ephesians 5:25 ~ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

1 Peter 5:4 ~ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

- It is in Christ that the body grows and is held together

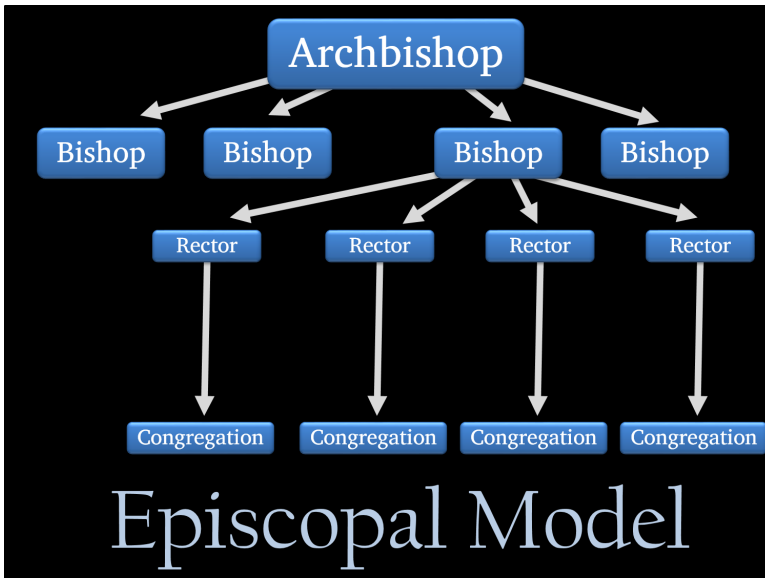
Colossians 2:19 ~ and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

- The NT directly connects Christ being head with the necessity of all things being in subjection to Him
- Therefore if He is head over the Church we are called to be in submission to Him
- There are many consequences to ignoring the fact that Christ is the head of the church:
 1. The focus no longer is seeking His will, but rather what is best for the organization, various people etc.
 2. It will lessen the importance of prayer
 3. Pragmatism will take precedence over walking by faith
 4. Personal power and politics will dominate - some must win, some must lose
 5. There will be consistent conflict
 6. God will not be glorified

FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Episcopalian

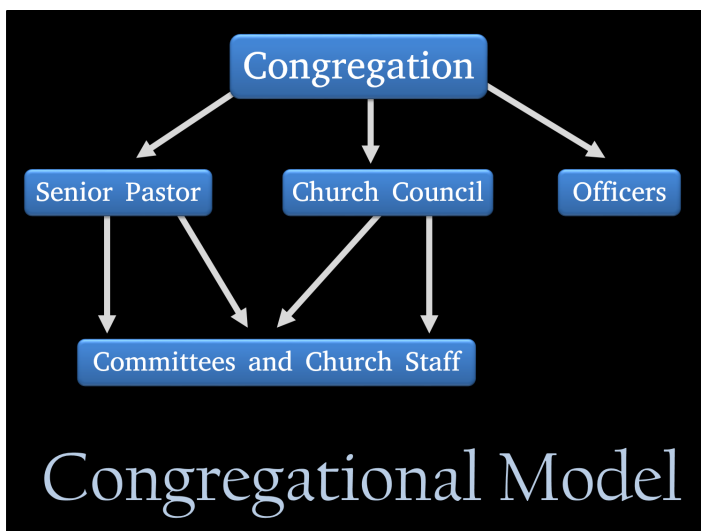
- Definition: the power of the church is in the hands of the bishops (the word "episkopos" = overseer)
- They hold that the right to consecrate other bishops, etc. belongs only to the bishop
- They practice apostolic succession where the official authority is passed down from apostles
- Examples of this form: Roman Catholic, Methodists, Lutheran, Episcopal



- Problems:
 - a. Bishop is not a separate office described in Scripture
 - b. This form is not found in the New Testament – arose in the 2nd century
 - c. Apostolic succession is not found in NT

Congregational

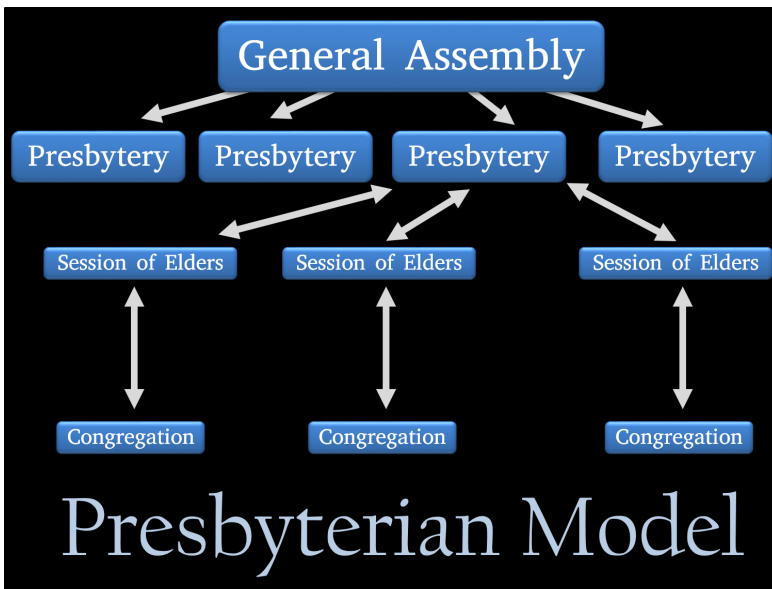
- Definition: governing power rests ultimately with people of the local church
- Followers of this polity believe that no man or group of men should exercise authority over a local assembly
- Rather, the government should be in the hands of the members themselves with each member having a vote
- Examples of this form: Baptists, Evangelical Free, Congregational, some Bible and independent churches (some of which have elders and deacons)
- Support given for this form
 1. Passages that speak of the responsibilities of the whole church (1 Cor 1:10; Phil 1:27)
 2. The committing of ordinances to the entire church not just its leaders (Matt 28:19-20; 1 Cor 11:2, 20)
 3. The involvement of the whole church in selecting leaders and dealing with issues (Acts 6:3-5; Acts 15:12, 22-25)
 4. The whole church is involved in exercising discipline (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5; 2 Thess 3:14-15)



- Problems:
 1. The elders are clearly entrusted with oversight of church in NT - Acts 20:28; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2
 2. Elders will be held accountable (can't be held accountable for something don't have authority to do) – Heb 13:17
 3. None of the above reasons (except #3 – but even it was initiated by the apostles) are in the context of church government

Presbyterian

- Definition: governing authority is in the hands of the elders (the word “presbuteros” = elder)
- The local church appoints elders to the session (the ruling authority of church)
- Those elders also belong to presbytery which has authority over several churches in a region
- Some elders belong to synod/general assembly – has authority over all churches in a nation or region
- Support given for this form:
 1. Basis for authoritative body over the local churches found in Acts 15-16
 2. In the NT, elders rules the churches (Heb 13:7, 17), led in discipline (1 Cor 5; 1 Tim 5:17, 20), and were appointed by the Apostles (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1-4)



- Problems:
 1. In Acts 15, the men who dealt with issues in the Antioch church were apostles
 2. Nowhere in Scripture do elders have authority over other churches

A Plurality of Local Elders

- Definition: Elders govern the church and have authority to rule over it, an authority delegated to them by Christ
- There is always more than one elder so that the authority is not in one man but in the plurality of elders
- This does allow for a first among equals
- It maintains a close relationship with the congregation
- The interchangeable terminology in Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5 make it clear that an elder = pastor = overseer

Acts 20:17, 28 ~ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the **elders** of the church...Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers** to **shepherd** the church of God

1 Peter 5:1, 2 ~ Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** the flock of God among you, **exercising oversight** not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

SUPPORT FOR PLURAL LOCAL ELDERS

- Definition: The Church is to be **shepherded** by a **plurality** of **qualified men** who **unanimously, equally,** and **independently** serve the local body of believers.

Shepherded

- The primary role of church elders is to shepherd the flock

Acts 20:28 ~ Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God

1 Peter 5:1, 2 ~ Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

Involves Leading

- God has sovereignly entrusted the elders of a local body of believers with the solemn responsibility to lead according to the Word of God

1 Thessalonians 5:12 ~ appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.

1 Timothy 5:17 ~ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

Hebrews 13:17 ~ Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over you souls as those who will give an account.

Involves Feeding

- Just like any good shepherd, the leaders of the church must spiritually feed their people on the Word of God.

1 Timothy 5:17 ~ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

Ephesians 4:11-12 ~ And He gave some; for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

2 Timothy 4:2 ~ Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Involves Protecting

- Shepherding involves protecting the flock from various attacks

Acts 20:28, 29 ~ Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock... savage *wolves* will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

Titus 1:9 ~ holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Plurality

- The church is never to be run by one man...The “senior pastor” model is foreign to the NT and runs counter to much biblical teaching on how the church should be led.
- Dangers of the Senior Pastor model:
 1. Pride and Control
 2. Limits the full expression of leadership gifts
 3. Limited to the wisdom and vision of one man
 4. Doesn’t naturally reproduce new leaders
- Though there may be different expressions of giftedness, the responsibility for leadership is placed on a **group** of men
- The term “elder” is only used in the plural except where it refers to a specific man in the context of a group

Acts 14:23 ~ And when they had appointed **elders** for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Philippians 1:1 ~ Paul and Timothy... to all the Saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the **overseers** and deacons.

Titus 1:5 ~ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might... appoint **elders** in every city as I directed you.

James 5:14 ~ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the **elders** of the church...

1 Peter 5:1, 2 ~ Therefore I exhort the **elders** among you... shepherd the flock of God.

Qualified

- An elder must be qualified according to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1
- These are the key characteristics that will be true if a man is qualified to be an elder
- The authority of the Word of God will not allow us to recognize a man for eldership who substantially lacks any of these qualities

An overseer must be...

<i>above reproach</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6, 7)	accusations not likely to be believed because of overall character
<i>husband of one wife</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6)	a man devoted to his wife
<i>temperate</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8; 2:5)	clearheaded, not self-indulgent, self-controlled
<i>prudent</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8)	not impulsive, self-restrained, balanced
<i>respectable</i> (1 Tim. 3:2)	an ordered life
<i>hospitable</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8)	an open heart and an open house
<i>able to teach</i> (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7)	able to transmit spiritual truth
<i>not addicted to wine</i> (1 Tim. 3:3; 5:23; Tit. 1:7)	no indulgence that would undermine witness
<i>not pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious</i> (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7)	not quick-tempered or irrational
<i>free from the love of money</i> (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2)	not money hungry
<i>one who manages his own household well</i> (1 Tim. 3:4, 5)	home reflects Christian character
<i>having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion</i> (Tit. 1:6)	children are believers
<i>not a new convert</i> (1 Tim. 3:6)	not a new believer
<i>good reputation</i> (1 Tim. 3:7)	known for good and right, a good reputation from those outside the church
<i>God’s steward</i> (Tit. 1:7)	one who is directly accountable to God
<i>not self-willed</i> (Tit. 1:7)	not stubborn, headstrong, overbearing, having own way
<i>not quick-tempered</i> (Tit. 1:7)	not known for outbursts of anger

<i>loving what is good (Tit. 1:8)</i>	pursues beneficial things
<i>just (Tit. 1:8)</i>	fair, impartial
<i>devout (Tit. 1:8)</i>	personal holiness
<i>holding fast the faithful word...that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (Tit. 1:9)</i>	stable in the faith, and is able to teach and defend the truths of God's Word
<i>exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily (1 Pet. 5:2)</i>	not out of obligation, but desires to serve
<i>not as lording it over but proving to be examples (1 Pet. 5:3)</i>	not controlling, but as Godly models

Men

- God has called men to be elders in the church

1 Corinthians 14:34 ~ Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves...

1 Timothy 2:12 ~ But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

Titus 1:6 ~ namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

Can a woman fulfill the role of elder?

Identity = Equality

Created in God's Image

Gen. 1:27 ~ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

Equal Salvation

Gal. 3:28 ~ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Role = Submission

In the Home

Help Her Husband

Gen. 2:18 ~ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

Submit to Her Husband

Eph. 5:22 ~ Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Keep House

I Tim. 5:14 ~ Therefore I want younger *widows* to get married, bear children, keep house...

Titus 2:4-5 ~ so that they may encourage the young women to be...workers at home

Raise Children

I Tim. 2:15 ~ But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity...

Titus 2:4 ~ so that they may encourage the younger women... to love their children.

In the Church

Exercise Spiritual Gift

I Cor. 12:7 ~ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Teach Younger Women

Titus 2:3-5 ~ Older women...teaching what is good, that they may encourage the younger women...

Don't Teach or Exercise Authority Over Men

I Tim. 2:12 ~ But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.

I Cor. 14:34 ~ Let the women keep silent in the churches...

- Notice that the roles of women within the church parallel the roles of women within the home
- How would you respond to the following objections:
 1. The prohibitions against women teaching or exercising oversight in the church were cultural
 2. The prohibitions against women teaching or exercising oversight in the church were based on the fact that some women were teaching heresy
 3. The prohibitions against women teaching or exercising oversight in the church were based on the fact that women then were not educated

Unanimously

- Elders are to function in unanimity such that the one will of the Lord might be demonstrated to the body
- When there is not agreement, it must be worked through until agreement is reached

1 Corinthians 1:10 ~ Now I exhort you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Ephesians 4:3 ~ Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

- Notice how often “one-mindedness” is said to describe the early church:

Acts 1:14 ~ These all with **one mind** were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 2:46 ~ And day by day continuing with **one mind** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

Acts 4:24 ~ And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with **one accord** and said, “O Lord, it is You who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

Acts 5:12 ~ At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with **one accord** in Solomon’s portico.

Acts 15:25 ~ it seemed good to us, having become of **one mind**, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

- Achieving unanimity is difficult at times, but it provides a safeguard against one man dominating the elders or missing the will of God in favor of a majority vote

Equally

- There is no level of hierarchy on the elder team...some have more influence in certain areas because of their giftedness and experience and there may be leaders among leaders, but they are equal
- Peter considered himself as a fellow elder with the local elders of a church

1 Peter 5:1 ~ Therefore I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow-elder...

Matthew 23:10-11 ~ And do not be called leaders, for One is your Leader, that is Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant.

Independently

- Each local church is a functioning body of Christ and needs to answer to no one except Him

Acts 14:23 ~ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Serve

- The primary goal and job of the local church leaders is to serve
- If elders are truly shepherding their people, they will be able to provide understanding and sensitive oversight

Matthew 20:28 ~ Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many

John 13:15 ~ For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.

1 Peter 5:3 ~ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

- Leading is serving and the desire to serve must be deeply rooted in any leader

OFFICES

- The term “offices” is not really the best term, but it conveys the basic idea
- These are not just roles, but actual positions

Elders

Acts 20:28 ~ Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God.

1 Tim. 3:2 ~ An overseer, then, must be above reproach...

1 Peter 5:1-3 ~ Elders...shepherd the flock.

What About Apostles and Prophets?

Ephesians 4:11-12 ~ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ

- The Purpose of Apostles and Prophets:

1) *To lay the foundation of the church*

Eph 2:20 ~ having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone

2) *To receive and declare the revelation of God's Word*

Eph 3:4-5 ~ And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit

- The Qualifications to be an Apostle:

1) *See the resurrected Christ*

2) *Be commissioned by Christ*

Acts 1:21-25 ~Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.

And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”

- What about Paul?
 1. He saw Christ – Acts 9:5-6; 1 Cor 15:7-9
 2. He was commissioned by Christ – Acts 26:16-17

Evangelists

- The term evangelist literally referred to a proclaimer of glad tidings
- In the NT, this term is used of one who proclaims the gospel - It referred to those who continued the work of the apostles

Acts 21:8 ~ And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.

- Evangelists are men who proclaim the good news...but they were much more than someone who preached an evangelistic message and then went to another place
- NT evangelists were missionaries and church planters who went where Christ was not named and led people to faith in the Savior
- They then taught the new believers the Word, built them up and moved on to new territory when a church was fully established

Deacons

- Acts 6:1-7 provides the first indication of a specific official group of men who were appointed to serve the practical needs of the church
- Although the Greek word for “deacon” is not explicit in the text, the concept of a body of servants who lovingly care for the needs of others is very apparent
- In this passage we see that men were selected to carry out the task of caring for the needy so that the Apostles could give attention to their first priority- prayer and ministry of the Word
- Deacons have a complementary ministry to elders
- In the New Testament, deacons are always in close relationship with the elders of the church
- Like the elders, deacons are required to meet specific qualifications
- Like the elders, they must be examined and approved before they can serve
- Like the elders, they hold an official position of trust in the congregation
- Unlike the elders, however, deacons are not required to be able to teach and do not govern the church as part of their position
- They are servants who relieve shepherding elders of the multitude of practical duties that are required in caring for a congregation
- The two offices of elders and deacons are separate but complementary
- Although deacons complement the elders, their Scriptural role and responsibilities are distinct
- The elders must devote their primary attention to teaching and leading people while deacons must give their primary attention to caring for people’s physical welfare
- So deacons assist and complement the elders in the overall ministry of the church
- The spiritual qualifications for deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-12:

Deacons must be...

<i>men of dignity</i> (1 Tim. 3:8)	serious; respectable conduct
<i>Not double-tongued</i> (1 Tim. 3:8)	not deceitful in words; no inconsistency in speech
<i>not addicted to much wine</i> (1 Tim. 3:8)	not controlled by alcohol
<i>not fond of sordid gain</i> (1 Tim. 3:8)	not one who loves money; not greedy
<i>holding to the mystery of the faith</i> (1 Tim. 3:9)	one who knows what he believes and why
<i>tested</i> (1 Tim. 3:10)	tested and approved character
<i>beyond reproach</i> (1 Tim. 3:10)	no charge of wrongdoing is likely to be believed because of overall character
<i>husband of only one wife</i> (1 Tim. 3:12)	a man devoted to his wife
<i>good managers of their children and households</i> (1 Tim. 3:12)	has his home in order

Women must be...

<i>dignified</i> (1 Tim. 3:11)	serious; respectable conduct
<i>not malicious gossips</i> (1 Tim. 3:11)	not slanderous or libelous
<i>temperate</i> (1 Tim. 3:11)	clearheaded, not self-indulgent, self-controlled
<i>faithful in all things</i> (1 Tim. 3:11)	in all of life- to their husband, family, church, and God

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELDERS AND BODY

- The Word gives some clear guidelines regarding the how the church body is to relate to the leaders

A Mutuality of Work

- Elders and the church body are to work closely together in accomplishing the work of the ministry
- Ministry is not simply the responsibility of the elders...ministry is to be done by the body under the leadership of the elders

Acts 6:3-6 ~ Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 23.....the role of the apostles/elders

Acts 15:22, 30.....the role of the congregation

An Expression of Appreciation

- The work of an elder, pastor, church leader requires diligence and spiritual exertion
- In light of that, the attitude that should characterize those in the church should be one of appreciation

1 Thess 5:12-13 ~ But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

A Willingness to Follow

- Pastors, elders, church leaders are called to be models of godliness, Christ-likeness, holiness, etc.
- And healthy church members wisely follow their pattern of holiness

Heb 13:7 ~ Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith

A Heart of Submission

- A healthy church member obeys and submits to their church leaders

Heb 13:17 ~ Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

- A heart of submission is necessary for the joy of the elders and the joy of the people!
- Obedience, submission, and the glad support of elders makes their work lighter and more joyful...it makes shepherding and teaching and oversight a blessing rather than a burden
- But it is also brings joy to the people....it's to their gain and credit to make the job of their leaders easy...leaders are encouraged so they give themselves fully to their work...and the church benefits...the people grow from solid teaching and intentional shepherding

A Commitment to Pray

- One of the best ways to demonstrate a humble respect for the leaders of the church is to pray for them
- Given all that church leaders must do and contend with, perhaps the best encouragement for them is prayer

Heb 13:18-19 ~ Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things. And I urge *you* all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner