

## TREASURING CHRIST IN THE CHURCH: Elders

I Timothy 3; Titus 3; Hebrews 13

### INTRODUCTION

- Treasuring Christ in the church
- Elders are to be examples of treasuring Christ and focus on equipping the church body to treasure Christ.
- This is accomplished primarily through the teaching of the Word, prayer, and guarding the life and doctrine of the church

### What is an Elder?

1. What's in a name? (Phil Newton)
  - a. Bishop, overseer, pastor
    - i. Presbuteros (elder)
      1. Representatives of the church given through apostolic ministry
      2. Recognized maturity
      3. **Acts 14:21-23**
    - ii. Episkopos (overseer)
      1. By Greeks, given to those who were supervising figures
      2. **Acts 20:17,28**
      3. Guardians of the church and the gospel trust on her behalf
      4. Leadership & direction
    - iii. Poimen (pastor)
      1. Translated as a noun once in the NIV
      2. Translated as "shepherd"
      3. Feeding, caring, guarding
      4. **Ephesians 4:11**
  - b. Plural vs. singular
    - i. Plural (in every example - **Titus 1:5**)

- ii. Singular (when speaking of particular elder - **1 Peter 5; 2 John 1; 3 John 1**)

2. Where do they come from?
  - a. Biblical
    - i. Not unusual
    - ii. Images in OT, NT Judaism, Heaven
  - b. Historical
    - i. Earliest Baptist documents
    - ii. Mix of plural and singular
3. What are their qualifications?
  - a. **1 Timothy 3:1-7**
    - i. Character
      1. Above reproach (no unnecessary questions or morality)
      2. One-woman man (faithful)
      3. Reasonable
      4. Controls his appetites
      5. Respectable
      6. Not given to much wine
      7. Gentle (not angry)
      8. Not a lover of money
    - ii. Skill
      1. Teacher (able and recognized)
      2. Leader of household
        - i. Ordered around the gospel
        - ii. Not unruly
    - iii. Experience
      1. Not a new convert
      2. Growing believer
      3. Enough years to be humble
  - b. **Titus 1:5-9**
4. What is their purpose?
  - a. I would summarize it with language we use around here this way... Elders serve the local church by leading her in the promoting of joy

- and the battling of sin through exemplary living, prayer and the teaching of the Scriptures.
- b. Teaching right doctrine
  - i. Teaching
    - 1. **Titus 2:1**
    - 2. Exemplary
  - ii. To Observe
- c. Caring for the body
- d. Guarding the body
  - i. **Titus 1:10-16**
  - ii. **Titus 2:11-15**
    - 1. Emphasis on the gospel
    - 2. Call to repentance
    - 3. Teaching practical eschatology
    - 4. Organize the church to live out the gospel (**Titus 2:1-10**)

### Why does the church need Elders? (Hebrews 13)

1. Well, first of all, to be a NT church you have to have elder(s) by some name
2. **v.7** - Remember the teaching and consider their way of life
3. **v.8** - Simple standard and gift of Christ
4. **v.9** - False teaching is always at the door. Elders help the church by guarding against false teaching and promoting godliness with contentment
5. **vv.10-16** - Elders help the church endure to the end, valuing difficulty and emphasizing grace
6. **v.17** - The church should make it a joy to lead. Elders and deacons are not divine houses of congress and the senate, checks and balances. Elders are to lead well because they will give an account. Congregations ultimately rule the body because it is incumbent upon them to select godly men to follow.

7. **vv.18-19** - The church should pray for her leaders / elders, because Satan hates them. They are to pray for purity in life and thought and the pursuit of sweet fellowship in their midst.

### Response

1. Your pastor's response...
  - a. In a functional way, UBC has a plurality of elders in the paid pastors
  - b. I believe a better way is a combination of some of the paid pastors working with lay elders, where the number of lay elders is greater than the paid elders and the senior pastor does not serve as chairman
  - c. UBC had a plurality of elders in the past; however, they ceased to function in a way that benefited the body, as far as I've been told and observed
  - d. The staff, Church Council, and deacons are reading about elders -- a well written book by my friend, Phil Newton, "Elders and Congregational Life" where elders are established as godly leadership and the congregation is the final rule and authority
2. Your response...
  - a. Pray for your leaders as we study this matter.
  - b. If you are without a church, we invite you boldly to join a very imperfect people who are seeking to glorify God by treasuring Christ above all things and reaching others that they may find lasting joy in Him.
  - c. If you are without Christ, my greatest work as an elder today, right now, is to share with you what was said in **Hebrews 13:11-14**