Editor's Note

"As God can send a nation of people no greater blessing than to give them faithful, sincere, upright ministers, so the greatest curse that God can possibly send upon a people in this world is to give them over to blind, unregenerate, carnal, lukewarm, unskillful guides," said George Whitfield.

9Marks believes that. What do *you* think?

This issue of 9News and the next are devoted to the topic of elders. This month, we asked a number of thoughtful pastors like John MacArthur, Alexander Strauch, Tom Schreiner, Sinclair Ferguson, and others what lessons they had learned in selecting men as elders. Mark Dever and Paul Alexander offer their collective thoughts on finding the right men. Justin Taylor and Matt Schmucker reflect—exegetically and practically—on whether unbelief in an elder's children disqualifies him. And Burk Parsons and Benjamin Merkle discuss nominating and ordaining elders.

Watch for these articles in the March issue on training and working as an elder:

- Four Lessons in Shepherding, by Paul Alexander
- How Ligon Trains His Men
- Bill Mounce and Seminary Smarties
- Thabiti Anyabwile on the Ninth Mark of Healthy Church
- Disagreements and Differences Among Elders, by Matt Schmucker
- What the Capitol Hill Baptist Church Elders Who Aren't Mark Dever Say Is Essential for Eldering!

While not directly related to our topic of elders, the matters discussed in Hammett's and Cratty's book reviews certainly have dramatic implications for eldering. Namely, what is the difference between a market mentality and a faith mentality when it comes to leading a church? Or, what does leading by faith versus leading by sight mean? And in this vein, what does God calls us to have faith *in*? Our plans and dreams, or something he has said?

May he grant his church more faith in his word!

--Jonathan Leeman

SELECTING ELDERS

A Pastors' and Theologians' Forum   *Page 4*
We asked a roundtable of pastors and theologians one question:
       "What lessons have you learned the hard way in selecting elders?"
Answers from John MacArthur, Michael Lawrence, Phil Newton, "Ed Roberts," Sinclair Ferguson, Bruce Keisling, Philip Pedley, Sir Fred Catherwood, Thomas Schreiner, and Alexander Strauch

INSTALLING ELDERS

CHURCH OR McCHURCH?

Book Review:
This Little Church Went to Market
&
This Little Church Stayed Home
by Gary Gilley
Reviewed by Flynn Cratty

AUDIO—*LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWS*

Life and Ministry with Josh Harris: *go to http://resources.christianity.com/default/mrki.aspx.*
(Post Date: 2/1/2007) What's it like to be a best-selling author and popular conference speaker in your twenties? Josh Harris talks about his testimony, his books, his pastorate, his family, and more.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones: Reflections on His Ministry by His Family:
http://resources.christianity.com/default/mrki.aspx
(Post Date: 10/1/2006) How often do you get to hear the children of great ministers reminisce about their father's ministry? Listen in as Lady Elizabeth Catherwood, daughter of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and her husband Sir Fred recount stories of the famed British preacher.

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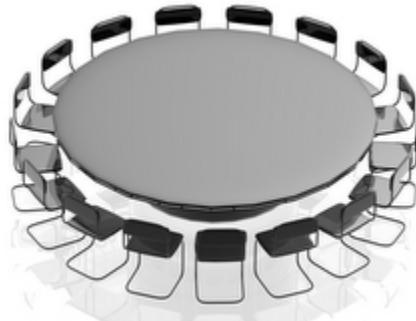Washington, DC 20002
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A Pastors' and Theologians' Forum

What lessons have you learned the hard way in selecting elders?

Answers from

- John MacArthur
- Michael Lawrence
- Phil Newton
- Ed Roberts
- Sinclair Ferguson
- Bruce Keisling
- Philip Pedley
- Sir Fred Catherwood
- Thomas Schreiner
- Alexander Strauch

John MacArthur

There's a good and vital reason Paul said, "Lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Tim. 5:22). The biblical qualifications for elders are all characteristics of godliness and giftedness that must be proven over time. A man may instinctively know how to make a good first impression. He superficially *appears* to be keen-thinking, knowledgeable, mature, or supremely gifted as a teacher. But he could actually have serious character flaws that would disqualify him from eldership, and these sometimes become plainly evident only through long-term patterns of behavior. It is vital therefore that church leaders *"first* be proved; *then* let them use the office" (1 Tim. 3:10).

In our church, elders serve for life. They are not elected to a *term* of office; they are recognized for their giftedness and calling. Since one's gifts and calling are not subject to change (Rom. 11:29), the selection and appointment of elders is not something that should be done lightly or hastily.

Furthermore, the gifts and calling of an elder are ultimately far more important than any formal training track.

Now, obviously, as a seminary president, I am strongly in favor of formal training. If a man knows he is called to ministry and gifted to teach, he ought to pursue (as much as he reasonably can) the very *best* training available to him. He should take full advantage of every opportunity to study and learn and be mentored. He should gain a thorough and careful working knowledge of Scripture; acquire a solid understanding of sound and essential doctrine; learn in a hands-on way how to help people with the practical aspects of living for Christ; and do as much as possible to hone his skills as a teacher. Meanwhile, his spiritual leaders should do everything in their power to help him acquire such training.

But if he lacks the calling and the giftedness that are essential to eldership, no amount of formal training can possibly equip him for the task. In other words, while formal training is wonderfully helpful for equipping men who are indeed called to leadership and gifted by God for the role, no training program alone can guarantee that a man will be fit to serve as an elder.

So it seems to me that the process of *identifying* those who are truly called to eldership is at least as important—and certainly a prerequisite to—whatever formal training process we put in place to equip young men to be pastors and shepherds.

If I've learned anything "the hard way" over the years, it is that the best way to identify potential elders is in the normal flow of church life. They are evident by their response to what's being taught; by their willingness to serve; by the abundance of spiritual fruit in their lives; and by the many ways their giftedness is manifest in the church *before* they are ever singled out for leadership.

In other words, our hands-on leadership-training programs should not been seen as the be-all and end-all of leadership development. Rather than always devising prefabricated ministry assignments and walking inexperienced young men through every step of what to do, it's sometimes better to give them the freedom to demonstrate what they are made of by seeing how they take up duties that are not necessarily laid at their feet. Then we can give help and encouragement as they develop their own unique spiritual abilities. I find that when men who are gifted and called to leadership are encouraged to think that way, they thrive.

John MacArthur is the pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California and is the author of numerous books, including the booklet Answering The Key Questions About Elders *(Word of Grace Publications, 1984).*

Michael Lawrence

One of the lessons I've learned and re-learned in more than one church is the danger of selecting a man to serve as elder who has a history of protracted, repeated, and/or unresolved conflict. On more than one occasion I have overlooked conflict in a man's life, reasoning either that it was justified by the circumstances, a function of immaturity that has been outgrown, or foisted upon him as the innocent party.

The fact is, however, that even when circumstances or theology vindicate his side of the conflict, a man can still be a quarrelsome man. This may demonstrate itself in a lack of gentleness, a propensity to taking rigid positions when none are required, an inability to lose graciously, or simply an over-love of debate. Whatever the form it takes, quarrelsomeness is a serious impediment to effective service as an elder; unchecked it is a clear disqualification (1 Tim. 3:3).

One of the reasons this is easy to overlook is that elders are to be the sort of men who can vigorously contend for the faith, to defend the flock from wolves and their errors, and to stand firm in the face of pressure or even persecution. A wishy-washy, compromising, easily swayed elder is a danger to the health of his congregation and the purity of the gospel. And so we look for men who have prepared their minds for action (1 Pet. 1:13).

But if we are to care for the flock after the pattern of the Good Shepherd, and if we are to do so even as we submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21), then we must be careful of selecting men who fail to combine a toughness of mind with a meekness of heart. Meekness is not weakness. Moses and Jesus were both described as meek (Num. 12:3; Mat. 11:28). Rather, meekness is power under control, humbly deployed for the benefit of others. In service of self, strength of mind (including correct theology) inevitably breeds conflict. Joined with humility and meekness, that same strength carries the burdens of the weak, gently restores the fallen, and accurately distinguishes between the wicked and the weak.

A history of conflict should not automatically disqualify a man from service. But it should invite further and careful investigation. Has the conflict been resolved? Was it necessary? Is it a weapon of first or last resort? Is it always self-justified? These and other questions should be honestly explored before selecting a man as an elder. Proverbs 15:1 notes that "A gentle answer turns aside wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Nowhere is this more important than in the work of an elder.

Michael Lawrence is an associate pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC.

Phil Newton

Eagerness to establish elder leadership or to fill the gap of elders rotating from active status may create issues that can take years to surmount. As our church moved toward elder leadership, selecting the initial group proved daunting. After teaching extensively on elder qualifications, the church nominated men thought to demonstrate biblical qualifications. The small list eventually narrowed to three that met with church approval. These completed a rigorous written questionnaire as well as interviews before presentation to the congregation. However, I learned through the process that questionnaires effectively test knowledge of basic doctrine but lack the precision to test motives and ambitions. These inner qualities are learned only in the crucible of church life.

Each of these men was bright and had reasonable grasp of basic doctrines. Yet none had the commitment level to the local church necessary to walk through adversities and threatening times without bailing out. One man viewed the role of preaching in church life as more tangential than central. I recall a very heated—though not ugly—dialogue that we had in elders' meeting over my exposition of 2 Timothy 4:1-5. I made the point that ultimately, the pastor's chief audience was God. He could not see this in spite of biblical argument to the contrary. No stomach for controversies marked the second man. Though biblically adept and probably the best student of the three, he lacked the boldness to confront those needing correction. The third man approached the church with a business model perspective. His perception of success amounted to increased numbers. When trials came, and the numbers declined, he abandoned ship.

What lessons have these incidents taught me? First, regularly instruct the congregation on both the qualifications and heart of an elder. Demonstrate that more than doctrinal knowledge and high visibility is needed. Second, cultivate future elders through interaction in a variety of settings, e.g. discipleship groups, prayer, visits, meals together, reading/discussion forums, critiquing their teaching. Listen to the way they interact with others. See how they respond to correction. That way you have time to observe the passions and ambitions of men *before* they are set apart as elders. Third, observe who and what most influence elder candidates. Fourth, as you pray for discernment, be conscious of the Holy Spirit setting off "alarms" concerning the character, conduct, or qualities of those aspiring to eldership. If you are hesitant to approve someone, then don't until your reservations are cleared.

Phil Newton, author of Elders in Congregation Life *(Kregel, 2005), is the senior pastor of South Woods Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee.*

Ed Roberts (*real name hidden for security purposes*)

From a church planter's point of view, there are two contexts for recognizing elders. First, there are mature believers who decide to become part of the new church plant and are potential elders. Second, as in a pioneer setting, there are only relatively young believers who have never exercised leadership in any congregation.

Where there are mature men who have served as leaders in other contexts, and they have served only as deacons "under" a paid single pastor who did not share leadership appropriately, they may or may not be good candidates. Be sure they understand plural leadership, and be sure that they are biblically qualified.

In either context, I look for proven faithfulness, particularly in discipling one's own family. This does not mean that single men cannot be elders, but a married man must be modeling, teaching, and training his own family. Properly managing one's own household is a prerequisite for serving as an elder in church. If a man is not discipling his wife and children, I would not suggest recognizing him as an elder, regardless of how fruitful his ministry might be in other arenas.

The other less obvious area in which to look is in his generosity (and perhaps our own?). When Paul writes to Timothy, he mentions that an elder must not be a lover of money; and in 2 Timothy 6, he says that those who are rich in this present world ought to do good, to be rich in good deeds and to be generous and willing to share. Not being greedy, but eager to serve is also mentioned in 1 Peter 5. I would do some probing of any potential elders about their financial stewardship, particularly generous giving (not just their weekly offering!), regardless of whether the evangelical culture finds this acceptable or not.

Be careful about recognizing an elder who has an unhealthy interest in theological disputes. Of course, an elder needs to be able to teach sound doctrine and refute those who oppose him, but this must be done gently, and we are warned in 2 Timothy about quarreling over words. So I look for one who is teachable and able to teach with good biblical theology, but does so with a gentle spirit and proper theological humility.

In recognizing elders, it would seem wise to recognize those like-minded men who are able to minister to particular people or in particular ways that other elders may not be so gifted. It is a mistake to have a team of like-minded elders with like personalities, like interests, like family situations, identical backgrounds, etc. The team of elders must be biblically like-minded, but they need not be alike according to every other measure of a man.

Mr. Roberts has planted a church in the U.S. and has been planting churches and doing leadership development in Central Asia for awhile.

Sinclair B. Ferguson

9Marks of Eldership. Elders can advance or retard a congregation's spiritual health. Their *selection* therefore is vital. The few comments below are limited to the question, How do we recognize who should serve as an elder?

1. While we will regret setting the bar below the standards of Scripture in recognizing men called to the eldership, we can also in our zeal set it artificially higher than the Scriptures, and fail to recognize that some of the best gifts grow in ministry.

2. Especially remember that "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:3), with its corollary of being able to "rebuke" (Tit. 1:9, i.e. to use the Scriptures for the ends for which they were given [2 Tim. 3:15-16]) does not specify an arena. Some are "able to teach" who are not suited to regular public preaching.

3. Look for men whose lives exhibit the spirit of, as well as an intellectual grasp of, sound doctrine. Orthodoxy with approachability is a great desideratum in an elder (approachability being the very least that "hospitable" means; Tit. 1:8).

4. Pose the most neglected question—"Do outsiders think well of him?" (1 Tim. 3:7)—and ponder why that question is important.

5. Choose those who are already "among" the flock, and the flock "among" them (1 Pet. 5: 2). Moral, domestic, occupational, didactic qualifications being met, ask, "Does this man love the flock and is he beloved by them?" Commitment to corporate prayer is often a litmus test.

6. Avoid appointing those who *would commit* to loving the flock *if* they were asked to be elders. Better by far to have men who love the sheep than men who love being shepherds (the former will become the latter, but not vice-versa).

7. Seek men who are simultaneously gentle but prepared to be courageous, and prepared to suffer if need be—to get in front to protect as well as behind to follow! An elder must be capable of both biblical rebuke and gentle restoration (Gal. 6:2). Quieter men, with quiet hearts, are worth their weight in gold and may astonish us by their wisdom.

8. Ask the question, "Would our church be willing, if need be, to pay this man a stipend to labor among us as an elder?" The answer may tell a great deal about his ministry in the flock and his esteem in their eyes.

9. Consider how well a man's life echoes the principles of the Lord's shepherding in Psalm 23.

Sinclair Ferguson, who teaches regularly for Westminster Seminary and authored multiple books, is the senior pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina.

Bruce Keisling

I have learned that the church's ability to recognize elders is strongly correlated to the number of teaching opportunities they have had in the church. In our situation at Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, we were without a pastor at the time we were nominating our first slate of elders. Even though I am not the pastor, the church gave me *de facto* status as an elder and charged me with the duty of nominating our first candidates, to then be confirmed or denied by congregational vote. I began the process by asking the church to send me recommendations for consideration. I wanted to know who *they* were viewing as elder material. I shouldn't have been surprised by what I received, but I was.

For the last several years, our church has enjoyed able teaching on Sunday evenings for fifteen minute devotionals by over a dozen men. And I expected a fairly even distribution of support for these many men who are gifted to teach. A number of men did garner one or two nominations. But what I found amidst the recommendations given to me with nearly universal clarity were three names in particular—the three men who gave not only brief devotionals on Sunday evenings, but who had shared the responsibility for Sunday morning sermons due to our lack of a pastor. The church had found the preaching of these three men particularly encouraging.

In short, I learned that concentrations of teaching opportunities (assuming an individual teaches well) will heighten the ability of a church to recognize its elders. As we have considered recommending new elders, we have intentionally scheduled more teaching opportunities for individuals being considered for nomination. That way, we—and the church—can discern their calling among us.

Bruce Keisling, head librarian at the Boyce Centennial Library at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is an elder at Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

Philip Pedley

Plural leadership in the local body of Christ is as beautiful as it may be rare. In 2002-03, God was pleased to lead First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman step by step into an understanding of eldership, and the church appointed its first elders in February 2004. Though we have faced many challenges over the past three years, these have brought home to us the wisdom and strength of plural leadership. Week by week we have discovered that principles like mutual submission and the blend of spiritual gifts among a plural eldership are God's design for the awesome task of shepherding the flock.

The main lesson I would draw from our experience is this: *conviction about eldership must be rooted in Scripture and not seen as a pragmatic option selected from a menu of models for leadership.* Probably the greatest danger to biblical eldership in my experience is the widespread belief that the pastor or senior pastor should be the CEO of the local church. We might call this the "business model" of church leadership. Because it is the dominant model in our working lives, it exerts a powerful influence on the Western church.

In place of such human alternatives, we have pondered afresh Christ's words on worldly leadership: "It shall not be so amongst you." We have learned how important it is to immerse ourselves in what Scripture teaches about plural leadership and to be vigilant about ways in which the biblical pattern can be subtly eroded. For example, members not fully committed to eldership may still be seduced by the siren song of single leadership, eyeing the deceptive attractions of powerful preacher-pastors around them and longing like ancient Israel for "their own king." New elders or pastors, though grounded in plural leadership, may need to adjust to the way a principle like mutual submission, which has broad application across different cultures, must find local expression amongst a particular group of elders. We know that ahead of us lie the dangers of established eldership: the risk that plurality may relax its watch and dwindle by degrees into a comfortable club which, in effect, abdicates leadership to a CEO pastor.

"Guard yourselves," says Paul, "and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). This warning, given specifically to all the elders of Ephesus, is part of the longest recorded address to any Christian audience in the whole book of Acts. Eldership is important. The Ephesian elders knew that the divine pattern of plural leadership had been established on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:23), widened on his second journey (Acts 16:12-40; Philip. 1:1), and was now being deepened on his third. Timothy almost certainly witnessed this poignant, farewell address. We can imagine him, years later, weaving its lessons into his own preaching after reading out Paul's well-known instructions for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1-15. It's a scene that reminds us that the true pattern of effective church leadership rests on Scripture alone and not on extra-biblical models, however appealing.

Philip Pedley, the chief policy advisor to the head of the civil service in the Cayman Islands, is an elder at First Baptist Church of Grand Cayman.

Sir Fred Catherwood

Paul's letter to Timothy concentrates on the inherent quality needed in elders who, in the urgency of the new churches, had none of the formal training which today's church has time to give. But in today's church, those inherent qualities still matter. Elders still need to be godly, patient, the husband of one wife, good parents, and steeped in the Word of God. No amount of training can offset gaps in these areas.

Any church is full of people with problems, and the minister cannot take all their calls. The elders are there to surround and support the minister. There is a lot of stress in the ministry and not every minister is strong enough to take it on his own. Ministers need men they can talk to freely who will not abuse that intimacy. We may not have women elders, but we should have elders' wives. Between husband and wife, elders should be able to take the calls of all who are anxious, uncertain, or just plain ignorant and be able to talk through their problems.

It may be easier for church members to bring a non-Christian friend to an elder than to the minister, so it helps if elders have some experience of one-to-one evangelism.

Above all, elders and their wives and families should be role models for the church.

Sir Fred Catherwood is a British author and politician. His most recent book is The Creation of Wealth: Recovering a Christian Understanding of Money, Work, and Ethics *(Crossway, 2002).*

Thomas R. Schreiner

First, we merged with a long established church a few years ago. This church had a number of men in it who were friendly and nice but were either doctrinally naïve or held views contrary to what we considered essential for anyone serving as an elder. If we had nominated one or more of these men to be elders, some of the older members of the congregation would have been pleased. But we would have saddled ourselves with serious problems in the future because we would have sacrificed harmony of doctrine and vision.

Second, we have faced situations where men were "almost" qualified to serve as elders, but they lacked at least one important qualification to serve with us. Again, it was tempting to include them because they were involved in the church, and feelings were hurt when they weren't nominated. Yet the wisdom of not appointing them became evident as further situations arose in their lives that would have made it difficult for them to serve with us.

Third, it is also tempting to appoint someone who is theologically brilliant and agrees with the doctrinal position of the church. But we need to remember that Paul especially stresses character qualifications for elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9). We need elders who are theologically faithful and who live out the gospel in their everyday lives. We must not sacrifice the latter simply because the former is present, for the words of elders must accord with a godly life.

Thomas Schreiner, professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the author of a number of books, is the preaching pastor at Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

Alexander Strauch

Stop thinking short-term. Like a good shepherd of sheep, think and plan long-term. Look for young men in their teens and early twenties who show spiritual interest and potential. They are your future leaders. God has placed them in your care for molding. Don't fail them!

Start giving them life-changing books to read, such as J. C. Ryle's *Thoughts for Young Men*. When I was fifteen years old, the staff director of the camp I attended put a biography of Hudson Taylor in my hands. Hudson Taylor himself was a teenager when preparing for missions. I was never the same after reading

the inspiring story of his life and founding of the China Inland Mission. Books change lives. I've seen it happen many times.

Also, make use of the many excellent sermons by renowned preachers of the Word that are readily available (on audiotape, CD, or Internet) to inspire young leaders. Challenge their minds before the world does. Begin with expository teaching on Paul's magisterial epistle to the Romans. Tell them to master Romans. In the process, Romans will master them. And that is what you want.

Another way to influence future leaders is by taking them or sending them to Bible conferences such as the Shepherds' Conference at Grace Community Church in California. And sending them or taking them on short-term mission trips is an excellent way to broaden their perspective and expand their thinking.

Give potential leaders gradually increasing responsibility in serving, leading, and teaching. Strategically open doors for ministry for them in the church. This is the best training ground. Monitor their service. Communicate with them regularly about how they are doing. And invite them, for a specified period of time, to visit your elders' meetings. This is another significant training ground. Cast the vision before them that shepherding Christ's blood-bought flock, the church, is truly fulfilling work. It is a high calling and privilege to care for God's people.

Part of the responsibility of pastoral oversight is to see that there will be qualified shepherds to lead and teach the flock in the future. It is your job to take the initiative in this matter, to reach out to young, potential shepherds, to be proactive and not reactive, to take interest in their lives and future, to spend time with them, to direct them, and to warn them of the many dangers young men face (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:2, 15, 22). Continually be mindful that you are an example to them, and encourage them in their own spiritual growth. You have the power to influence key individuals for God and the future of your church. Use that influence or you will lose it.

I remember watching Dr. Vernon Grounds, chancellor of the Denver Seminary, come down the main hallway of the seminary at the same time two young students were walking toward him. As they were about to pass, he reached out with both hands and placed one on each of the men's shoulders, stopping them in their tracks. Looking authoritatively at them, as if God were speaking, he said, "Soon the church of Jesus Christ will rest on your shoulders; be prepared." He then went on his way, leaving them speechless. I'm sure they never forgot Dr. Grounds' startling exhortation from heaven. Maybe you, too, should send some lightening-bolt charges to the young men of your church.

Alexander Strauch, who has taught philosophy and New Testament literature at Colorado Christian University, is an elder at Littleton Bible Chapel near Denver, Colorado. He is also the author of Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leaderhip. *Go to lewisandroth.org to see more resources on equipping elders, including study guides on this book.*
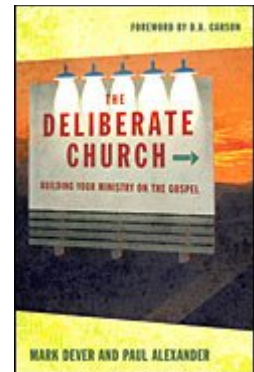
Looking For A Few Good Men

By Mark Dever and Paul Alexander

How do you go about looking for elders, and what exactly is it that you're looking for? Answering this question requires us to consider what exactly an elder is not, and then what an elder is.[1]

WHAT AN ELDER IS NOT

A biblical elder is not simply an older male.

There are plenty of godly older men who do meet the character qualifications for biblical eldership. I hope the Lord blesses our church with more! But bare chronological advancement, even when married to upstanding church membership, is not sufficient to satisfy the requirements outlined in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1. In fact, there are some thirty year old men (or even younger) who are more qualified to be elders than some men twice their age. Life experience alone does not qualify a man as an elder.

A biblical elder is not simply a successful businessman.

In fact, some of the very principles or character traits that get some businessmen to the top of the business ladder may actually put them on the bottom rung of the church leadership ladder.[2] We're not looking for people who "know what they want and know how to get it." Nor are we looking for people who know how to manage people, raise money, climb the ladder, or close the deal. Leadership in the church is fundamentally different than leadership in the business world.[3] The church is not simply a non-profit business. It is the body of Christ, and as such is the most unique corporate institution in the world. It operates on principles of distinctively Christian doctrine, servant-hood, holiness, faith, hope, and love. This is not, of course, to say that it is impossible to be a biblically qualified elder and a successful business man at the same time. It is simply to say that success and leadership in the business world do not always or necessarily bode well for eldership in the local church.

A biblical elder is not simply an involved community member.

Being elected to sit on a city or neighborhood council is a wonderful privilege and a unique evangelistic opportunity for any Christian. But again, it is neither necessary nor sufficient for meeting the qualifications of elder. A man can be the president of the PTA, coach little league, be an alderman, and lead a boy scout troop and still not be qualified as an elder. Serving the community in these ways certainly doesn't preclude a man from qualifying. But as we look around to see who might meet the biblical requirements, community service alone cannot be our ultimate criteria.

A biblical elder is not simply a "good ole' boy".

Living in the same location and having the same friends or even being a member of the same church for 30+ years doesn't make a man an elder. Serving in the capacity of elder in a local church should not be dependent on whether a man is willing to "play ball", or whether he is a part of the right social network, or whether he's from the right part of the country (or county, depending on where you live!). Likeability can often be deceptive.

A biblical elder is not a female.

The criteria laid out in 1Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 assume male leadership in the church. The office of elder is an office that requires the ones holding it to be able to teach. Teaching is an authoritative act, and women are

forbidden to exercise authority over men in the church (1Tim 2:9-15). Paul roots that prohibition in the order of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 – Adam was created before Eve, revealing Adam's God-given place of headship over her. Both are equally created in the image of God, but God has given them different yet complementary roles to fill both in the home and in the church.[4]

A biblical elder is not a politician*.*

The biblical office of elder *is* an elected office. But the man who fills it should not be one who subtly or overtly campaigns for it, or one who is noticeably vocal about promoting political positions in the context of the local church.

What, then, is a biblical elder?

WHAT IS AN ELDER?

Our question can be answered first in terms of the office and second in terms of the man. The office of elder is an office designed for the leadership of the church through the teaching of the Word.[5] The character of the man who qualifies to fulfill that office is described in 1Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. An elder is simply a man of exemplary, Christ-like character who is able to lead God's people by teaching them God's Word in a way that profits them spiritually. We are looking, then, for men who display this character and demonstrate both an aptitude for and fruitfulness in teaching God's Word to others in an edifying way.[6] This definition might serve as a good spiritual snapshot or profile of the kind of men you're looking for to be elders.

Qualification Quadrants

A helpful way to think about the criteria for choosing leaders might be in terms of the quadrants below. Again, the call to being an elder is a call to leadership through biblical teaching. This means that at a bare minimum, you need men who, first and foremost, share a deep, biblical understanding of the fundamentals of Christian theology and the Gospel. Areas to consider first are the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, God's sovereignty, the divinity and exclusivity of Christ, and the atonement. No man who falters in the basics of biblical doctrine should be considered for eldership, no matter how gifted or likeable he may be. The Word builds the church, and as such it simply can't be healthy for any of our elders to have reservations about fundamental Christian truths.

Once it's been determined that a candidate is sound in the central Bible doctrines, it is our practice to confirm that the candidate shares our particular doctrinal distinctives; namely, the necessity of believers' baptism for local church membership. These issues, while not saving, are nevertheless important for how we decide to conduct our life together as a church. Such distinctives will obviously vary depending on the convictions of the congregation. The principle, however, is simply that the leaders of a congregation should understand and be conscientious advocates of a local church's distinctive doctrines. The elders need to be agreed on these matters so that their own unity doesn't fracture, and so that they can provide a unified lead for the congregation to follow.

Core Theology • Authority & Sufficiency of Scripture • God's Sovereignty • Divinity & Exclusivity of Christ • The Atonement	**Doctrinal Distinctives** • Believers' Baptism • Congregationalism
Love for the Congregation • Attending Regularly • Discipling Selflessly • Serving Consistently	**Cultural Distinctives** • Gender Roles in the Home & Church • Opposition to Homosexuality

Fig.14.1 – Qualification Quadrants

Third, it is extremely helpful to ensure that the candidate is courageous enough to stand against the culture on certain clear biblical issues, such as the role of women in the church. An elder must model for the congregation both a strength and a willingness to live a counter-cultural lifestyle in areas where Christ and culture conflict. If, as an elder, a man caves in to the conforming pressures of the culture on well-defined biblical issues, his example and teaching will eventually lead the church to look more like the world.

Finally, we need to be able to discern from the candidate's relational involvement in the church that he loves the congregation. We want to be able to recognize his love for the other members of the church by the fact that he's already involved in doing elder-type work, even before he's given the title. So we might reasonably expect a man who is recognized as an elder to be attending regularly, initiating with others to do them spiritual good, and serving the church as faithfully as he can.

CONCLUSION

One of the most significant human dynamics in the church's continuing spiritual growth and health is the kind of leadership it is following. When biblically qualified men are leading a church with character and skill, it is a deep and wide blessing for the unity, holiness, and spiritual growth of the church. Put somewhat negatively, *so many* potential mistakes and heartaches can be avoided simply by ensuring that only those men who are biblically qualified become elders.

1 With the exception of the opening paragraph, this entire article is excerpted from the chapter "Looking For a Few Good Men" in *The Deliberate Church*, by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander (Crossway, 2005).
2 *E.g.*, being a lover of money, being argumentative, not being gentle, not managing his own household well (1Tim 3:1-7).
3 Mark 10:35-45; John 13:1-17.
4 For a full exegetical and practical treatment of gender-based roles in the home and church, see John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Biblical Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1993). For a specific treatment of 1Tim 2:9-15, see Andreas Kostenberger, Thomas Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).
5 This is distinguished from the office of deacon, which is designed for the service of the church through tending to the physical and financial matters of the corporate body.
6 We will think more carefully about the practical necessity of this character in chapter 15, and what it means to be "able to teach" in chapter 16.

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Unbelief in an Elder's Children – Exegesis

By Justin Taylor
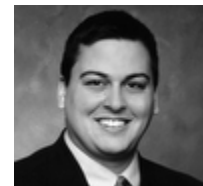
He must manage his own household well,
with all dignity keeping his children submissive,
for if someone does not know how to manage his own household,
how will he care for God's church?
—1 Timothy 3:4-5

. . . appoint elders in every town as I directed you—
. . . above reproach,
the husband of one wife,
and his children are believers
and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.
—Titus 1:6

May a man have children who are unbelievers and yet be appointed or continue as an elder? First Timothy 3:4-5 and Titus 1:6 provoke the question.

There are two primary interpretations. Douglas Wilson summarizes the first view quite succinctly: "if a man's children fall away from the faith (either doctrinally or morally), he is at that point disqualified from formal ministry in the church."[1] Alexander Strauch suggests the second interpretive option: "The contrast is made not between believing and unbelieving children, but between obedient, respectful children and lawless, uncontrolled children." What is at stake, Strauch suggests, is "the children's behavior, not their eternal state."[2]

FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH AND HOME

Paul's basic logic, especially in 1 Timothy 3, is fairly clear. The rhetorical question in the second half of verse 5 ("for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?") logically grounds his insistence on an ordered home in verse 4 ("He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive"). Because "The house of a believer ought to be like a little church,"[3] the result is that "he who cannot obtain from his children any reverence or subjection . . . will hardly be able to restrain the people by the bridle of discipline."[4] This means that how an elder, or potential elder, manages and orders his household are of utmost importance in determining his qualification for office. John Stott carefully summarizes the matter: "The married pastor is called to leadership in two families, his and God's, and the former is to be the training ground of the latter."[5] (Cf. Matthew 25:14-30—he who is faithful over a little will be faithful over much.[6]) The above analysis is rather uncontroversial among exegetes. Disagreements arise, however, when we probe more deeply into the nature of this well-ordered home.

MUST AN ELDER'S CHILDREN BE BELIEVERS?

The most controversial question surrounding these verses is whether Paul is saying that an elder's children have to be believers, or only that they must be faithful, submissive, and obedient.

The term *pistas* can mean either "believing" or "faithful" in the Pastoral Epistles (for the former with a noun, cf. 1 Tim. 6:2; for the latter with a noun, cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). Therefore, word studies alone cannot resolve the question.

However, I want to suggest that resolution to this question can be found in comparing the parallel between Titus 1:6 and 1 Timothy 3:4. We can be reasonably certain that *tekna echonta en hupotagē* ("having children in

control/submission/obedience"; 1 Tim. 3:4) is virtually synonymous with *tekna echôn pista* ("having faithful / believing children"; Titus 1:6).[7] In other words, to have *pista* children means to have children *en hupotagç*. This would mean that the final part of Titus 1:6 ("not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination") is a description of what *pista* means.

With that in mind, here are five further reasons that incline me to believe that Paul is referring to the submission and obedience of an elder's children, and not to their salvation.

First, the grounding question of 1 Timothy 3:5 explicitly connects the elder's qualifications with his managerial skills in verse 4. Generally obedient behavior does not require miraculous intervention; even a good lab technician can make a rat follow a certain path if enough planning and forethought is invested. Salvific faith, however, cannot be produced as a result of good housekeeping. While a godly home is often conducive to belief, it does not produce it. If we insist that a child's salvation is fundamentally connected to the managerial skills of the father, we have inadvertently assigned an unbiblical role to human action. This is clearly the case with an application drawn by Stott: "An extension of the same principle may be that presbyter-bishops can hardly be expected to win strangers to Christ if they have failed to win those who are most exposed to their influence, their own children."[8] What would this mean? If you are a good manager at your home, then unbelievers can be "expected" to come to the Lord through your ministry?

Second, even the best pastoral managers have unbelievers within their church or under their sphere of influence (cf. Gal. 1:6!). The logical consequent of this would mean that one can manage the larger household (his church) well, even though not everyone in it is a believer. If this is so, then it seems that one can manage the smaller household (his family) well, even though not all within it believe.

Third, insisting that having believing children is a prerequisite to eldership leads to some uncomfortable questions. What do we make of an elder who has a number of believing children—but one who is not? If most of his children *are* believers, is he not a good manager of his household? Or, does the one unbelieving child call into question his overall managerial ability? If it does, then why did any of his children turn out to be believers? Wilson writes: ". . . a man might decide (and, I think, should decide) to step down if one of his six children denies the faith. But if another pastor in his presbytery in the same situation does not decide to do so, and his other five children are saintly, only a crank would express his disagreement through a big church fight."[9] Yet this seems inconsistent; for if Paul truly teaches that unbelieving children automatically disqualify a man for eldership, then the purity of the elder board *is* worth fighting over.

Fourth, all of the requirements for eldership that are listed in this passage (being married once, being temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, a good teacher, not a drunkard, not a lover of money, and not a recent convert) are actions of personal responsibility. We would expect the requirement regarding his children to be in the same category. Requiring that his children have genuine saving faith is to require personal responsibility for the salvation of another, something I don't see taught in Scripture.

CONCLUSION

I believe, therefore, that 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are referring to the general submission and behavior of the elder's children. God has so designed the universe that the parental role of disciplinarian, model, authority, and servant-leader generally has a profound effect upon the behavior of the children. Paul does not spell out what this looks like in every case, nor does he spell out all of the specifics of what will disqualify an elder. The general case, however, is clear:

What must not characterize the children of an elder is immorality and undisciplined rebelliousness, if the children are still at home and under his authority.[10] Paul is not asking any more of the elder and his children than is expected of every Christian father and his children. However, only if a man exercises such proper control over his children may he be an elder.[11]

May God give the pastors and elders of our churches grace and wisdom in faithfully leading both their churches and their homes.[11]

See "Unbelief in an Elder's Children—Practice," an interview with 9Marks Executive Director Matt Schmucker (next page!).

1. Douglas Wilson, "The Pastor's Kid" in *Credenda/Agenda*, vol. 2, no. 3.
2. Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, revised & expanded (Littleton, Col.: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1995), 229.
3. John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, translated from Latin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 83 n. 1.
4. Ibid., 293.
5. John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 98.
6. William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WCB (Dallas: Word, 2000), 180.
7. As Andreas Kostenberger writes, "In the larger context of the teaching of the Pastoral Epistles, it would be unusual if the author had two separate standards, a more lenient one in 1 Tim. 3:4 (obedient) and a more stringent one in Titus 1:6 (believing). This creates a presumption of reading *pistos* in Titus 1:6 as conveying the sense "faithful" or "obedient" in keeping with the requirement stated in 1 Tim. 3:4." See http://www.biblicalfoundations.org/?p=36, along with his treatments in *1–2 Timothy, Titus*, in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12 (rev. ed.; Zondervan, 2007), pp. 606-7, and ch. 12 in *God, Marriage, and Family* (Crossway, 2004).
8. Stott, *Guard the Truth*, 176.
9. Douglas Wilson, "The Pastor's Kid, Again" in *Credenda/Agenda*, vol. 2, no. 5.
10. See Knight, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles,* 161, for his argument that Paul is referring to *tekna* ("children") who are under authority and not yet of age.
11. Ibid., 290.
12. I wish to thank Ray Van Neste, Tom Schreiner, and Andreas Kostenberger for offering helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this paper.

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Unbelief in an Elder's Children – Practice

By Matt Schmucker

Following up on Justin Taylor's exegetical discussion of the passages pertinent to the question of unbelief in an elder's children, 9Marks executive director and Capitol Hill Baptist Church elder Matt Schmucker answers some practical questions about putting this exegesis to work in real life.

9M: *Do you agree with Justin Taylor's assessment that the passage in Titus 1 refers to the general submission and behavior of an elder's children, and not the state of their souls before God?*

MS: That is our understanding and practice at Capitol Hill Baptist Church.

9M: *How many children do you have? Are they all "believing"? Have they been baptized?*

MS: I have five children, who range in age from eighteen months to eighteen years. The oldest four children would say that they believe the gospel. The eighteen-year-old has confessed Christ publicly by being baptized and taken into church membership. While we trust that the seed of faith has been planted with the other three, my wife and I believe it's still immature. We're hoping that, as they face the testing of the world, the flesh, and the devil over time, their faith will prove genuine. As parents, we have the responsibility to affirm them as they grow in their faith, and yet help them examine the fruit of their lives.

9M: *So the fact that you can't confidently say that all of your children are believing—including one who is sixteen—doesn't disqualify you from eldership.*

MS: That's our understanding and practice.

9M: *Are your children well-behaved?*

MS: According to these versus in Timothy and Titus, yes. By God's grace!

9M: *Can you envision a scenario in which your child's unbelief would disqualify you?*

MS: Not really. For instance, suppose my sixteen year old son came to me after reading several books and said, "Dad, I've thought about the different arguments, and I don't believe that Christianity is true." As long as he remained submissive and respectful under my authority, so as not to bring shame on the gospel and call into question my shepherding of the household, I believe I could continue to serve in good conscience. To argue otherwise, that his doing this would disqualify me, would require me to conclude that I should be able to effectually guarantee my son's spiritual life.

Now, if his lack of faith began to translate into a lack of respect for my authority, and he became so disruptive in our home, neighborhood, or church that a stench was associated with my name and my leadership—rather than the aroma of Christ—then I should step down from serving.

On the other hand, I can imagine a scenario where my sixteen your old son, still living under my roof, confessed Christ, yet lived in open, unrepentant sin. This might disqualify me outright because it proved my ineptitude as a leader. Or, even if it didn't disqualify me outright, it might suggest that is would be wise for me to step down for a time to give extra attention to my little flock. How much time? I would utterly depend on my fellow elders to determine how long that time should be, whether months or years.

9M: *How does a child's age enter into the question of whether his or her behavior disqualifies a man from eldership?*

MS: Once a child is independent of his parents, I believe that he's outside of his parent's authority as it relates to Paul's remarks in Titus. When a kid is on his own, he's on his own. The father can't be responsible anymore. In our culture, that can occur as early as age 18, when the child is no longer a minor and may move out of the house. Admittedly, the ceding of independence may be gradual. A child may be off in college in another state, while the parent continues to pay many of his or her bills. Here, independence moves into a gray area. Yet the general principle is, the more dependent the child is on the parent, the more the qualification sticks to the elder.

Suppose you have this situation of a child who has moved out, yet remains financially dependent and chooses to live in flagrant opposition to the gospel. The elder may want to consider the solution not of stepping down, but of cutting off the child from financial dependence. I know of one situation where an 18-year-old was out of the house, still financially dependent, but suddenly and flagrantly living in opposition to the gospel. This elder, in agreement with the other elders, determined to withdraw all means of financial support. Doing this allowed the real lines of authority and dependence to be very clear for all parties involved.

So there are several factors involved here: How old is the child? Does he live in the parent's home? Is he generally obedient and respectful of authority? All of these questions matter for the issue of an elder's qualification.

9M: *What steps should an elder take if he's uncertain as to whether or not his child's behavior is disqualifying?*

MS: First, pray to God for a humble heart.

Second, study and meditate over the relevant passages.

Third, seek instruction from your fellow elders.

Fourth, confess and be transparent with them. Don't hold things back, remembering that God sees all anyhow.

Fifth, receive critical evaluation and consider it together with your wife.

Sixth, trust the elders in the church as to whether or not you are qualified.

9M: *Would you qualify your answer to the last question depending on whether we're talking about a staff-elder (a pastor) and a non-staff elder?*

MS: Paul's great concern is with the reputation of the gospel. Therefore, the more publicly associated you are with the proclamation of the gospel, the more care should be given to this particular qualification. Thus, elders and deacons are called out on this matter, whereas the average church member is not.

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Electing Elders

By Burk Parsons

In his classic 1832 work, *The Ruling Elder*, Samuel Miller penned the following: "The design of appointing persons to the office of Ruling Elder is not to pay them a compliment; not to give them an opportunity of figuring as speakers in judicatories; not to create the pageants of ecclesiastical ceremony; but to secure able, faithful and truly devoted counselors and rulers of the Church—to obtain wise and efficient guides, who shall not only go along with the flock in their journey heavenward, but go before them in everything that pertains to Christian duty."[1]

Miller's words are as poignant now as they were in the nineteenth century. We are in a desperate situation wherein the church of Christ has lowered its standards not only in the realms of God-centered worship and biblical exposition, but in the realm of church government as well. As pastors, we have duped ourselves into thinking we have all the right answers and have no need for biblically qualified elders to surround us, encourage us, admonish us, and love us.

Crucial to the gospel ministry of shepherding the sheep of our Chief Shepherd is identifying those from among the flock whom God has gifted to serve as shepherds. Every step of the electing process of elders demands care, and everyone involved in the electing process must be immersed in kingdom-focused prayer. From the beginning of the electing process to the end, the congregation and its elders must consider the weightiness of the matter. Indeed, many Christians are more concerned with following the intricacies of local or national political elections than with electing officers to shepherd the family of God.

The first step of electing elders may be the most critical. In many churches, particularly those within the Presbyterian tradition, potential elders are formally nominated by communicant members of the congregation. According to the book of church order of the Presbyterian Church in America, elders are to be nominated by members of the congregation: "At such times determined by the session, communicant members of the congregation may submit names to the session…."[2] Similarly, the book of church order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church reads, "Such officers, chosen by the people, from among their number…."[3] Each book of order is worded with tremendous care and wisdom, and the general assemblies of each ecclesiastical body have taken great pains over the years to make certain their books of order are in precise accordance with their traditions and, what is more, thoroughly biblical. And while each book of order allows for elders to elect potential elders, each book also seems to recommend that potential elders are to be nominated by those who are not elders in the church.

I have no disagreement over the importance and biblical precedent (i.e. Acts 6:3; 14:23) for the congregation's role in *confirming* elders. Yet it is ultimately the responsibility of the elders to nominate and elect elders. For it is upon the elders of the church that God has placed the authority and responsibility of shepherding his people (Acts 6:1–7; 14:23; 1 Tim. 5:17–22; Heb. 13:17). In *The Deliberate Church*, authors Mark Dever and Paul Alexander write, "It cannot be stressed enough that only the elders should nominate other elders, both because they are the most spiritually mature members of the congregation and because they know the lives of the congregation best."[4] Too often, within churches where men are nominated by the people of the congregation the nomination process becomes a popularity contest of sorts. In those contexts, a man who is nominated is usually sought out by the one nominating him to inform him that he is being nominated for the office. Yet if the elders don't confirm this nomination handed in by the church member, a nominee is, in some cases, left feeling unwanted, or, perhaps, unqualified, when in fact the individual simply may not have been needed at the time. On occasion, the consequences are devastating.

In either situation, if people from the congregation are nominating potential elders, or if the elders are nominating and electing potential elders, it is ultimately incumbent upon the existing elders of the church to discern who will be nominated, examined, and elected for the office. The integrity of the electing process is inextricably dependent on the integrity of the elders. There must necessarily be, therefore, biblically qualified, faithful men who are

nominating, examining, and electing. Apart from such integrity in the eldership, a church will easily apostatize. On this point, Alexander Strauch comments:

So in vitally important matters such as selecting, examining, approving, and installing prospective elders or deacons, the overseers should direct the entire process.…If the elders do not oversee the appointment process, disorder and mismanagement will ensue, and people will be hurt. Moreover, if the elders do not take the initiative, the process will stagnate. The elders have the position, authority, and knowledge to move the whole church into action. They know its needs, and they know its people. So they can, intentionally or not, stifle or encourage the development of new elders.[5]

Similarly, John Owen, in his work on *The True Nature of a Gospel Church*, stipulates:

This is the power and right given unto the church, essentially considered, with respect unto their officers—namely, to design, call, choose, and set apart, the persons, by the ways of Christ's appointment unto those offices whereunto, by his laws, he hath annexed church power and authority. …the wisdom intended is not promised unto all the members of the church in general, nor are they required to seek for it by the ways and means of attaining it before laid down, but respect is had herein only unto the officers of the church.[6]

To the elders of the church, God has given the wisdom and authority necessary to govern the church in accordance with his Word. That does not mean that the elders of the church actually *make* other elders. It is simply the responsibility of elders of the church to *discern* whom God has raised up to serve as an elder (Acts 20:28). In his book *The Elders of the Church*, Lawrence R. Eyres writes, "God makes men elders, and the church's duty is to discern which men God has given to the church for teaching and ruling."[7] Eyers point is a good one and should not be underestimated. The principle found within such teaching is brilliantly profound and provides the church with many practical implications.

Among those implications, first and foremost, the elders must always keep in mind that they are not heads of the church; Christ is the only head of the church. This is not merely a statement of supreme doctrinal import; it is a statement of practical consequence. If Christ is understood to be the living head of the church, who died for the church and prays for the church (John 10:11; 17:17–23; Eph. 5:25), the elders of the church will see themselves as under-shepherds to Christ, serving him as the church's active, living head (Eph. 5:23). As under-shepherds, then, elders possess the great authority and responsibility of electing men to the office of elder whom Christ himself has provided. After all, Christ gives gifts to his people and sets them apart to serve (1 Cor. 12:1–31).

Men who are nominated for the office of elder should be men whom the Lord has already raised up. One may ask, how does the Lord reveal those whom he has raised up? In just this way: The Lord has distributed to his people various gifts to be employed in his church and kingdom (Ps. 68:18; 1 Cor. 12:1–31; Eph. 4:4–16). In distributing gifts, he has given his people the responsibility to employ their gifts for the mutual benefit of the entire body of Christ. Therefore, men whose gifts are manifested in accordance with the Lord's command (Matt. 25:14–30) and who are responsibly employing their gifts should be recognized by the elders of the church and encouraged to continue in love and good works in accordance with their gifts (Heb. 10:24). In so doing, the elders of the church will be able to discern those whom the Lord has raised up to serve in the office of elder. On this point, Strauch asserts, "So before a man is appointed to eldership, he is already proving himself by leading, teaching, and bearing responsibility in the church."[8] To that same end, those men who are "proving" themselves to be elders should be involved, as much as is possible, in the care of the people of God. For in so doing, such men are demonstrating their desire to serve the Lord as an elder, which is a noble thing as the apostle Paul asserts (1 Tim. 3:1).

1 Samuel Miller (1769–1850), *The Ruling Elder* in David W. Hall and Joseph H. Hall, *Paradigms in Polity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 428.
2 Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, Sixth Edition, "On the Election, ordination, and Installation of Ruling Elders and Deacons," Chapter 24, section 1.
3 Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2005 Edition, "Ruling Elders," Chapter 10, section 1.
4 Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 157.
5 Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 278.
6 John Owen, *The True Nature of a Gospel Church,* ed. William H. Goold, in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 16, (first published 1689; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995), 39–41.
7 Lawrence R. Eyres, *The Elders of the Church* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 7.
8 Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 281.

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Should Elders Be Ordained?

By Benjamin Merkle

In most denominations or churches, office-holders are publicly recognized when they are installed into office. The questions before us, then, are how we are to understand the significance of this act, and when should it be performed?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ORDINATION

In order to discuss the significance of publicly recognizing an office-holder, we need to look at the different terms used in the New Testament to describe this process. We read in Acts 14:23 that Paul and Barnabas "appointed elders" in every church in various cities in Asia Minor. The Greek term translated "appointed" is *cheirotonço*, which is a compound word taken from "hand" (*cheir*) and "to stretch" (*teinô*). In classical Greek the word meant "choose" or "elect," originally by raising the hand. In time, however, the "hand" element became a dead metaphor.[1] Thus, in biblical Greek, *cheirotonço* simply means to appoint someone to an office or designate someone for a specific task. The only other occurrence of the verb in the New Testament is found in 2 Corinthians 8:19, where a well-noted brother was "appointed by the churches" to accompany Paul on his journey. It is clear in this instance that *cheirotonço* means to designate or appoint one to a position.[2] Nevertheless, in Patristic Greek it again came to mean "ordain with the laying on of hands." Because of this later usage, some interpreters read this meaning back into New Testament and maintain that Paul and Barnabas ordained men to the office of elder by the laying on of their hands, indicating some special conference of authority or ecclesiastical power. Although the laying on of hands is often associated with the appointing of elders, the author conveys such meaning by using a different term. For example, when Luke wants to speak of the laying on of hands, he uses the verb *epitithçmi* plus the noun "hand" (*cheir*) (Acts 6:6; 8:17, 19; 9:12, 17; 13:3; 19:6; 28:8; also see 1 Tim 5:22). Others claim that the word *cheirotonço* means to vote in the context of Acts 14:23. Although this is a possible meaning of the verb, it is not likely based on the context. Paul and Barnabas appointed, not voted, for the elders of the church.

The other verb used to convey the idea of "appointing" is found in Titus 1:5, where Titus is exhorted by Paul to "appoint [*kathistçmi*] elders in every town." In both classical and biblical Greek *kathistçmi* is used with the meaning of appointing someone to office. For example, Jesus asks someone, "Who *appointed* me a judge or arbitrator over you?" (Luke 12:14, NASB, emphasis added). We also read about how Joseph was shown favor by Pharaoh, "who *appointed* him ruler over Egypt and over all his household" (Acts 7:10, NRSV, emphasis added).

The laying on of hands is often associated with the appointing or commissioning of someone for a specific office or task. The Seven who were chosen to serve the church in order to lighten the responsibilities of the apostles were "set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:6). At the church in Antioch, the Lord chose Barnabas and Paul to perform a special task: "Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:3). In another context, Timothy is exhorted by Paul not to neglect the gift that was given to him "by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands" on him (1 Tim 4:14).[3] It should be noted that here the entire body of elders laid hands and appointed Timothy to service and not only one elder or bishop. Finally, Paul warns Timothy, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands" (1 Tim 5:22). Although Paul does not specify the public installation of someone to the office of elder, the context deals exclusively with elders.[4]

Prayer and fasting is also associated with the selection and appointing of leaders. The apostles followed the example of Jesus who prayed all night before choosing His twelve disciples, the apostles (Luke 6:12–13). After the church selected the Seven we read that the apostles "prayed and laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:6). Similarly, when Barnabas and Paul were appointed as missionaries, the church fasted and prayed and then sent them off (Acts 13:3).

The New Testament never uses the word "ordain" (in the modern, technical sense) in connection with a Christian leader who is installed to an office.[5] Thus, it is often misleading to use the term "ordain" in our modern context if

one has in mind the biblical concept of publicly appointing or installing someone to an office. Today, the word "ordain" carries with it the idea that special grace is transferred through the act of laying on of hands. Unlike the Episcopal tradition which claims that the authority of the office comes from the bishop passed to the appointee by the laying on of the hands, the authority of the office comes from God who calls and gifts men to lead his church (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). The New Testament does not teach that those chosen to lead the church are "ordained" to a sacred, priestly office. It also does not teach that only so-called "ordained" clergymen possess the right to preach, baptize, conduct the Lord's Supper, or pronounce a benediction.

It is the church's duty to recognize those whom God has set apart for this important duty. Grudem comments, "If one is convinced that the local church should select elders, then it would seem appropriate that the church that elected that elder—not an external bishop—should be the group to confer the outward recognition at election by installing the person in office or ordaining the pastor."[6] Strauch warns against understanding the appointment of elders in light of the Old Testament priesthood:

Elders and deacons are not appointed to a special priestly office or holy clerical order. Instead, they are assuming offices of leadership or service among God's people. *We should be careful not to sacralize these positions more than the writers of Scripture do.* The New Testament never shrouds the installation of elders in mystery or sacred ritual. There is no holy rite to perform or special ceremony to observe. Appointment to eldership is not a holy sacrament. Appointment confers no special grace or empowerment, nor does one become a priest, cleric, or holy man at the moment of installation.[7]

THE TIME OF ORDINATION

It is common for people to be given the title "pastor" without having been ordained. But if the above analysis is correct, then to rightfully be a "pastor" (or deacon) is to be "ordained" in the sense of being publicly installed into that office. The idea of separating the title from the public act of commissioning is not found in the Bible. Elders are not appointed to an office after they become elders. But by becoming elders, they are appointed to office.

Thus, to be appointed to the office of elder implies that a man has met the biblical qualifications, has been called by God, has been approved by the congregation, and consequently has been publicly recognized as one who holds that office. It does not necessarily imply that he works full-time for the church or has been to seminary. Rather, it means that God has called and gifted a person to humbly lead the church. It is also without biblical precedent to call some church leaders "pastors" before ordination and then "reverend" or "minister" after ordination.

SUMMARY

Elders should be "ordained" if by ordination we simply mean the public recognition of someone to a particular office and ministry. Perhaps a more appropriate, and biblical, term is "appointment" or "commission." The appointment to a ministry was often accompanied by prayer and fasting and the laying on of hands. These public acts draw attention to the seriousness and importance of the appointment. In addition, elders should be appointed as soon as they take their office.

1 It is therefore unlikely that the verb means "having appointed by popular vote." See J. M. Ross, "The Appointment of Presbyters in Acts xiv. 23," *Expository Times* 63 (1951): 288–89; Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 137–39.
2 For a similar use, see Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.14.78.
3 Later, Paul indicates that the gift was given to Timothy through the laying on of his hands which probably indicates that Paul was apart of the council of elders mentioned in 1 Tim 4:14.
4 The laying on of hands is also found in the connection of those receiving the Spirit (Acts 8:17, 19; 19:6) and those receiving healing (Acts 9:12, 17, 28:8).
5 Banks, for example, writes, "Ordination, as we know it, does not appear in the Pauline letters" (R. Banks, "Church Order and Government," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993], 135).
6 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 925.
7 Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 285.

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Elder Vows Sample

When Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington DC installs a new elder, the following vows will be recited during the Sunday morning service between an elder, the elder(s) being confirmed, and the congregation. These vows will also be printed in the church bulletin in their entirety.

[To the elder(s) being confirmed]

1. Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior?

I do.

2. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

I do.

3. Do you sincerely believe the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church contain the truth taught in the Holy Scripture?

I do.

4. Do you promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with any of the statements in the Statement of Faith and Covenant you will on your own initiative make known to the pastor and other elders the change which has taken place in your views since your assumption of this vow?

I do.

5. Do you subscribe to the government and discipline of Capitol Hill Baptist Church?

I do.

6. Do you promise to submit to your fellow elders in the Lord?

I do, with God's help.

7. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to accept the office of elder from love of God and sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?

I have.

8. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise to you on that account?

I do, with God's help.

9. Will you be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as elder, whether personal or relative, private or public, and will you endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before this congregation?

I will, by the grace of God.

10. Are you now willing to take personal responsibility in the life of this congrgation as an elder to oversee the ministry and resources of the church, and to devote yourself to prayer, the ministry of the Word and the shepherding of God's flock, relying upon the grace of God, in such a way that Capitol Hill Baptist Church, and the entire Church of Jesus Christ will be blessed?

I am, with the help of God.

[To the congregation]

Will the members of the church please stand?

1. Do you, the members of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, acknowledge and publicly receive these men as elders, as gifts of Christ to this church?

We do.

2. Will you love them and pray for them in their ministry, and work together with them humbly and cheerfully, that by the grace of God you may accomplish the mission of the church, giving them all due honor and support in their leadership to which the Lord has called them, to the glory and honor of God?
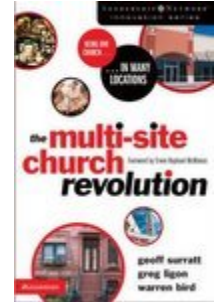
We will.

[Close in prayer]

The Multi-Site Church Revolution
By Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird

Reviewed by John Hammett

Zondervan, 2006, 224 pages, $16.99

The Multi-Site Church Revolution is the second book in the Leadership Network Innovation Series, which seeks to energize, equip, and inspire Christian leaders. These books are designed for practitioners, offering "*real* stories, about *real* leaders, in *real* churches, doing *real* ministry" (224) and utilizing innovative and transferable principles. The three authors of this book have all been involved in multi-site church ministry and in the Leadership Network.

BOOK SUMMARY

The book begins with a foreword and preface, includes fifteen chapters divided into four parts, and concludes with three appendices, endnotes, and subject and Scripture indices.

According to the preface, the movement toward multi-site churches is a revolution already taking hold. The authors cite one study that claims one in three churches is considering developing a new service in a new location. And they foresee the day when, like chain hotels and chain restaurants, "multi-site extensions of trusted-name churches" will be the norm (10).

Part 1 introduces the multi-site movement. Chapter 1 defines a multi-site church as "one church meeting in multiple locations," sharing "a common vision, budget, leadership, and board" (18). A number of growing multi-site churches are profiled, and the five most prominent models within this diverse movement are described: video-venture, regional-campus, teaching-team, partnership, and low-risk. In practice, the authors note that most multi-site churches are a blend of these models.

Part 2 is the longest section of the book, addressing the "how to" question. It begins with the question, "would it work for you?" The authors list numerous advantages they see in going multi-site as opposed to planting new "stand-alone" churches. They give churches "A Self-Diagnostic Tool" (57) at the end of the chapter to assess their readiness. Chapter 4 looks at the motivations for developing multiple venues. The two most common seem to be overcrowding of a growing church's facility and a desire to reach out into new areas. Further chapters discuss how to discern opportunities, and promote and finance a second location. Each of the six chapters in this part includes practical exercises—called "Workouts"—designed to help churches with the nuts and bolts of developing a multi-site church.

Part 3 continues in the same practical vein, highlighting elements crucial in the success of a multi-site church. Becoming a multi-site church, rather than merely planting a new church, requires identifying and transferring the original church's "DNA" to additional locations. Multi-site churches also raise difficult questions of structure and leadership, which are considered in chapters ten and eleven. The final chapter in part three deals with technology, an important element for multi-site churches because a major feature of many multi-site churches is the use of videocast preaching. One-third of multi-site churches use videocast preaching exclusively, and another third use a combination of videocast and in-person preaching.

The last two chapters comprise Part 4, which looks at some of the key barriers to adding locations, and seeks to inspire churches to "be part of turning the tide in a battle being lost by current approaches to doing church" (195). Appendices direct the readers to internet links for more practical tools and list some multi-site churches, both internationally and in North America.

EVALUATION

The authors present a passionate case for multi-site churches. They clearly believe this model is the wave of the future, and see its evangelistic fruitfulness as evidence of the blessing of God upon it. They present dozens of positive examples, and believe most churches should join this revolution. For growing churches facing limitations of space, becoming multi-site seems preferable to building ever bigger buildings and becoming ever bigger megachurches. Multi-site churches have been effective in extending ministry into previously unchurched or underchurched areas.

But this model raises numerous theological and ecclesiological questions that are not acknowledged or are treated superficially. Perhaps this is due to the fact that its intended audience is practitioners rather than theologians, but practitioners should also be theologians.

Biblical Basis?

For example, is there a biblical basis for the idea of a multi-site church? If so, it is not developed very thoroughly in this book. The Scripture index contains only twenty-three references to biblical texts in the book, and in a number of places, the references that are used are very much out of place. For example, is it really accurate to say that when Moses put leaders over the people of Israel (Ex. 18:21-23), he "created the first multi-site church" (143)? Attention to Scripture is minimal throughout. For example, how can the authors devote an entire chapter to leadership and never consider what Scripture says about the qualifications for leaders in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5?

Another example of an unrecognized issue occurs on page 28, which gives definitions for six key multi-site terms, but the critical term "church" is not one of them. If "church" by definition involves a local body of believers who gather, then a multi-site church is an impossibility. The authors assert that "Corinth and other first-century churches were multi-site, as a number of multi-site house churches were considered to be part of one citywide church" (17). But that goes beyond what the evidence actually shows. Paul does use the singular "church" to refer to the church in a city, but whether there were multiple house churches in those cities or not, we do not know. There may have been both small group and large group meetings of a body of believers that considered themselves one church and occasionally gathered as one, but multi-site churches do not have any large group meeting where all the multiple sites of the one church gather. Moreover, when Paul spoke of the churches in an area, he consistently used the plural (the churches of Asia, Macedonia, Galatia, Judea). The multi-site model sees one church extending over a region and even internationally. Finally, the seven churches in Revelation 2 to 3 are relatively near one another geographically, yet they are not regarded as multiple sites of one church but as distinct local churches.

Pastoral Care?

Another question regards those who use videocast preaching. The authors emphasize the importance of each location having a "campus pastor," who offers pastoral care but does not preach and teach his people. But can pastoral care and preaching be so easily separated? Can the elders of a church routinely give over the feeding of the flock to someone who has no relationship to them? One of the tasks most clearly associated with the office of pastor in the New Testament is that of teaching the flock. This separation of pastoral care and preaching is a serious question raised by the growing use of videocasts that needs more careful consideration.

Episcopalian?

A final question lies in the area of polity. One of the marks of a multi-site church is sharing a common leadership and board. At one point, the authors give an organizational chart of what a multi-site church would look like under such leadership (137). The lead pastor in this model closely resembles the bishop of episcopal polity. That is fine, if one happens to follow that polity. But those of presbyterian and congregational polities should be aware of the implicit polity in multi-site churches.

BOTTOM LINE: WHY NOT PLANT INDEPENDENT CHURCHES?

One question considered but never answered to my satisfaction is why developing multiple sites of the "same" church is preferable to planting new independent churches. The authors list what they see as eight advantages of developing multi-site churches over planting new churches (see 51: Accountability; Sharing of resources; Infusion of trained workers; Shared DNA; Greater prayer support; Preestablished network for problem solving; Not needing to 'reinvent the wheel'; Connection with others doing the same thing). But all these supposed advantages could and should happen in any healthy new church plant. In fact, the authors acknowledge that multi-site can also be an effective church planting model, with the multiple sites eventually becoming "stand-alone churches" (53). Using this model for church planting or seeing multi-site churches as networks of churches would resolve a number of the questions raised above, and would be, in this reviewer's opinion, a better use of the model.

This book is not designed to answer these questions, and so it is somewhat unfair to criticize it for not answering them. As I said, it is addressed to practitioners, especially pastors of growing churches who face space problems. However, if multi-site is to become the norm for churches of the future, the questions raised above need serious discussion. For any evangelical, the biblical basis of an idea is paramount. The authors claim that "Corinth and other first-century churches were multi-site" (17). But a one paragraph discussion is not a sufficient justification for a movement they call "revolutionary." The leaders of this movement need to show more clearly that a multi-site church fits within the biblical meaning of *ekklesia* before recommending it as fervently as they do. A respect for history should cause them to ponder why earlier theologians never saw this model in the pages of the New Testament. Before adopting a pragmatic solution in response to the need for additional seating, considering the theological implications of the solution is imperative. This book *should be* building upon a previous work making the theological, exegetical, and ecclesiological case for multi-site churches. But that work has not yet been written. I am not sure that a convincing case can be made; perhaps it can. But before urging multitudes of churches to join the movement, the implications of the multi-site model need to be considered.

Perhaps multi-site churches are a preferable option to building bigger buildings for bigger megachurches. But why adopt what is as of now biblically questionable when the better option of planting new churches is clearly biblical? Much of what this book contains can be easily transferred to a strong and supportive church planting model, which would accomplish many of the same goals as the multi-site church while relieving many of the troubling ecclesiological questions.

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This Little Church... Went to Market & Stayed Home
By Gary Gilley

Reviewed by Flynn Cratty

***This Little Church Went to Market* by Gary Gilley**
Evangelical Press, 2005, 142 pages, $13.99

***This Little Church Stayed Home* by Gary Gilley**
Evangelical Press, 2006, 190 pages, $14.99

Gary Gilley is the pastor of an independent Bible church in Springfield, Illinois, but writes in the tradition of the European Reformation. I don't just mean the Reformation's theological tradition; I mean the Reformation's *polemical* tradition. While modern writers can be polite to a fault, men like Martin Luther and William Tyndale were less civil. Luther was not afraid to call the pope an antichrist or a devil. Gilley's language is not that acerbic, but his criticisms are severe, and he's not afraid to identify erring teachers by name. His two books—*This Little Church Went to Market* and *This Little Church Stayed Home*—provide a response to the growing influence of worldly philosophies and methodologies in the evangelical church.

Both *Went to Market* and *Stayed Home* are slim books, but they cover a great deal of ground. Gilley takes on entertainment, market-driven approaches to church life, the influence of psychology in the church, preaching, singing, and Rick Warren. And that's just the first book.

In the second, he takes on postmodernism, mysticism, the Emerging Church, George Barna, and Rick Warren again. Suffice it to say, he does not address any one subject exhaustively. Indeed, much of what Gilley says is not original to him—he draws heavily on thinkers like Neil Postman, David Wells, John MacArthur, and D. A. Carson. Gilley's cultural analysis is occasionally overbroad, but he is right when he pleads for churches to pay more attention to Scripture than to telephone surveys and cultural fads.
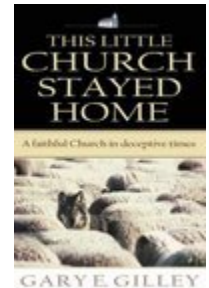
The bulk of *Went to Market* is devoted to a critique of the seeker-driven or "new-paradigm" church. Gilley argues that "The new-paradigm church is offering a purely commercialized, yuppie brand of Christianity found nowhere in the New Testament" (*Market,* 72). This is strong language. But Gilley makes a convincing argument that many avowedly Bible-believing churches operate according to a therapeutic mindset that owes more to Freud than the Apostle Paul. The novel, seeker-sensitive evangelistic method of the seeker-driven church has led to a novel, seeker-sensitive gospel. Gilley writes,

The new gospel is liberation from low self-esteem, a freedom from emptiness and loneliness, a means of fulfillment and excitement, a way to receive our heart's desires, a means of meeting our needs (*Market,* 74).

These benefits *may*, in varying degrees, *result* from the gospel, but none of them are the gospel. To treat them *as* the gospel is to undermine the gospel and simply pander to the desires of unregenerate sinners. We should all examine ourselves to see whether we are like the Corinthians, putting up with a different gospel "readily enough" (2 Cor. 11:4).

This seeker-sensitive gospel differs from the true gospel in its weak and worldly view of sin. As Gilley writes, "It is clear, when one studies Scripture rather than marketing surveys that the seeker-sensitive gospel message is flawed at its roots—it has a faulty anthropology" (*Market,* 69). Indeed, an evangelistic strategy devoted to meeting the felt needs of seekers is doomed from the start. The Scriptures teach that "no one seeks for God" (Rom. 3:11). The target audience of seeker-sensitive churches simply doesn't exist. As much as carnal men desire purpose and self-esteem, they do not desire to know God or serve him. Indeed, Paul calls those who do not know God "haters of God" (Rom. 1:30). Evangelism is the task of offering to unbelievers precisely what they, in their flesh, least want.

Gilley singles out numerous authors and church leaders for criticism, including Richard Foster, Bill Hybels, and George Barna. However, I suspect that readers of Gilley's books will be most uncomfortable with his criticism of Rick Warren. Gilley writes, "Warren … is not totally off base, and I would not want to portray him as such. Without question he is as evangelical as many evangelicals" (*Home,* 91). Yet from Gilley's standpoint, this is damning Warren with faint praise. The larger part of Gilley's two books are spent showing how "many evangelicals" have drifted into theological confusion. Gilley argues,

Warren is doing a great disservice to the church of God. As he minimizes the content of the gospel, trivializes Scripture, belittles doctrine and replaces them with psychology, mysticism and worldly wisdom, we are reminded of Paul's warning in Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (*Market,* 111).

This may be overstating the case. Unlike some of the other teachers that Gilley discusses, Warren is firmly in the evangelical camp. And Gilley could have been more charitable to Warren.

Yet many of his criticisms stick. Gilley devotes an entire chapter in *Stayed Home* to evaluating *The Purpose-Driven Life* [see the 9Marks review by clicking here]. He acknowledges that Warren says many good things, but he highlights how Warren misuses Scripture again and again, whether by taking verses out of context or by using dubious translations to get to a desired conclusion (*Home,* 88-100). This troubles Gilley, and it should trouble us.

Not all of the teachers Gilley criticizes are as orthodox as Warren. For instance, his portrait of the emerging church in *Stayed Home* raises serious questions about the emerging movement's commitment to the historic Christian faith. Many "emerging" churches, of course, do no more than add incense to otherwise conservative doctrine and practice. However, some of the more prominent thinkers in the movement—or "conversation"—seem to have embraced philosophies that are simply antichristian. The most damning paragraphs in Gilley's books are his quotes of emerging church thinkers. For instance: Rob Bell is presented as arguing that its time for Christians to reconsider what it means to be a Christian, which Bell then clarifies by saying, "By this I do not mean cosmetic, superficial changes like better lights and music, sharper graphics, and new methods with easy-to-follow steps. I mean theology: the beliefs about God, Jesus, the Bible, salvation, the future. We must keep reforming the way the Christian faith is defined, lived and explained" (quoted in *Home,* 152-3). Or take Brian McLaren, cryptically stating that "Universalism is not as bankrupt of biblical support as some suggest" (quoted in *Home,* 157). Like many statements coming out of the emerging church camp, these are simultaneously vague and ominous. However, the trajectory seems clear. Gilley is right that "the emerging church is the new liberalism" (*Home,* 106).

Gilley's second book—*This Little Church Stayed Home*—was originally designed to be a more positive follow-up to *This Little Church Went to Market.* In the preface, he writes, "I want to discuss what a church should be – what it should hold dear and emphasize, what its distinctive should be." Although much of the second book critiques false teaching, he does include some positive teaching on biblical ecclesiology.

Particularly noteworthy is his plea for the renewal of church discipline (Chapter 7). He notes that "church discipline is antithetical to the seeker-sensitive movement since a goal of church discipline is purity, which is not an attractive feature to most unbelievers and even many Christians" (*Home,* 62). Gilley rightly recognizes that purity is a scriptural imperative, an imperative that many churches have ignored in the name of evangelism. However, no church can have a corporate witness without purity, and no church can maintain purity without discipline.

Most readers will probably want to quibble with some of the details of Gilley's cultural analysis. Similarly, some readers will likely feel that some of his criticisms—in particular, those of Warren—were less charitable than they could have been.

Yet Gilley does get the big picture right. Many evangelicals appear to be chasing hollow and deceptive philosophies, practically begging to be taken captive. Some of the teachers that Gilley discusses have clearly jettisoned the idea of biblical authority altogether. Gratefully, most evangelicals do continue to believe in biblical inerrancy and authority. Yet what they don't believe in is the *sufficiency* of Scripture. Gilley writes, "the vast majority of evangelicals and fundamentalists believe the Scriptures are either inadequate or incomplete in communicating what the Christian needs to know when navigating the important issues of life" (*Market,* 88).

That's why believing in inerrancy is not enough, Gilley argues. We must believe that the Bible is powerful and sufficient, as well as true.

In the end, this emphasis on the Bible as the norm for life and doctrine is the most helpful thing in these two books. Gilley constantly tests the claims of those in the church growth and emerging church movements against those of Scripture. Churches would be healthier if more pastors and church members did they same.

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