

The basic idea of eldership:

The gathering (church) in the New Testament operated under the care of elders who served as shepherds for the community (Acts 14:23). Their responsibilities were about taking care of the church (1 Peter 5:1-3, Acts 20:28). The expectation for elders included godliness because they were held accountable by God for the church (Hebrews 13:17). Because of this, there are clear biblical qualifications for eldership (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9).

How does it work....i.e. What is the chain of command for a church?

- *Jesus is the King*
 - He is the Head of the church (Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:19; Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:23).
 - He is the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).
 - He is the Builder (Hebrews 3:3).
- *The Holy Spirit directs the body of Christ by speaking to the church through its elders* (Acts 13:2; Acts 15:28; Acts 16:6-7; Acts 20:28)
- *Elders are the Holy Spirit's "arms" of leadership for the body of Christ.* (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-7; Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:17-38)

What does an elder do in the body of Christ?

Thinking biblically, elders are primary leaders, caretakers and overseers of a church. Specifically, they provide leadership (1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1-2), care for and shepherd the church (Acts 20:28), 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 church 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), judge over doctrinal issues (Acts 15:6), provide oversight for the financial operations of the church (Acts 11:30), and will ultimately give an account to God for their leadership (Hebrews 13:17).

There are clear theological mandates for eldership as well as clear instruction for functional leadership within the gathering. To summarize all of that, there seems to be at least 3 main functions for an elder:

1. **Wise counsel.** You offer a theological perspective and prayerful counsel.
2. **Brakes.** Our Leader Team holds the keys to accountability. Should anything go amiss (theologically, financially, sinful behavior, etc.) with me or the staff, the Leader Team is the one group that can immediately slam on the brakes.
3. **Shepherds in waiting.** When pastoral care is needed, it's too late to try to throw together a team of godly and wise folks who have enough history and understanding of each other to work through the tough calls, sharp disagreements, and dicey issues that come with any major mess. If these people

aren't already in place, it's hard to throw them together on the fly and even harder to navigate your way through the landmines. Our Leader Team provides the security of knowing we have such a team already in place. You are like firefighters in the firehouse....you're prepared, connected, and ready if the bell should ring.

What are the defining biblical texts for “eldership”?

Titus 1:5-9

5 I left you on the island of Crete so you could complete our work there and appoint elders in each town as I instructed you. 6 An elder must live a blameless life. He must be faithful to his wife, and his children must be believers who don't have a reputation for being wild or rebellious. 7 A church leader is a manager of God's household, so he must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or dishonest with money. 8 Rather, he must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life. 9 He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.

1 Peter 5:1-4

And now, a word to you who are elders in the churches. I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ. And I, too, will share in his glory when he is revealed to the whole world. As a fellow elder, I appeal to you: Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.

Acts 20:28-31

“So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood —over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following. Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.

James 5:14

Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord