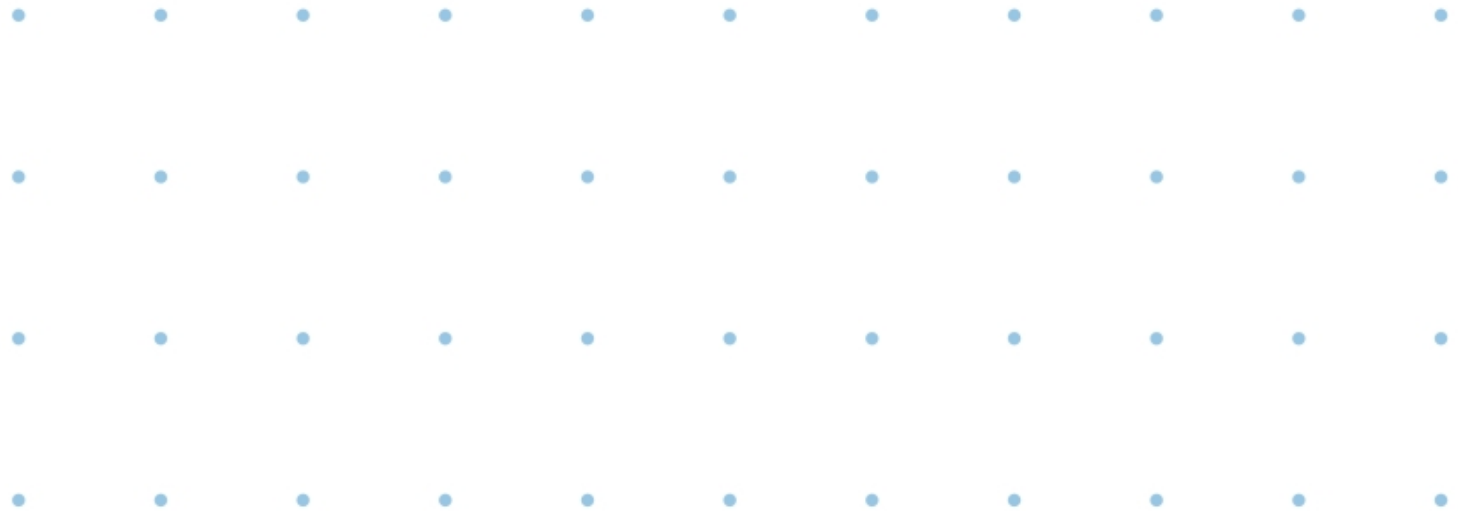


Men of the
Word



Ecclesiology Government and Leadership

Church Government

...church government can be broken down into three large categories, which we may term “episcopalian,” “presbyterian,” and “congregational.” Grudem



Church Government

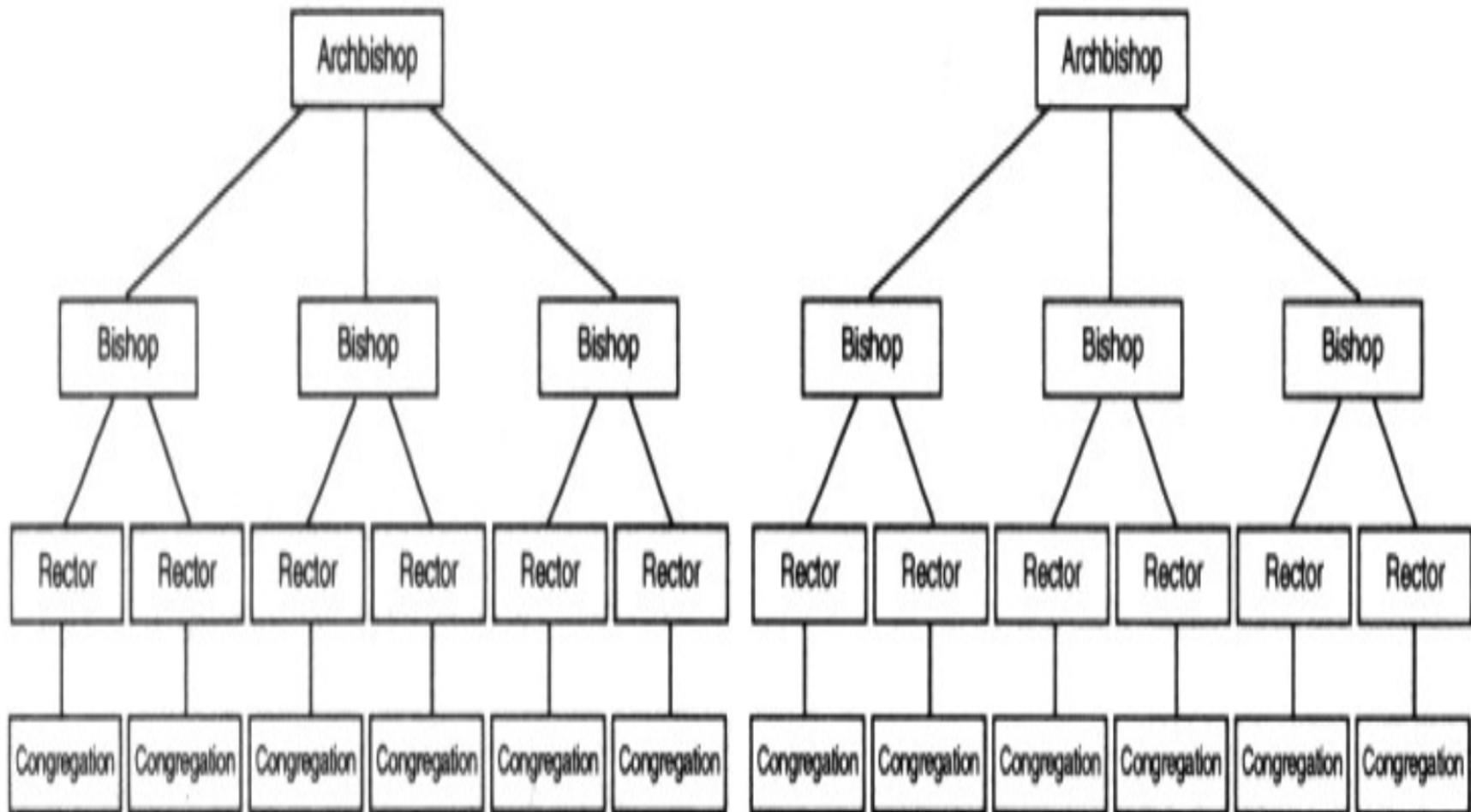
In practice, however, presently and through the centuries, there has been both a moderation of the differences with borrowing of one from another and elevation of some distinct feature or mutation to a point the name no longer applies exactly. And one sort, say of episcopal government, may be utterly unlike any other of the category. Culver



Episcopalian

The *episcopalian* forms have a government by a distinct category of church officers known as a priesthood, and final authority for decision-making is found outside the local church. The Episcopal Church system is the primary representative among Protestants of this form of government. The Roman Catholic Church also has government by a priesthood, and is therefore “episcopalian” in form of government. Sometimes an episcopalian form of government is called a “hierarchical” government, especially when referring to the Roman Catholic Church. Grudem • • • •

Episcopalian





Episcopalian

Adherents

Roman Catholic

Orthodox

Episcopal

Lutheran

Methodist





Episcopalian

Authority

Bishops

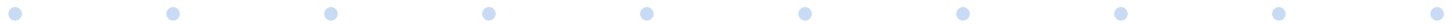


Episcopalian

Basis

Acts 6:6; 14:23

Galatians 1:19; 2:9



Episcopalian

In the episcopal form of church government the authority rests with the bishops who oversee not one church, but a group of churches. Inherent in the office of bishop is the power to ordain ministers or priests. Roman Catholics suggest this authority is derived through apostolic succession from the original apostles. They claim this authority on the basis of Matthew 16:18–19. Others, such as the Methodists, do not acknowledge authority through apostolic succession. Enns

• • • • • • • •

Episcopalian

In the episcopalian system, an archbishop has authority over many bishops. They in turn have authority over a “diocese,” which simply means the churches under the jurisdiction of a bishop. The officer in charge of a local parish is a rector (or sometimes a vicar, who is an “assistant” or one who substitutes for the rector). Archbishops, bishops, and rectors are all priests, since they have all at one time been ordained to the episcopalian priesthood (but in practice the rector is most often called the priest). Grudem

Episcopalian

Arguments in Support

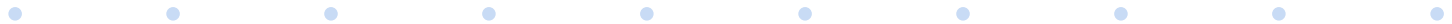
The argument for the episcopalian system is not that it is found in the New Testament, but that it is a natural outgrowth of the development of the church which began in the New Testament, and it is not forbidden by the New Testament. Grudem



Episcopalian

Arguments in Support

...there is the historical argument that there is a line of direct succession from the apostles to today's bishops. It is maintained that through the ordination process the authority of the apostles has been passed down to modern-day bishops. Erickson



Episcopalian

Arguments in Support

***Another* argument is the position occupied by James within the church of Jerusalem. His authority was similar to that later held by bishops. Here then is precedent for the episcopal system. Erickson**



Episcopalian

Arguments in Support

Moreover, since the office of bishop and the corresponding government structure found in the Episcopalian Church is both historical and beneficial, Litton argues that it should be preserved. Grudem



Episcopalian

Arguments in Support

..the benefit of direct descent from the apostles is regarded as a strong reason in favor of the episcopalian system. Litton says, “The Apostles are the first link in the chain, and there is no reason why a succession, as regards to the external commission, should not proceed from age to age, the existing body of ministers handing down the official authority to their successors, and these latter in turn to theirs.” Grudem



Episcopalian

Objections

The theory of a group of bishops established to replace the apostles is not taught in the New Testament, nor is there an implication of a need for *physical* continuity of ordination through the laying on of hands by those who have been ordained in an unbroken chain of succession from the apostles. Grudem



Episcopalian

Objections

...there is very little evidence that the apostles had any concern for a line of succession. Timothy apparently was ordained not simply by Paul but also by a “council of elders” (1 Tim. 4:14), though this may well have included Paul as well (see 2 Tim. 1:6). Grudem



Episcopalian

Objections

While it may be argued that the development of an episcopalian system with single bishops in authority over several churches was a beneficial development in the early church, one may also argue that it was a deviation from New Testament standards and a result of human dissatisfaction with the system of elected local elders that had been established by the apostles and that had apparently worked very well from A.D. 30 to 100 throughout all of the New Testament church. Grudem

Episcopalian

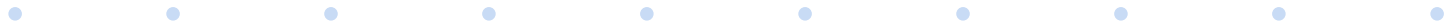
Objections

...advocates of the episcopal form of church government give insufficient attention to Christ's direct exercise of lordship over the church. He installed Paul without any intermediary; no other apostle was involved. Paul makes much of this point in justifying his apostleship (Gal. 1:15–17). Now if Paul received his office directly from God, might not others as well? In other words, in at least this one case apostolic authority does not seem to rest on previous apostolic authority.

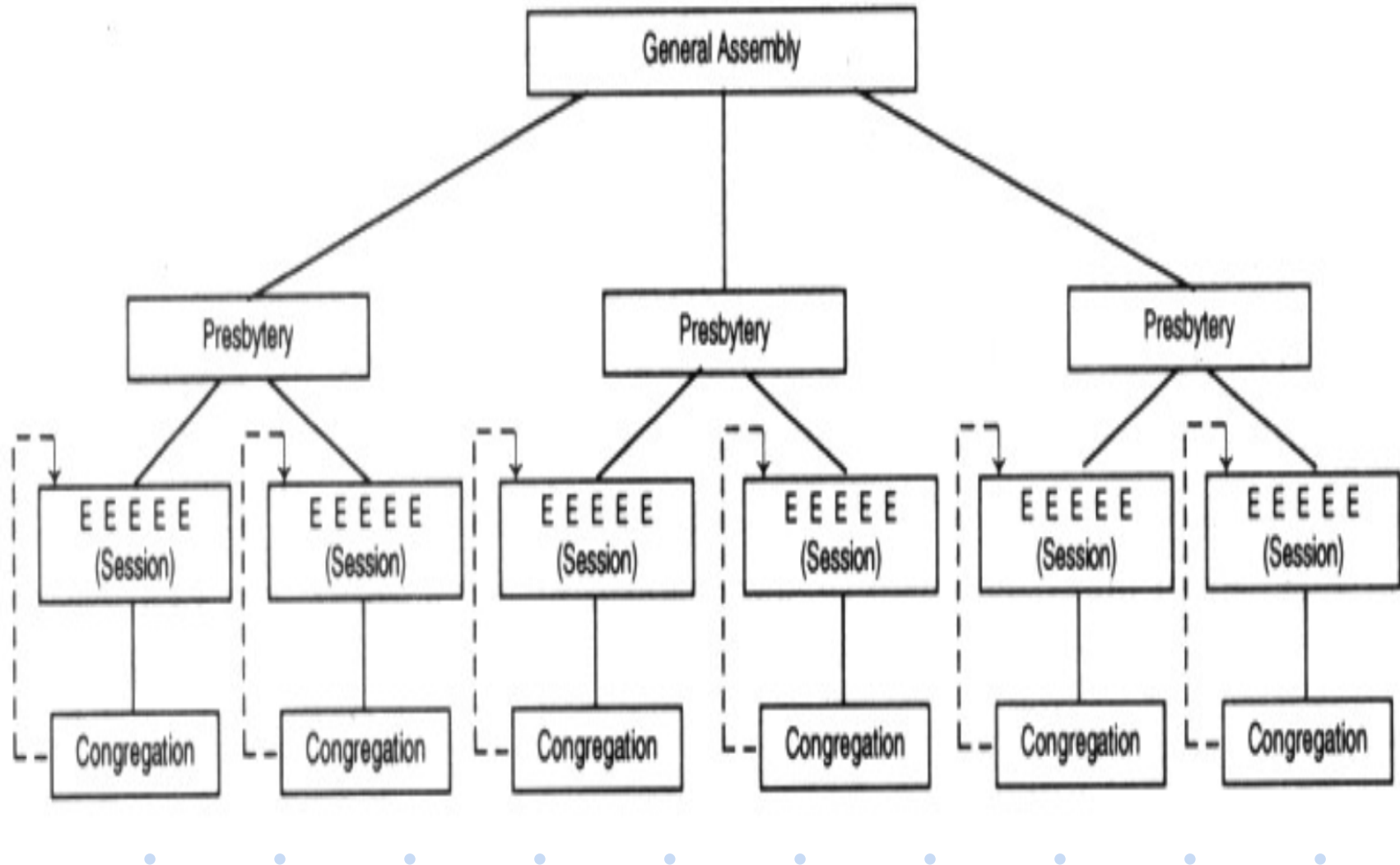
Erickson

Presbyterian

The *presbyterian* forms have a government by elders, some of whom have authority not only over their local congregation, but also, through the presbytery and the general assembly, over all the churches in a region and then in the denomination as a whole. Grudem



Presbyterian





Presbyterian

Adherents

Presbyterian

Reformed





Presbyterian

Authority

Elders



Presbyterian

Basis

Acts 20:17
1 Tim 5:17
Titus 1:5



Presbyterian

In this system, each local church elects elders to a session (E in figure 47.2 stands for elder, and the dotted lines indicate that the whole congregation elects the elders). The pastor of the church will be one of the elders in the session, equal in authority to the other elders. This session has governing authority over the local church. However, the members of the session (the elders) are also members of a presbytery, which has authority over several churches in a region. This presbytery consists of some or all of the elders in the local churches over which it has authority. Moreover, some of the members of the presbytery are members of the “general assembly” which usually will have authority over all the presbyterian churches in a nation or region. Grudem



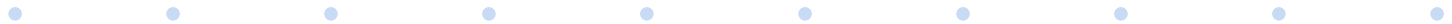
Presbyterian

Preliminary Principles of the Presbyterian Form of Government

God alone is Lord of the conscience, hence no religious or civil authorities may rightly coerce 'private judgment ... in all matters that respect religion.'

Every 'particular church' or union of churches 'is entitled to declare' terms of admission and systems of internal government.

The 'blessed Savior ... hath appointed officers ... and it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole church to exercise discipline ... observing ... the rules contained in the Word of God.'



Presbyterian

Preliminary Principles of the Presbyterian Form of Government

‘[T]ruth is in order to goodness ... there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty.’

[A]ll who are admitted as teachers [must] be sound in faith.’ They acknowledge that ‘there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good character and principle may differ.’

Scripture provides the sole authority of officers and of rules of government; yet the individual ‘society’ must elect the ones who hold the offices and enforce the rules.



Presbyterian

Preliminary Principles of the Presbyterian Form of Government

All church power is 'by delegated authority, [and] is only ministerial and declarative ... The Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners.' All synods and councils may err. Councils really must not make laws but as 'fallible men' carry out scriptural laws already made.

No civil authority should ever be called upon to enforce ecclesiastical decisions and discipline.

Culver



Presbyterian

Arguments in Support

The biblical support for this is the frequent mention of elders in the New Testament: there were elders in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4) and in Ephesus (Acts 20:17); elders were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus. 1:5); elders were responsible to feed the flock (1 Pet. 5:1, 2); there were also elders who ruled (1 Tim. 5:17).

Enns

Presbyterian

Arguments in Support

(1) that those who have wisdom and gifts for eldership should be called on to use their wisdom to govern more than just one local church

(2) a national (or even worldwide) government of the church shows the unity of the body of Christ

(3) such a system is able to prevent an individual congregation from falling into doctrinal error much more effectively than any voluntary association of churches.

Grudem

Presbyterian

Arguments in Support

Furthermore, the presbyterian system of government preserves several essential New Testament principles of polity. One of these is the lordship of Christ. In the presbyterian system, his will and his Word are the ultimate standards by which the church determines its actions. Second, the principle of participation by the people is preserved. They have direct access to God and the right to express their personal opinions. Third, the presbyterian system maintains the concept of corporateness: each individual is seen as part of the body. Finally, the power of the local church resides in a group, the elders, not in just one minister or elder who derives his authority from a bishop.

Erickson

Presbyterian

Objections

(1) Nowhere in Scripture do *elders* have regularly established authority over more than their own local church. The pattern is rather that elders are appointed in local churches and have authority over local churches.

(2) This system, in practice, results in much formal litigation, where doctrinal disputes are pursued year after year all the way to the level of the general assembly. One wonders if this should be characteristic of the church of Christ—perhaps so, but it seems to the present author to be a system that encourages such litigation far more than is necessary or edifying for the body of Christ.

• • • • • Grudem • • •

Presbyterian

Objections

Critical objections come especially from those who advocate a more individualistic or congregational type of church government. They object that the presbyterian system is rooted in a hierarchy of governing bodies for which there is little or no support within Scripture. Further, they object that the Presbyterian polity does not give each and every believer an adequate part in church government. While the presbytery and the session are in theory servants and representatives of the individual believers, they may well come to assume a ruling role. Many decisions that could be referred to the church membership as a whole are not. Thus, although intended to represent and carry out the authority of individual believers, the presbyterian structure of church government has on occasion usurped that authority. ²⁴ Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), vol. 3, p. 421

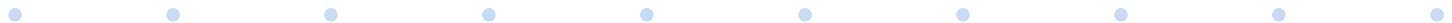
• • • • • • • • Grudem • •

Presbyterian

Objections

Although in some cases it is true that a doctrinally sound denomination with a presbyterian system of government can keep a local church from going astray in its doctrine, in actuality very frequently the opposite has been true: the national leadership of a presbyterian denomination has adopted false doctrine and has put great pressure on local churches to conform to it.

Grudem



Congregational

The *congregational* forms of church government all have final governing authority resting with the local congregation, although various degrees of self-rule are given up through denominational affiliation, and the actual form of local church government may vary considerably.

Grudem



Congregational

Adherents

Congregational

Baptist

Mennonite

Evangelical Free

• • • • • • Enns • • •



Congregational

Authority

Congregation



Congregational

Basis

Acts 15:12
Acts 15:22-25
Col 1:18
1 Peter 2:9



Congregational

Congregational polity means two things:

- (1) independency or autonomy of each local church as opposed to being part of a bishop's diocese (episcopal)
- (2) democracy, wherein each member of voting age has a share in government.

Culver



Congregational

It is the individual members of the congregation who possess and exercise authority. Authority is not the prerogative of a lone individual or select group. Neither a monarchical (episcopal) nor oligarchical (presbyterian) structure is to take the place of the individual.

Erickson



Congregational

Arguments in Support

The biblical support for congregational church government is that the congregation was involved in electing the deacons (Acts 6:3–5) and elders (Acts 14:23)³¹; the entire church sent out Barnabas (Acts 11:22) and Titus (2 Cor. 8:19) and received Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:27; 15:4); the entire church was involved in the decisions concerning circumcision (Acts 15:25); discipline was carried out by the entire church (1 Cor. 5:12; 2 Cor. 2:6–7; 2 Thess. 3:14); all believers are responsible for correct doctrine by testing the spirits (1 John 4:1), which they are able to do since they have the anointing (1 John 2:20).

Enns

Congregational

Arguments in Support

Advocates of congregational polity assert that when it functions properly, each member not only is 'indwelt' by the Spirit but 'filled' by Him, hence church government is a spiritual function. It is not as in American political elections an expression of each voter's private opinion, but of the 'mind of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:27; 11:34), 'the same mind and the same judgment' (1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 13:11), 'the mind of Christ' (1 Cor. 2:16).

• • • • • Culver • • •

Congregational

Arguments in Support

Further, Jesus' teaching seems to be opposed to the special leadership positions found within the episcopal and presbyterian schemes of government. He censured those who sought rank above other persons. When his disciples disputed which of them was the greatest, "Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves' " (Luke 22:25–27).

Erickson

Congregational

Objections

(1) Proponents of Episcopacy contend that Congregationalism does not take sufficient account of the fact that the earliest apostolic churches and those of subsequent centuries were hierarchically governed. Congregationalism reflects modern democracy rather than apostolic and post-apostolic tradition.

(2) Advocates of Presbyterianism object that the New Testament vests more authority in elders than proponents of most forms of Congregationalism allow (Rom. 12:8; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24)

• • • • • Andreas Köstenberger • •

Congregational

Objections

(3) the Jerusalem Council did not merely issue suggestions but rules to be followed (Acts 16:4)

(4) Against those who define Congregationalism as congregational rule, it is objected that many of the above-cited texts cited in support of Congregationalism only mandate congregational *participation* but not necessarily congregational *rule*.

• • • • • Andreas Köstenberger • •

Congregational

Two Major Models

(1) single-elder or pastor

(2) plural-elder leadership

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Congregational

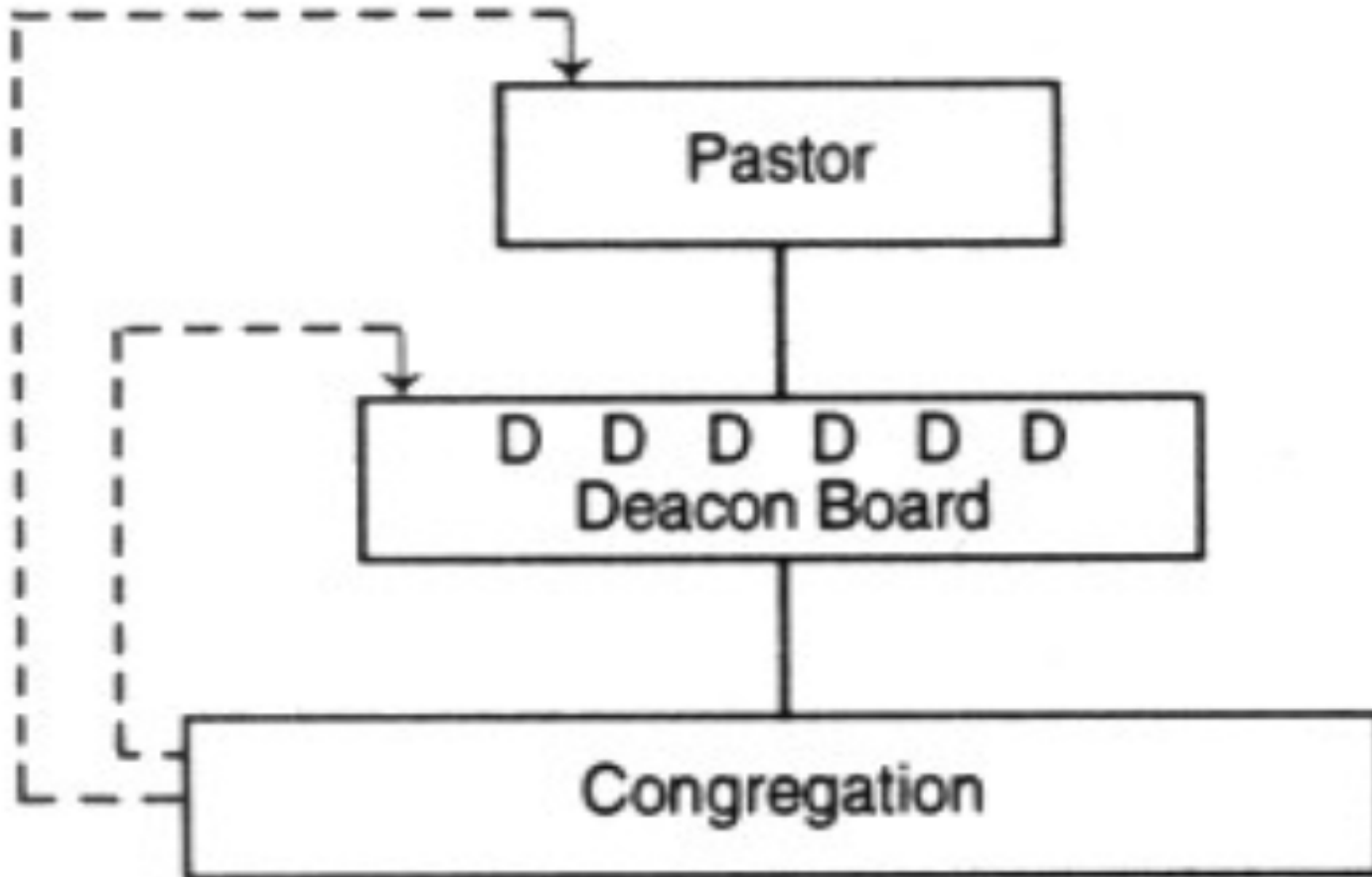
Single-Elder Model

...the church votes into office one (senior) pastor who oversees the congregation... While the congregation retains final authority, in practice the senior pastor wields considerable power due to his public teaching office. In addition, deacons are chosen to assist, and in some cases supervise, the pastor, though assigning to deacons authority over the pastor clearly conflicts with New Testament teaching. In the latter case, deacons form a “deacon board” taking the role of a body of elders.

Andreas Köstenberger



Single-Elder Model



Single-Elder Model

In this system, the congregation elects the pastor and also elects the deacons. The amount of authority the pastor has varies greatly from church to church, and will generally increase the longer a pastor remains in a church. The authority of the deacon board is often thought to be merely an advisory authority. In the way this system ordinarily functions, especially in smaller churches, many decisions must be brought before the congregation as a whole.

Grudem



Single-Elder Model

Objections

It seems inconsistent to argue that the New Testament falls short of giving a clear *command* that all churches should have a plurality of elders when the passages on qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–7 are used as scriptural *requirements* for church officers today. How can churches say that the *qualifications for elders* found in these verses are commanded for us today but the *system of plural elders* found in these very same verses is not commanded, but was required only in that time and in that society?

Grudem

Single-Elder Model

Objections

Moreover, it seems to be quite unwise to ignore a clear New Testament pattern which existed throughout all the churches for which we have evidence at the time the New Testament was written. When the New Testament shows us that *no* church was seen to have a single elder (“in every church,” Acts 14:23; “in every town,” Titus 1:5; “let him call for the *elders*,” James 5:14; “I exhort the *elders* among you,” 1 Peter 5:1), then it seems unpersuasive to say that smaller churches would have only had one elder. Even when Paul had just founded churches on his first missionary journey, there were *elders* appointed “in every church” (Acts 14:23). And “every town” on the island of Crete was to have elders, no matter how large or small the church was.

Grudem

Single-Elder Model

Objections

A common practical problem with a “single elder” system is either an excessive concentration of power in one person or excessive demands laid upon him. In either case, the temptations to sin are very great, and a lessened degree of accountability makes yielding to temptation more likely. As was mentioned above, it was never the pattern in the New Testament, even with the apostles, to concentrate ruling power in the hands of any one person.

Grudem



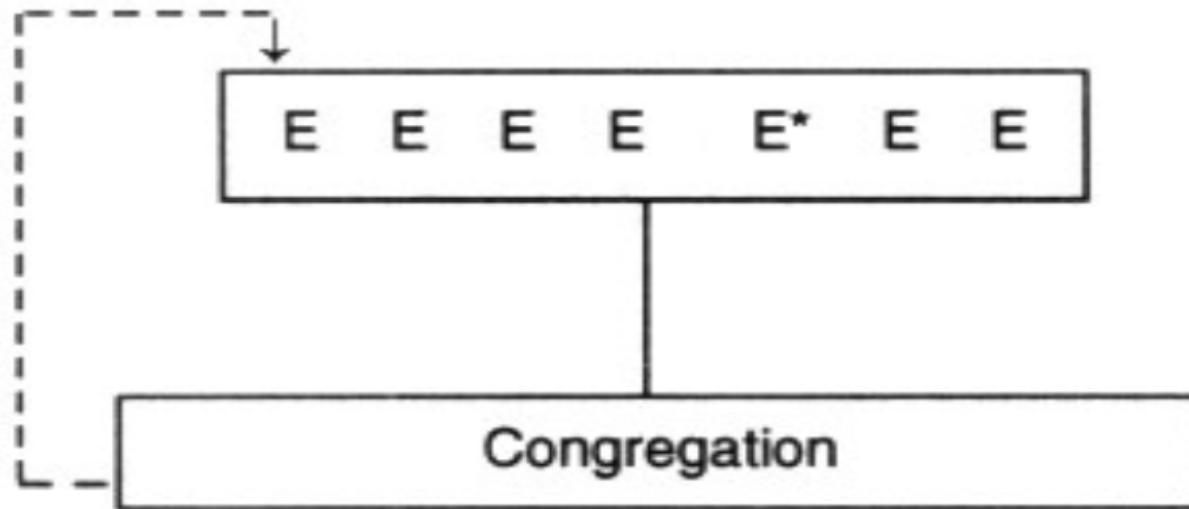
Congregational

Plural-Elder Model

...several elders and/or pastors are chosen to oversee the congregation. Within this model, there is considerable variety as to the way in which the authority of the elders and/or pastors is construed. Some take the notion of the priesthood of all believers to imply that no one should have authority over individual believers (pure democratic model). Others view the elders' authority as derived from Christ, not the congregation, and believe the church is called in Scripture to submit to those serving in this office (White, "Plural-Elder-Led Church," in Brand and Norman, *Perspectives on Church Government*, 255–96).

Andreas Köstenberger

Plural-Elder Model



* Pastor



Plural-Elder Model

Within such a system the elders govern the church and have authority to rule over it, authority which has been conferred by Christ himself, the head of the church, and by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17).

In a contemporary congregation, the “pastor” (or “senior pastor”) would be one among the elders in this system.

He does not have authority over them, nor does he work for them as an employee. He has a somewhat distinct role in that he is engaged in the full-time work of “preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17), and derives part or all of his income from that work (1 Tim. 5:18).

Grudem

Plural-Elder Model

The strength of this system of government is seen in the fact that the pastor does not have authority on his own over the congregation, but that authority belongs collectively to the entire group of elders (what may be called the elder board). Moreover, the pastor himself, like every other elder, is subject to the authority of the elder board as a whole. This can be a great benefit in keeping a pastor from making mistakes, and in supporting him in adversity and protecting him from attacks and opposition.

• • • • • • Grudem • • •

Plural-Elder Model

Potential Self-Imposed Limitations

- (1) they may be elected rather than self-perpetuating
- (2) they may have specific terms with a mandatory year off the board (except for the pastor, whose continuing leadership responsibilities require continuous participation as an elder)
- (3) some large decisions may be required to be brought to the whole church for approval

Grudem

Elders

Elders are also called “pastors” or “bishops” or “overseers” in the New Testament. The least commonly used word (at least in the noun form) is *pastor*... It may be surprising to us to find that this word, which has become so common in English, only occurs once in the New Testament when speaking about a church officer. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul writes, “And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some *pastors* and teachers.” The verse is probably better translated “pastor-teachers” (one group) rather than “pastors and teachers” ...

Grudem

Elders

Although the noun *pastor*... is not used of church officers elsewhere in the New Testament, the related verb which means “to act as a shepherd” or “to act as a pastor”... is applied to elders in Paul’s address to the Ephesian elders. He tells them “to *shepherd* the church of God” (Acts 20:28...), and in the same sentence he referred to God’s people as “all the *flock*,” using another related noun... which means “a flock of sheep.” So Paul directly charges these Ephesian elders to act as shepherds or “pastors.”

Grudem

Elders

Another term used for elders in the New Testament is a Greek word ἐπίσκοπος... which is variously translated as “overseer” or “bishop,” depending on the individual passage and the English translation. But this word also seems quite clearly to be another term for elders in New Testament usage. For example, when Paul has called to him the *elders* of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17), he says to them, “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you *overseers* (Gk. ἐπίσκοπος)” (Acts 20:28). Paul quite readily refers to these Ephesian elders as “overseers” (or “bishops”) The NIV regularly uses “overseer” instead of “bishop” to translate ἐπίσκοπος...

• • • • • Grudem • • •

Elders

Overseer or Bishop

Acts 20:17

¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

Acts 20:28

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 which He purchased with His own blood.



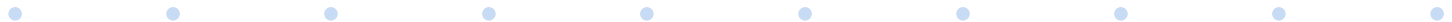
Elders

Overseer or Bishop

1 Timothy 3:1–2

¹ It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.

² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,



Elders

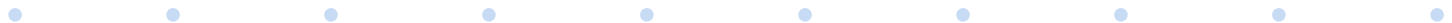
Overseer or Bishop

Titus 1:5–7

⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint **elders** in every city as I directed you,

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

⁷ For the **overseer** must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,



Plurality of Elders

Acts 14:23

²³ 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.

Acts 20:17

¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

Titus 1:5

⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,



Plurality of Elders

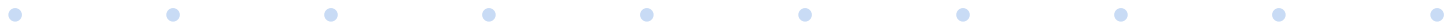
James 5:14

¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

1 Peter 5:1–2

¹ 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,

² 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...



Plurality of Elders

Two significant conclusions may be drawn from this survey of the New Testament evidence. First, no passage suggests that any church, no matter how small, had only one elder. The consistent New Testament pattern is a plurality of elders “in every church” (Acts 14:23) and “in every town” (Titus 1:5). Second, we do not see a diversity of forms of government in the New Testament church, but a unified and consistent pattern in which every church had elders governing it and keeping watch over it (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2–3).

Grudem



Elder Responsibilities

An Overview

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13

¹² 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**,

¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.



Elder Responsibilities

Teaching

Ephesians 4:11

¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers...

1 Timothy 3:2

² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

1 Timothy 5:17

¹⁷ The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.



Elder Responsibilities

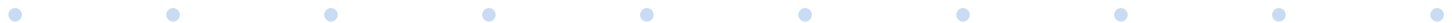
Refute False Teaching

Titus 1:7–9

⁷ For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,

⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,

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



Elder Responsibilities

Keep Watch Over Souls

Hebrews 13:17

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.



Elder Responsibilities

Protection

Acts 20:28–31

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 which He purchased with His own blood.

²⁹ “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

³¹ “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

Elder Responsibilities

Govern

1 Timothy 5:17

¹⁷ The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

1 Timothy 3:4–5

⁴ He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity

⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)...



Elder Responsibilities

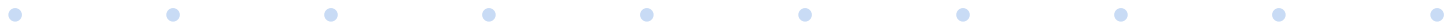
Govern

The fact that they are to act as shepherds of the flock of God, and the fact that they are not to domineer (that is, not to rule harshly or oppressively) strongly suggest that elders have ruling or governing functions in the churches to which Peter is writing. Grudem

¹ Peter 5:2–3

² 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;

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



Elder Responsibilities

Caring for Practical Needs

James 5:14

¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;



Elder Responsibilities

Correct

2 Timothy 4:2

² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.



Elder Qualifications

When Paul lists the qualifications for elders, it is significant that he combines requirements concerning character traits and heart attitudes with requirements that cannot be fulfilled in a short time but will only become evident over a period of several years of faithful Christian living.

Grudem



Elder Qualifications

1 Timothy 3:2–7

² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.

⁴ He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity

⁵ (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

⁶ and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

⁷ And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.



Elder Qualifications

Titus 1:6–9

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

⁷ For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,

⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,

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



Elder Qualifications

Above Reproach

The first and overarching qualification is that of being “above reproach.” What is meant by “above reproach” is defined by the character qualities that follow the term. Strauch

To be “above reproach” demanded that the overseer be a man of blameless character. The same word... is used of widows in 5:7 and of Timothy in 6:14. It may serve as a general, covering term for the following list of virtues that should distinguish a church leader. The etymology of the word suggests the meaning not to be taken hold of. It describes a person of such character that no one can properly bring against him a charge of unfitness.

Lea, T. D., & Griffin, H. P. (1992). 1, 2 Timothy, Titus (Vol. 34, p. 109). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.(NAC)

Elder Qualifications

Husband of One Wife

...“the husband of one wife” is meant to be a positive statement that expresses faithful, monogamous marriage. In English we would say, “faithful and true to one woman” or “a one-woman man.” This latter phrasing closely follows the Greek wording.

Negatively, the phrase prohibits all deviation from faithful, monogamous marriage. Thus it would prohibit an elder from polygamy, concubinage, homosexuality, and/or any questionable sexual relationship. Positively, Scripture says the candidate for eldership should be a “one-woman man,” meaning he has an exclusive relationship with one woman. Such a man is above reproach in his sexual and marital life.

• • • • • • • •
Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Husband of One Wife – CBC Policy Statement

Divorce & Remarriage

Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3 state that an elder or a deacon be “the husband of one wife.” Specifically how this requirement will be applied in circumstances regarding a man who has been divorced has been greatly debated. The elders of Countryside Bible Church affirm the following position on this qualification:

A divorced man may be considered for service as an elder or a deacon if the divorce occurred prior to conversion, it has been a lengthy period of time since the divorce, there is no lingering reproach associated with the divorce, and the man has demonstrated fidelity to his present wife.



Elder Qualifications

Temperate

In Greek, the word “temperate”... can mean sobriety in the use of wine. Here, however, it is used to mean mental sobriety. “Temperate” denotes self-control, balanced judgment, and freedom from debilitating excesses or rash behavior. Negatively, it indicates the absence of any personal disorder that would distort a person’s judgment or conduct. Positively, it describes a person who is stable, circumspect, self-restrained, and clear-headed.

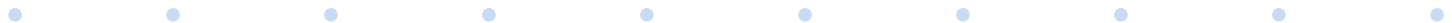
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Elder Qualifications

Prudent

Similar to the word “temperate,” “prudent”... also stresses self-control, particularly as it relates to exercising good judgment, discretion, and common sense. To be prudent is to be sound-minded, discreet, and sensible, able to keep an objective perspective in the face of problems and disagreements. Prudence is an essential quality of mind for a person who must exercise a great deal of practical discretion in handling people and their problems. Prudence tempers pride, authoritarianism, and self-justification.

Strauch



Elder Qualifications

Respectable

“Respectable”... is associated with the word “prudent” (1 Tim. 2:9). A sensible-minded person will also be a well-behaved person. *Kosmios* conveys the ideas of self-control, proper behavior, and orderliness. Although the word is used to describe properness in outward demeanor and dress in 1 Timothy 2:9, its usage here conveys the more general meaning of “ ‘orderly’ ... ‘well-behaved,’ or ‘virtuous’ ... that which causes a person to be regarded as ‘respectable’ by others.”

Strauch



Elder Qualifications

Hospitable

It is also necessary for an elder to be hospitable. Hospitality is a concrete expression of Christian love and family life. It is an important biblical virtue:

- Job, the exemplary Old Testament elder, was a model of hospitality: “The alien has not lodged outside, For I have opened my doors to the traveler” (Job 31:32).
- Paul exhorts the Christians at Rome to pursue hospitality (Rom. 12:13).
- Peter writes, “Be hospitable to one another without complaint” (1 Peter 4:9).
- The author of Hebrews bids his readers: “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb. 13:2).

• • • • • • • • • •
Strauch

Elder Qualifications

Able to Teach

In his parallel list of elder qualifications in Titus, Paul expands on the meaning of “able to teach.” He writes, “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he [the elder] may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9). An elder, then, must be able to open his Bible and exhort and encourage others from it. He must also be able to discern false doctrine and refute it with Scripture. God’s Word brings growth to the church and protects it from falsehood. Therefore, shepherd elders must be able to teach God’s Word.

• • • • • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Not Addicted to Wine

An elder must be above reproach in his use of alcohol. Paul uses strong language here that means not preoccupied or overindulgent with wine. Drunkenness is sin, and persistently drunken people require church discipline (see 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Peter 4:3). So a person in a position of trust and authority over other people can't have a drinking problem.

• • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Not Pugnacious

A pugnacious man is a fighter, a bad-tempered, irritable, out-of-control individual. The Greek word is derived from the verb “to strike” and suggests a violent person who is prone to physical assault on others. Wives and children especially feel the blows of a pugnacious man, and anyone who seriously frustrates a pugnacious man is a potential target for verbal, even physical, assault.

• • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Gentle

“Gentle” is one of the most attractive and needed virtues required of an elder. No English word adequately conveys the fullness of this word’s beauty and richness. “Forbearing,” “kind,” “gentle,” “magnanimous,” “equitable,” and “gracious” all help capture the full range of its meaning. Forbearance comes from God and is a chief source of peace and healing among His people. So in his letter to the Philippian Christians, who were experiencing internal as well as external conflict, Paul says, “Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men” (Phil. 4:5).

• • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Uncontentious

Along with being gentle, it is important that an elder be uncontentious or peaceable. Since the day Cain killed Abel, his brother, men have been fighting and killing one another (Gen. 4:5–8). This is one of the wretched consequences of man’s sinful nature. Christians, however, are commanded to be different, “to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men” (Titus 3:2).

• • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Free From the Love of Money

An elder must not love money or be greedy. So this qualification prohibits a base, mercenary interest that uses Christian ministry and people for personal profit. Both Paul and Peter condemn what we would call “being in it for the money” (1 Peter 5:2; Titus 1:7). False teachers, Paul points out, are overly interested in money and in personal financial gain (1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11). The Pharisees were lovers of money who devoured widow’s houses (Luke 16:14; Mark 12:40). The chief religious leaders of Jesus’ day turned the temple into a merchandise mart for their own profit (Mark 11:15–17).

• • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

A Man Who Manages His Household Well

A prospective elder must be able to manage... lead and care for; see 1 Thess. 5:12) his household “well.” The key measurement when evaluating a man’s management of his household is his children’s behavior. So Paul requires that he keep “his children under control with all dignity.” This means he must be a responsible Christian father, husband, and household manager. He must have a reputation for providing for his family, financially, emotionally, and spiritually. Concerning this qualification, Donald Guthrie, former professor at London Bible College, remarks, “A most important principle, which has not always had the prominence it deserves.... Any man unable to govern his children graciously and gravely by maintaining good discipline, is no man for government in the Church.”

• • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Having Children Who Believe

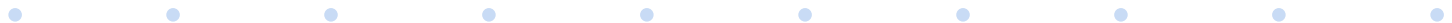
The primary argument for rendering it as “believers” is that in the letters to Timothy and Titus, this word almost always refers to saving faith. Those who think it should be rendered “faithful” would argue that no father can guarantee the conversion of his own children, but he can ordinarily ensure that they act in a “faithful” way. Also, the parallel passage in 1 Timothy 3 says only that the children must be well-behaved, not that their conversion is a requirement for their father to be an overseer. The concern in the passage is that the children behave appropriately and are not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.

Elder Qualifications

Having Children Who Believe – CBC Policy Statement

In Paul's epistle to Titus, he lists the qualifications for elders beginning in Titus 1:6. One of those qualifications is: "having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion." (NASB)

Recognizing that there are good men on either side of the interpretive issue of "children who believe" versus "children who are faithful," we agree to support the Countryside Bible Church position on this elder qualification as follows:



Elder Qualifications

Having Children Who Believe – CBC Policy Statement

Concerning children in the home:

A man meets this qualification if the children:

1. Are believers in Christ.
2. Have not yet made a profession of faith but are trustworthy in behavior, that is, responsive to the authority of their parents.



Elder Qualifications

Having Children Who Believe – CBC Policy Statement

Concerning children in the home:

A man does not meet this qualification if there is a child who:

1. Is a professing believer in Christ but not under control.
2. Is an unbeliever who openly professes rejection of Christ and/or is given to dissipation or rebellion.



Elder Qualifications

Having Children Who Believe – CBC Policy Statement

Concerning children no longer in the home:

A man meets this qualification if the children:

1. Are believers in Christ.
2. Are unbelievers yet do not bring reproach upon the man.



Elder Qualifications

Having Children Who Believe – CBC Policy Statement

Concerning children no longer in the home:

A man does not meet this qualification if there is a child who:

1. Is given to dissipation or rebellion.
2. Brings reproach upon the man.

This qualification, as all others, must be reviewed in the context of the total life and character of the man.



Elder Qualifications

Not a New Convert

Scripture prohibits a “new convert” from serving as an elder. A new convert is a beginner in the faith, a baby Christian, a recent convert. No matter how spiritual, zealous, knowledgeable, or talented a new convert may be, he is not spiritually mature. Maturity requires time and experience for which there is no substitute, so a new convert is simply not ready for the arduous task of shepherding God’s flock.

• • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Good Reputation Among the Unsaved

Finally, and of significant importance, an elder “must have a good reputation with those outside the church.” Both the apostles Paul and Peter express deep concern that Christians have a good reputation before a watching, nonbelieving world (1 Cor. 10:32; Phil. 2:15; Col. 4:5, 6; 1 Thess. 4:11, 12; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2; 5:14; 6:1; Titus 2:5, 8, 10; 3:1–2; 1 Peter 2:12, 15; 3:1, 16). If all believers are required to have a good testimony before non Christians, then it is imperative that the leaders have a good reputation with unbelievers. The church’s evangelistic credibility and witness is tied to the moral reputation of its leaders.

• • • • • • • Strauch • •

Elder Qualifications

Age for Elders – CBC Policy Statement

The Elders of CBC acknowledge that the Bible does not provide a specific age for the office of Elder. The term itself implies a man who is older and who has maturity, dignity, experience, and honor. But an exact age is never mentioned.

However, when the Bible connects a particular age to the commencement of spiritual leadership, the biblical examples point to about thirty years of age. For example, a man who belonged to the descendants of Aaron could enter full service in the priesthood at thirty (Num. 4:46-47). Our Lord began His earthly ministry at about that age as well (Luke 3:23). Many commentators believe that Timothy was still considered young in his spiritual leadership in his early thirties (1 Tim. 4:12). Although we do not see those examples as binding on the office of elder in the local church, we do believe that they help to provide a general guideline.

Elder Qualifications

Age for Elders – CBC Policy Statement

With that in mind, the Elders have established the following guidelines for considering a man for elder:

He must be at least about thirty years of age.

He must have served faithfully at Countryside for a number of years.

He must have demonstrated his giftedness and biblical leadership in a number of venues with a diverse range of ages.

He must demonstrate a maturity that will clearly benefit the decision-making process of the Elder Board.



Elder Qualifications

Age for Elders – CBC Policy Statement

With that in mind, the Elders have established the following guidelines for considering a man for elder:

Both laymen and staff pastors must follow the process determined by the elders to become an elder and to be approved by the church.

It is essential that the church at large is able to affirm the giftedness and biblical qualifications of a man considered for this position (Titus 1; 1 Timothy 3).



Elder Qualifications

Staff Elders – CBC Policy Statement

Countryside employs several gifted young men who serve as staff pastors here. While we recognize that the qualifications for Elder are identical to those of pastor, and that in other churches and in different circumstances they may be asked to serve in the office of elder, we have determined that in our church a staff pastor must also meet these requirements before being asked to serve as an elder on the Elder Board.

In addition, the Elders will carefully consider each man's life situation. The office of elder requires significant time and commitment. A man must be able to fulfill those requirements without detrimental effects on his wife and family. Because of this, the Elders will be very deliberate and cautious when considering a man for this position who has a young family, and whose ministry time must be above and beyond his secular employment.

Deacon Qualifications

It is essential to recognize that deacons are equally qualified with elders in terms of character and spiritual life. The one difference between their qualifications is the elder's ability to teach.

The deacon's role is one of administration, shepherding, and caring for the flock. Although deacons' primary function is not teaching, they are no less spiritually qualified, honored, or respected. They relieve those who are more skilled in teaching to be free to pray and study to teach.

In a special sense, the deacon's task sums up the essence of spiritual greatness. Our Lord said, "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" ([Matthew 20:26–28](#)).

MacArthur



Countryside Bible Church

Leadership

Elders

Deacons

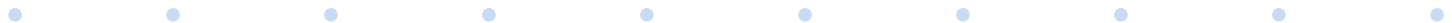


Countryside Bible Church

Constitution

Article III – Government

The Board of Elders shall be responsible for the governing of the church, and shall submit to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit in such governing (Titus 1:9) . The Elders will be responsible for the final decisions (I Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; I Peter 5:1-3).



Countryside Bible Church

Article V – Responsibilities of Pastoral Staff, Elders and Deacons

The Elders shall be responsible to:

Care for the spiritual needs of the church family

Guard the purity of doctrine and life of the church

Direct the administration of the church ordinances

Discipline in accordance with the Word of God

Share the ministry of pastoral care

Approve all leadership positions



Countryside Bible Church

Constitution

The Elders are responsible for the total operation of the church, including various organizations, physical properties, finances, and other temporal matters. The Board of Elders shall function only under the headship of Christ and the authority of the Word of God. Their decision-making process shall always be guided by clearly discerned Scriptural principles (I Peter 5:2-6) . All decisions will be made in a manner which preserves the principle of unity (Acts15:25; Philippians 2:1-5) . Disregarding the opinion of an Elder who is in the process of church discipline (I Timothy5:19, 20) does not violate this principle.



Countryside Bible Church

Constitution

Section 2 – Senior Pastor and Pastoral Staff

The pastoral staff is accountable to the Board of Elders. The Senior Pastor shall oversee the preaching of the Word and give pastoral care. He shall be responsible for the oversight of the church staff. By virtue of his position he shall serve as an Elder.



Countryside Bible Church

Constitution

Section 3 – Deacons

The Deacon's role is one of administration and serving the flock (Acts 6:1-6). The Deacons shall have responsibilities as delegated by the Elders in order to share with the Elders in their ministries and will meet with the Elders at periodic intervals.



Countryside Bible Church

Constitution

Elders shall be added to the Board based upon the Spirit-led recognition of a man's fulfillment of the Scriptural qualifications (I Timothy 3; Titus 1; I Peter 5) and his awareness of the call of the Holy Spirit to serve. Any man who candidates for the Office of Elder shall be recommended to the membership for their consideration. The Board of Elders shall establish and maintain a written procedure for identifying, qualifying, and approving new Elders. Such procedures shall be available for inspection by any member of Countryside Bible Church upon request. Upon approval of an Elder candidate by the Board of Elders, that man shall be presented to the church body as an Elder.

Countryside Bible Church

Elder Selection Process

Aspiration: The process begins when the candidate demonstrates an aspiration to the office of Elder (1 Tim. 3:1). He may approach one of the elders to state his desire or the Elder Board may approach him based on their awareness of his giftedness and service.

Application: With the recommendation of the elder board, (indicating that he has been tested and proven in ministry), the candidate completes an elder application (see pages 2-3). This application provides the elders with the candidate's personal testimony, family information, and ministry experience; as well as his understanding of the Biblical qualifications. The completed application is given to the elder board.

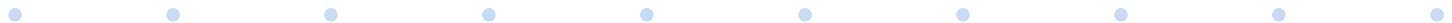


Countryside Bible Church

Elder Selection Process

Application Review: The elder board will review the application. If the board is in agreement, the candidate will meet with the elder board for a general interview.

Preparation: The candidate will continue the process by preparing for his oral evaluation (see step 6). The candidate should take as much time as necessary to properly prepare, using the materials provided in this manual and meeting with any of the elders for their assistance. During this preparation period, the elder board continues to observe and evaluate the candidate.

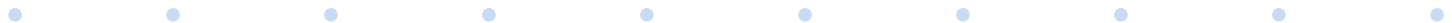


Countryside Bible Church

Elder Selection Process

Proclamation: During his preparation time, the candidate must provide a copy of or link to his teaching (in a Countryside Bible Church setting—Jr. High or older) to the elders. The elders can then evaluate whether or not the candidate has a capacity to teach.

Evaluation: After adequate preparation, the candidate appears before the elder board for an interview. The interview covers three areas: Bible knowledge, systematic theology, and practical theology. The elder board will concentrate on the highlighted questions from the materials provided in this manual.



Countryside Bible Church

Elder Selection Process

Recommendation: If approved by the elder board, the candidate will be allowed to attend the monthly meetings until congregational affirmation has occurred.

Affirmation: Once approved by the elder board, the elder candidate will be presented to the church for their consideration at a regular worship service. The membership of Countryside Bible Church should then seek out the candidate to encourage him and/or express any concern regarding his serving in this office. The elders will carefully evaluate any concerns that are brought to their attention regarding a candidate's qualification for service. After a period of at least thirty days, the elder board can confirm the candidate as an elder.



Countryside Bible Church

Elder Selection Process

Confirmation: Once affirmed by the congregation the elder candidate will be added to the elder board.



Countryside Bible Church

Deacons

Deacons shall be added based upon the Spirit-led recognition of a man's fulfillment of the Scriptural qualifications (I Timothy 3; Titus 1; I Peter 5) and his awareness of the call of the Holy Spirit to serve. Any man who candidates for the office of Deacon shall be recommended to the membership for their consideration. The Board of Elders shall establish and maintain a written procedure for identifying, qualifying, and approving new Deacons. Such procedures shall be available for inspection by any member of Countryside Bible Church upon request. Upon approval of a Deacon candidate by the Board of Elders, that man shall be presented to the church body as a Deacon.

Countryside Bible Church

Deacon Selection Process

Identification: The process begins when an individual who is already faithfully serving in a ministry to the church demonstrates the character qualities of a deacon (1 Tim. 3: 8 - 13). The individual may approach one of the elders to state his desire to serve as a deacon or the Elder Board may approach him based on their awareness of his giftedness and service.

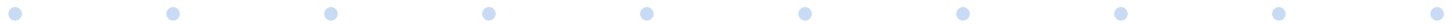
Application: Upon receiving the recommendation of the elder board, (indicating that he has been tested and proven in ministry), the candidate completes a deacon application (see following three pages). This application provides the elders with the candidate's personal testimony, family information, and ministry experience; as well as his understanding of the biblical qualifications. The completed application is submitted to the elder board

Countryside Bible Church

Deacon Selection Process

Application Review: The elder board will review the application. If the board is in agreement, the candidate will begin the process of preparing for his oral interview. If the candidate is not recommended, he will receive a full explanation.

Preparation: The candidate will continue the process by preparing for his oral interview (see step 5). The candidate should take as much time as necessary to properly prepare, studying the potential interview questions listed in this application and meeting with any of the elders for assistance. During this preparation period, the elder board continues to observe and evaluate the candidate.



Countryside Bible Church

Deacon Selection Process

Interview: After adequate preparation, the candidate appears before the elder board for an interview. The interview covers the areas listed on the last page of the application.

Recommendation: If approved by the elder board, the candidate will be allowed to attend any meetings until congregational affirmation has occurred.

Affirmation: The elder-approved candidate will be presented to the congregation for affirmation. Once affirmed by the congregation they officially become a deacon.



Countryside Bible Church

Article VII – Terms of Service of Elders and Deacons

Each Elder and Deacon, staff and non-staff, shall serve in perpetuity, qualified beforehand as, and responsible to, shepherd the members in regular attendance at Countryside Bible Church, as set forth in Article V, Sections 1, 2, and 3. The terms of service for an Elder or Deacon may be terminated by resignation or disqualification as set forth in Article VIII. The term and all responsibilities, authorities, or privileges granted to the Elder or Deacon shall cease on the date of resignation or knowledge of disqualification. Any Elder or Deacon who has resigned must resubmit to the application/ qualification process if they desire to resume said office.

Any Elder or Deacon may take a voluntary bi-annual sabbatical of not more than ninety (90) consecutive days. If the sabbatical extends beyond ninety (90) days, he must re-candidate before resuming his former office.

Countryside Bible Church

Elder Meetings

Rotating Chairman that serves for one year at a time (non-staff)

1st and 3rd Thursday nights at 7 PM

Children's Building 208

Open and closed sessions

Guests are welcome to attend open sessions



Countryside Bible Church

Elder Meetings – Decision Making

When the Elders are not unanimous.

Since the Spirit has only one mind about any given decision, in the normal course of church ministry our goal is for all the elders to be of one mind in following the same Spirit (Phil. 2:2). Thus, we strive to be unanimous in all decisions. We endeavor to reach all decisions only after prayerful consideration and in a spirit of humility, with each elder regarding one another as more important than himself (Phil. 2:3-5).

However, we recognize that godly men sometimes differ (e.g., Acts 15:37-40). In the event we are unable to reach a unanimous decision with the first vote, we have unanimously agreed to use the following process.

Countryside Bible Church

Elder Meetings – Decision Making

VOTE 1

If any matter receives a unanimous *yes* vote, then the elders' decision is *yes*, the matter is settled, and the motion should be carried out.

If a motion receives a greater than 25% *no* vote, the elders' decision is *no*, the motion should not be carried out, and the matter is settled (unless the elders agree to bring it up again at a later date for further consideration).

If any elder or elders vote *no*, but there are not enough *no* votes to settle the matter (that is, less than the required 25%), a second vote must be scheduled for a future meeting.

Countryside Bible Church

Elder Meetings – Decision Making

VOTE 1

Before the second vote is taken, the dissenting elders (or elder) are responsible to gather additional information on the motion, engage in discussion with the key parties, and seek godly counsel. The board will grant these men as much time as reasonably necessary to review the matter. After sufficient time to consider the additional information, discussion, and counsel, the elders will then allow additional time for prayer. Again, the desire is that all decisions will be unanimous, and the elders will work in good faith toward that end.

Once the necessary time has been allowed, the elders will schedule a second vote on the matter.

Countryside Bible Church

Elder Meetings – Decision Making

VOTE 2

If 75% of the elders vote *yes*, then the elders' decision is *yes*, and the matter is settled.

If less than 75% of the elders vote *yes*, then the decision is *no*, and the matter is settled.

The elders agree that a decision will be final after the second vote.



Countryside Bible Church

Elder Meetings – Decision Making

VOTE 2

Statement of Unity: Any decision finalized after following this process will be a unified *yes* or *no* decision by the entire board. All elders agree to be unified in the final decision, in public and in private, even though the final decision may not reflect their personal preference.



Countryside Bible Church

Congregational Vote at CBC

Notice shall be given from the pulpit in at least two consecutive Sunday morning services prior to a business meeting. Business meetings shall be called for member input. Approval of the congregation by a vote of at least 2/3 of active adult members voting shall be required for the following, to-wit:

Purchase or sale of real estate

Filling of permanent full-time senior pastor position

Amendment of the Constitution or Doctrinal Statement

Any other matters provided herein or any matters presented by the Elders for church vote

Countryside Bible Church

Government and Leadership

Ephesians 4:11–13

¹¹ And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

