

Introduction

How does the church think about leadership? How does the Bible setup the leadership of the church? Why does it seem so often that those two are at odds with one another?

It has been one of our purposes at the Chapel to build a Biblical Leadership that as closely as possible, reflects the New Testament texts.

This two sermon series is designed along the lines of how we think about God's will and God's wisdom. This is woven all through the Scriptures but is based foundationally on Colossians 1:9-10.

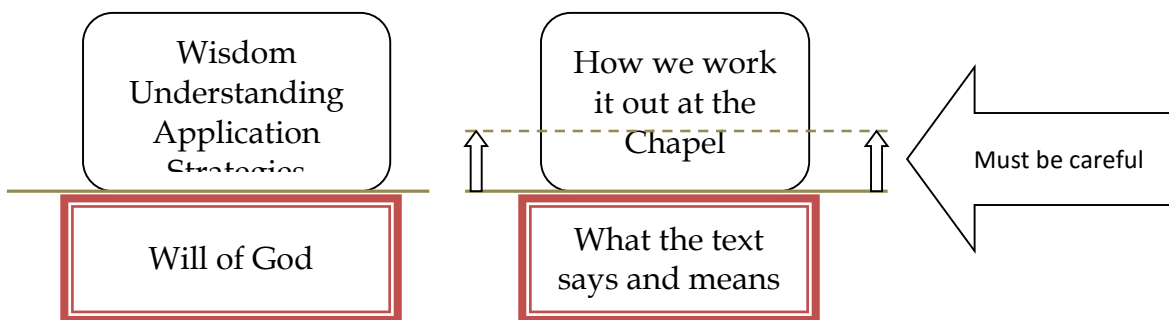
⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,
¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

The Will of God

The will of God is what the text itself says that we must believe, want, feel and do or not do. It may not be in the imperative form but violation of it constitutes sin.

The Wisdom from God

The wisdom from God is how we take the will of God and work it out in our own situation following the principles and patterns in the text.



So, we have what the Bible has clearly revealed, both in its models and in its commands. The foundations and the framework are God's will. These are what we must do and what we must not do. It involves the oversight and shepherding of the church and the qualifications of those who serve. How we work that out in daily practice in our culture are matters of wisdom. We "do what is best." This morning we will think about what God's will is for church leadership. This evening we will talk about how we work that out in formal and functional wisdom. Now, some of this is impossible to make totally distinct - but I will try.

This evening, we will also update you on our annual Elder's retreat which took place in May. We considered some concerns from our church family. Part of the purpose, particularly this evening, is to clarify how the eldership works. You have already seen one initiative that came from the Elder's Retreat: more clearly establishing my preaching and teaching role as both *here* and *there* - Pastor for Preaching and Global Ministry Development. I would encourage you to be

here this evening particularly if you are new to the Chapel or you have questions or concerns about how our leadership works.

The Principles for the Chapel Eldership

Acts 20:28

Let's begin by considering the Biblical principles which are the foundation and framework for the eldership here at the Chapel. Paul, having called the elders from the church at Ephesus to meet with them, challenged them with these words.

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.

History – Its Growth and Development

The Old Testament Era

We can trace the growth of the governance of God's people by a plurality of men in the Old Testament.

The Jewish tribes in Egypt had elders over each tribe who make collective decisions for the tribes.

When Moses was overwhelmed by the tasks of leading and judging God's people, Jethro, his father-in-law counseled Moses to appoint elders who would carry the daily load leaving Moses free to attend to the important issues. God confirmed this plan years later in the wilderness.

After Israel become a nation and we being governed by kings, there were still elders in the cities who were responsible to carry out the daily tasks of governing the city on behalf of the king.

During the 70 year captivity, while Israel did not have the temple, God's people began to meet to worship and hear the Scriptures in gathering places called synagogues. The leaders in the synagogues were the elders and among them were some who taught called rabbis.

The New Testament Era

The practice of meeting in synagogues has remained even till this day. In Jesus' time, the synagogues were the local meetings for Jewish worship. Everywhere that Jews went in the world, they established synagogues. Jesus often taught in his synagogue and in others as well.

Since the church itself was the new Temple, no temples were established by the Apostles as places of worship. Initially, the church met in the courtyard of the Temple in Jerusalem. When the Lord sent Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary trip to take the gospel to the Gentiles, they began by preaching in the synagogues in the cities they went to. There they would be able to preach the gospel to the Jews, but also to the God-fearing Gentiles who gathered there.

So everywhere that the Lord began saving His elect people, the New Testament leaders established gathered assemblies in each city. The Holy Spirit through the New Testament apostles used the familiar synagogue, elders and gathering as a model on which the New Testament church was organized. There was both organic life and administrative trellises.

Jesus – Its Person and Pattern

As in all things, Jesus is first and foremost to the church. He is preeminent as the pattern of what church leadership is to be. This is not just general theology; this is specific in the Bible

Jesus is the Good Shepherd of God's People

John 10:14–16

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Jesus embodies all that it means to be a shepherd, a pastor. He is the good shepherd, both in His character and in His care over the sheep.

Jesus is the Overseer of God's People

1 Peter 2:19-25

But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Jesus is both the pastor and the overseer of our souls. He is the one to whom all shepherding and governing in the church gives an account. We are measured by and accountable to Him.

Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of God's People

1 Peter 5:1-4

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 the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Jesus is the lead pastor, the senior pastor of the church. He alone has the overarching authority in the church. All the elders/shepherds/pastors are under-shepherds.

Jesus is the Great Shepherd of God's People

Hebrews 13:20-21

²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Jesus is the shepherd who has redeemed and transforms the church. Who we become and what we do as God's people has all come into existence according to His eternal, sovereign plan, by His unchanging purposes, in His all-encompassing providence, by His irresistible power and for the everlasting praise of our great shepherd, Jesus the Lord.

Summary – Its Example and Exhortations Acts 20:17-18, 24-32

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia,...

²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to ~~care for~~ [shepherd] 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 every one 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.

The church is to be led by a plurality of Elders

In verse 17 we note that Paul called the elders, *plural*, of the church, *singular*, at Ephesus. Everywhere that the leadership of the church is spoken of, it is plural. Obviously, there are times an elder is spoken to or spoken about. Paul, writing to Titus, says, “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 –” (Titus 1:5). He is to appoint elders in every town presumably over the church in each town. *It is our conviction that the church is to have a leadership team, a plurality of leaders.*

The elders of the church are its overseers and serve as its pastors.

Three words are primarily used in the New Testament to refer to this group of leaders in the church. We see all three of them in this text. Paul called the *elders* of the church who had been made *overseers* of the church and were responsible to *shepherd* the church.

	Elder	Overseer	Shepherd
Greek Word	presbuteros	episcopos	poimen
Translation	elder(s)	overseer bishop	Shepherd pastor
Designation	[spiritual] maturity	administration oversight	care and protection
Source	Derived from Old Testament Israel and the synagogue	Derived from those who administrated Rome’s colonies	Derived from the common occupation of the day

It is our conviction that the church is led and governed by a group of men who are called elders, overseers (bishops in some translations) and pastors. These are not three groups of men. These three terms are referring to the same body of men. This body of men govern or oversee the church in accord with God’s Word.

The elders of the church are responsible to govern and shepherd the church.

So there emerges in the New Testament the leadership of the church by what is labeled, elders. That this leadership by elders was universal is evident from:

Elders were appointed in all the churches Paul established. (Acts 14:23).

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.

Elders shared the leadership in the church in Jerusalem. (Acts 15:2).

² And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

Elders were overseeing the church in Ephesus. (Acts 20:17).

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

Elders were overseeing the churches in Crete. (Titus 1:5)

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 were overseeing the churches of the Diaspora. (James 1:1; 5:14)

1:¹ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

5:¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Elders were overseeing the churches throughout the northern Roman Empire. (1 Peter 1:1; 5:1).

1:¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

5:¹ 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:

Qualifications – Its Standards and

1 Timothy 3, Titus 1

Now, let's consider the qualifications for the eldership. Rather than expound upon these qualifications, I want to summarize them in a way that I hope will instill in all our men a desire to be this kind of man. With a couple of exceptions, all of these are simply the marks of a godly man.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

¹ 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 1:5-9

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— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. 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.

The Elder must be/have...

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| -a male | -eager to serve |
| -above reproach | -the husband of one wife |
| -temperate (not excessive) | -prudent |
| -respectable | -hospitable |
| -able to teach | -gentle |
| -humble | -good household managers |
| -children under control | -good reputation outside church |
| -lover of good | -devout |
| -self controlled | |

The Elder must not be...

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| -a new convert | -addicted to alcohol |
| -violent | -contentious |
| -lover of money | -greedy for gain |
| -accused of dissipation | -accused of rebellion |
| -self-willed, arrogant | -one who lords it over others |

These basic qualifications speak to a kind of person, one who is characterized by these virtues. It points to a tested, mature and seasoned Christian who knows the Word and is able to teach. Tonight we will talk briefly about our process for identifying, examining and bringing an elder on to serve.

Reflect and Respond

It is our desire to be shaped by the Scriptures in all we do. This has led us not to adopt many traditions that are prevalent in churches. Not that those traditions are in and of themselves wrong or not useful. We have just tried to start with the Scriptures and then build a working leadership and governance that rests on the Word and reflects the wisdom of God in our world.

It is our desire to be the kind of leaders you can trust and follow, not merely by authoritative declaration but also by the example of our loving and living.

And finally, **Romans 15:4-6**

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶ that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.