

IX

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9Marks Journal

Biblical Thinking for Building Healthy Churches



Lay Elders

Part
2

A User's Guide

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Jonathan Leeman

Editor's Note

We return again to the topic of lay elders in this issue of the Journal. (Check out the last one [here](#).) This time we take up the matter of elder relationships themselves. A lot of guys become elders and are surprised to find the relationships with the other brothers require care, even forgiveness.

“What? I thought they were all supposed to be godly?”

Well, hopefully, they are. But still...

You don't become a “band of brothers” just by showing up. You need to face battle together, as well as work through all the disagreements and sins that arise along the way. My friend Matt Schmucker often observes that more apologizing happens during our elder meeting bathroom breaks than at any other time he knows. It is a consecrated commode.

An elder's first priority is the sheep, but shepherds who don't know how to love one another compromise their ability to serve the sheep.

To get us started, Bob Johnson explains how he, as the senior pastor, tries to build unity and love among the elders. Michael Lawrence, Greg Gilbert, and Walter Price all address the tricky issue of the lay elder/staff elder dynamic.

Then Eric Bancroft, Matt Schmucker, Nick Roark, and I turn to the elder meeting itself. How can we build unity and peace amidst the challenging dynamics of group decision-making? Finally, Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright take us in a slightly different direction by considering the possibility of bi-vocational elders planting churches.



By Bob Johnson

Building Unity and Friendship Among Elders

Developing unity and friendship among your elders is critical for the health of your church. The way that the leaders of your church relate to one another will eventually be reflected in how the congregation relates to each other. Disharmony at the top will create serious division in the body. Harmony at the top creates safety and security for the flock.

Can you develop a team of elders who like each other and truly get along? Is it even possible? Yes!

For years I have been greatly served by a team of men who enjoy the bond that has developed among fellow-shepherds of the flock. The times of mutual joy as well as challenge have forged cherished friendships. When the men rotate off after their term is up, many express the desire to come back on. That is extremely gratifying.

So how do you do it? I want to first acknowledge some challenges and then lay out some ideas.

CHALLENGES TO UNITY AND FRIENDSHIP AMONG THE ELDERS

What are some challenges to unity and friendship among the elders?

Assuming that your elders are theologically and philosophically in sync, there are some practical obstacles that can arise. For example, if you have some elders who are on the paid pastoral staff of the church and some who are not, those who see each other throughout the week will have a level of camaraderie that can make the others feel like outsiders. This will be nearly impossible to overcome if staff elders consistently discuss issues and agree upon a position or course of action before the rest even join the conversation. I cannot state in strong enough terms how deflating it can be for lay elders when you are made to feel that a direction has already been established before you had the chance to weigh in.

“But the greatest challenge to elder unity and friendship is our tendency to use a leadership position as a means to be served instead of to serve.”

Also, new elders are naturally going to feel like outsiders and will not understand inside jokes or other such matters. Further, elders who are of a different age than the senior pastor will often have a tendency to feel like they do not quite fit. And if in the name of efficiency and organization you have a small group of the elders who function as the administration team, the rest of the elders can quickly realize that the few will establish a consensus, and leave them to provide the rubber stamp.

But the greatest challenge to elder unity and friendship is our tendency to use a leadership position as a means to be served instead of to serve. Therefore, the following steps will not be helpful unless you are consistently cultivating a culture of gospel-driven humility and servant leadership.

One year I purchased chef aprons for all the elders and had their names embossed on them. I gave them out publicly to remind them and the congregation that we are here to serve. It is both necessary and helpful to regularly read passages such as John 13, Acts 20, Philippians 2, 1 Thessalonians 2, and 1 Peter 5 as a group.

WAYS TO BUILD UNITY AND FRIENDSHIP AMONG THE ELDERS

With all that in mind here are some specific suggestions for cultivating unity and friendship among the elders:

1. Every year the elders publicly sign our doctrinal statement and church covenant. This gives us the opportunity to stand before the congregation and affirm our commitment to watch our lives and doctrine. It also affords me the opportunity to remind all of us of the challenge to be servant leaders.
2. We have an elder retreat every year. This time away is invaluable for our guys to get to know each other, pray together, play games, and have fellowship. We also have some strategic sessions on church health assessment, long term planning, and short-term goals. But the most beneficial part of the retreat by far is the team building that comes from the concentrated time that we spend together.
3. We have two meetings per month. The first focuses on our oversight of the flock, and the second focuses on our oversight of each other. In this second meeting we study pertinent topics, discuss personal and family matters, pray for one another, confess sin and discouragement, and rejoice in each other's blessings. The transparency of these meetings has led to deeper friendships and trust among the guys. I believe this more than anything else is why the elders present such a picture of unity to the congregation.
4. All prayer requests that are communicated to the church office throughout the day are emailed to the elders. Sometimes there are 5-10 emails a day, but this way everyone knows the needs of the flock, not just a select few.
5. From time to time we gather at someone's home just for dessert or for an evening without an agenda.
6. When I am overwhelmed, I reach out to all of the elders and ask for prayer. This confession of weakness not only gives them permission to do the same, but gets them to pray for me, and in turn for each other.
7. We rarely if ever move forward with a decision if there is even one dissenting vote. It is not that we have a policy that every decision has to be unanimous, but we really care about each guy, and take his hesitancy seriously. This happened a few months ago, and honestly, I was hoping that we would just move on for the sake of time. But another elder expressed concern for the brother who was not on board with the decision. His care resulted in the brother being encouraged to express even more of his thoughts rather than feeling sheepish about being the lone dissenter.
8. What is discussed in the meetings stays among the elders only.

Here are a couple of additional ideas from Don Magee, pastor of Lakes Baptist Church in Walled Lake, Michigan. They are so good I think I will be implementing them.

1. During the year we schedule a Friday night dinner with our wives and conduct a Q&A about anything the ladies feel out of the loop on. We follow that with a time of prayer for personal needs in our families and then enjoy some games together.
2. At Christmas we host the elders and their families in our home. My wife has gifts for all of the kids.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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By Michael Lawrence

When to Intrude, When to Defer

Serving as a lay elder is an The relationships between staff (paid) elders and lay (unpaid) elders can create their fair share of dilemmas. When should lay elders defer to staff elders? When should they intrude and call a staff elder's decision or practice into question?

Consider these three scenarios:

1. The chairman of the elders, whose works full-time in a downtown law office, is concerned about the direction of the children's ministry. Since he is responsible to set the agenda for the elders' meetings, he asks the director of children's ministry, a female staff member, to submit a report on recent changes to the curriculum. When informed, the associate pastor for family ministry, the staff elder ultimately responsible for curriculum, countermands the Chairman's request.
2. A relatively young church plant has three elders: the founding church planter, an older lay elder, and a younger lay elder who hopes to go into vocational ministry some day. They agree to operate by consensus, but increasingly the pastor feels undermined by the young elder's desire to review his day-to-day decisions at each elders' meeting. When confronted, the young elder reminds him that all three of them are pastors of the church.
3. A pastor's ministry gains prominence, and invitations to speak at conferences multiply. He always consults his wife and staff before accepting an invitation, but the elders are generally informed after the commitment is made. They are encouraged by their pastor's ministry, but some are concerned that he's away from the church too much. At the next elders' meeting, a lay elder asks how often the pastor intends to be away. The pastor answers but leaves feeling attacked.

What do these scenarios have in common? In each case, the relationship between lay and staff elders has become a point of friction and conflict. A staff elder feels that lines of authority and responsibility have been illegitimately crossed by a lay elder. A lay elder feels that legitimate ownership of the ministry is being denied, or limited, by a staff elder. In each case there is no clear agreement about where the lines of authority should be drawn, or what the distinction between staff and lay elder is, beyond getting a paycheck from the church.

When my associate pastor found out that 9Marks asked me to write this article, he mocked me: "There's a hot topic with a wide readership!"

He may be right—perhaps only a few would be interested in this topic. But in the three weeks that followed, I had no less than three different pastors from three different churches approach me about this issue.

My aim in this piece is to offer wisdom for sorting out what can be one of the most fruitful but also frustrating relationships in the church: the relationship between the elders in the employ of the church, and the elders who sacrificially volunteer their time.

Together they make a powerful and fruitful team for ministry. Staff elders benefit much from the perspective and wisdom lay elders bring to the table. Lay elders benefit from the hands-on management and detailed expertise staff elders exercise. So it shouldn't surprise us that the Enemy would seek to sow seeds of distrust and discord here. If he can hobble the work of the elders through internal division, he's gone a long way toward rendering an entire local church ineffective for the gospel.

SPIRITUAL OVERSEERS VS. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

One cause of the friction that develops between staff and lay elders is that we sometimes unconsciously adopt the corporate boardroom model. In that model, the board of directors, under the leadership of the chairman of the board, sets the overall vision of the corporation. But the board also receives reports from the executive officers of the company. While the officers may sit on the board, it is the board that ultimately holds the officers responsible for their actions. There is a clear chain of accountability: The CEO and his fellow officers answer to the board. The board answers to the shareholders.

Translated to the church, the lead or senior pastor and his staff constitute the executive officers, while the elders constitute the board of directors. The staff elders may sit on the board, but in the end it's understood that they answer to the board and it's the board's job to ask them tough questions, oversee their management, and hold them accountable.

That's what's going on in the three examples above. Lay elders are acting like board members whose responsibility is to exercise oversight, to ask tough questions, and to make sure "management" is on the right track. In some cases, the intrusion is unwanted or heavy-handed. In one case, inattention has led to resentment when elders try to engage.

The business world is awash in studies on managing the relationship between the CEO and the board of directors. If a board is overly intrusive, they undermine the CEO's ability to lead the organization. If they're inattentive, the CEO is denied wisdom and needed oversight. It's a delicate balance. And it's the wrong model for the church.

When the lay elders treat the staff elders as officers to be held accountable, or vice versa, and when staff elders treat the lay elders like a board to be managed and (often) avoided, an unbiblical distinction is introduced into the church. Rather than functioning as spiritual overseers of the church, a ministry team devoted to the Word and to prayer (Acts 6:4), one group of elders functions like the managers or governors of another group of elders.

“ Given that the secular world struggles with the dynamics of overly-intrusive and under-engaged boards, we should hardly be surprised that those struggles are imported into the church when we adopt their model. We need a better one. ”

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TWO HATS ON ONE MAN: THE BIBLICAL OFFICE AND THE PRUDENTIAL JOB

In the New Testament there are numerous descriptions and instructions for the office of elder. But so far I haven't found any clear description or instructions for church staff, or their relationship to the elders and deacons. The decision to hire staff, whether a single pastor or a team of ministry and administrative personnel, is finally prudential. And yet for most people the church staff are the ones whom they have most contact with and who make the biggest impact on their daily and weekly experience of the church.

To be clear, by staff I mean people who are being paid full- or part-time to facilitate the day-to-day operations of a local church. Some of those staff might be elders. Some might be deacons. Many will be neither. But regardless of what other biblical offices they hold, what makes the staff "the staff" is the paycheck they receive in order to manage the normal operation of the church.

The existence of church staff is not entirely without biblical warrant. The closest we get are the statements by Jesus in Matthew 10:10 that those engaged in the work of ministry are worthy of their keep, and by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:4-12 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18 that ministry workers are like oxen, whom the laws says should not be muzzled while they tread the grain. In other words, people in ministry have a right to earn their living from the ministry. While these verses don't get us all the way to a multi-staff team, they do clearly teach that at least some people in a local church should expect to be paid for their work of gospel ministry.

First Timothy 5:17 is especially helpful because it observes that the elders whose primary work is preaching and teaching are "worthy of double honor," that is, to be paid. Apparently Paul understood that some, though not necessarily all, elders would be employed by the local church. Which elders should be paid? At least those whose work is preaching and teaching.

But the point I want to emphasize is that being an elder doesn't make you staff, and being staff doesn't make you an elder. They are two different things that in some cases overlap. One man, two hats.

Recognizing this simple distinction has huge implications for the way in which staff elders and non-staff elders interact. All the elders need to be aware of which responsibilities go with which hat, as well as which hat a guy is wearing when we talk to him about his work. Are we dealing with someone in his capacity as a "fellow elder," or are we dealing with someone in his capacity as a "paid deacon," whose work enables the elders to give themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer?

FELLOW ELDERS

In 1 Peter 5:1-4, the apostle Peter writes,

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder...Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of glory that will never fade away.

The elders of the scattered churches in Asia Minor needed oversight, direction, and correction. Peter gives it to them in the form of a command, as we would expect an apostle to do. Be shepherds. But notice how the command is delivered. Peter addresses the elders as a fellow elder. That's instructive for us, as we engage our fellow elders. We have not been

given authority over our fellow elders. Rather, we've been given authority with our fellow elders (v. 2). And that authority is to shepherd God's flock (vv. 2, 3).

In order to exercise our authority faithfully, there will be times when we need to come alongside each other, to remind, encourage, and maybe even instruct each other about what it means to be an elder. But there is nothing in Peter's example that suggests we do this as overseers of the overseer. We do this as fellow elders, appealing to our common stewardship and the apostolic message, in the knowledge that there is a Chief Shepherd to whom we will each give an account for our pastoral ministry.

PAID DEACONS

In Acts 6, faced with a crisis of unity due to an operational and administrative challenge, the apostles state,

It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. (vv. 2-4)

This is the classic text for the institution of the office of deacons. But when we consider it, it's a fairly good description of what we expect from a church's staff. We don't want the elders consumed with questions of payroll administration, building maintenance, and weekly mailings. And so when a matter becomes so time consuming that a volunteer deacon can no longer manage it, we hire a "full-time deacon," a staff member, to manage the administrative operations.

That seems clear enough when it comes to thinking about a church administrator, secretary, or children's ministry director. But is it appropriate to think of staff elders, in their capacity as staff, as full-time paid deacons? I think it is.

First, Paul repeatedly refers to himself and other elders as ministers, literally deacons, of the word and of Christ (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:5, 2 Cor. 3:6, Eph 3:7, Col. 1:7, 23, 1 Tim. 4:6). Not that they're holding the office of deacon, but that their work can be rightly described as diaconal.

Second, consider why we generally hire staff elders. True, they must preach and teach. But it is a rare pastor who is hired to do nothing but preach and teach. Generally, we hire pastors to oversee the day-to-day affairs of the church, manage other staff, execute the vision of the elders, and provide leadership to the spheres of ministry they have been entrusted with. In that sense, much of their work is administrative and organizational. Since it involves managing the teaching and discipling ministry of the church, it is necessary for them to be elders. But the nature of the work itself is diaconal.

So how should elders engage the staff, including the staff elders in their capacity as staff? Once again, I think the apostles' example is instructive. The apostles saw a need and instructed the congregation to set aside men to meet that need. They made clear what qualifications were required and the general direction their ministry should take. All the widows needed to be provided for in such a way that unity was preserved and the ministry of the gospel would go forth. But they didn't tell the deacons how to do the job. That would defeat the purpose of having deacons in the first place, which was to preserve the apostles' focus on their ministry of Word and prayer.

As elders, part of our responsibility is to recognize when deacons, including full-time paid deacons (i.e., staff), need to be put in place in order to facilitate the gospel ministry of our church. We need to make clear to the deacon/staff member the direction and goal of their ministry, and we need to be clear on the qualifications necessary to hold the position. But then we need to resist the temptation to tell the deacon/staff member how to do their job, or even worse, do the job for them.

WHEN TO DEFER, WHEN TO INTRUDE

When it comes down to it, the question of when a non-staff elder should defer to a staff elder and when he should intrude largely depends on which hat the staff elder is wearing. Is the matter fundamentally related to his work as an elder? In that case, as fellow elders, we should love one another enough to be willing to appeal to one another, to exhort and encourage one another, and even sometimes to offer counsel and correction.

For example, if as a lay elder I observe a staff elder neglecting the sheep, I need to come alongside and exhort and encourage him. Not as his boss, but as a fellow elder.

Or think of the example above concerning the pastor whose outside speaking schedule was impacting his pulpit ministry. In such a scenario there is the potential for sheep to be neglected. Yet it would be a mistake for a lay elder to approach the pastor as a staff member who is not working hard enough for the church. That's your managerial board approach. Approaching him instead as a fellow-elder may produce better results.

At the same time, a senior pastor contributes to the problem by leaving elders out of the discussion in the first place. The issue of outside invitations is not merely a scheduling matter, handled by the staff. It's a matter of feeding the flock. So the senior pastor should take the initiative by inviting his fellow elders into the decision-making process, or at least giving them a regular opportunity to talk about the impact of his outside schedule on the church.

When elders relate to each other as fellow elders, not only are the bonds of love and respect strengthened, but correction can be given and received.

On the other hand, other issues relate fundamentally to an elder's work as a staff member. In that case, as a lay elder, I want to make sure we have given the staff clear directions about the vision of the church and philosophy of ministry that we are pursuing. But then I want to trust that staff member to figure out the best way to proceed. If correction is needed, then I might address it with the individual's supervisor, whether that is the senior pastor or some kind of executive pastor. Often, that is what the senior or lead pastor is hired to do: manage the staff, including the other staff pastors. If I think something has really gone awry at the staff level, rather than trying to reach around the senior pastor and manage his staff for him, I as a lay elder should talk to the senior pastor directly.

In the first example above, the chairman of the elders attempted to manage the children's ministry staff directly, bypassing the associate pastor and causing him to feel undermined. But what a lay elder should do in such a scenario is raise his concern with the senior pastor, whose responsibility is to manage the staff. Of course, if any elder is concerned about the children's curriculum, he should address that concern since the teaching ministry falls under the elders' oversight. But that discussion is a discussion for the elders, not for an individual elder and a staff member. Once the elders have reached a conclusion, they should communicate to the staff the character and direction of children's ministry they want, and then trust the staff to find and implement an appropriate curriculum. If the staff consistently choose curriculum the elders disagree with, the answer is not to have the elders pick the curriculum for the staff, but to find staff the elders trust.

But what happens when a disagreement occurs with the senior pastor in his capacity as staff, not elder? This is probably the fuzziest area, since the distinction between the two hats is least clear in the person of the senior pastor.

So I want to introduce one more analogy that might help: the work of the elders is a bit like the judicial branch of the U.S. government, while that staff's work is a bit like the executive branch. (No, the analogy is not perfect, and don't ask me who plays congress.) The elders in this analogy are like judges who evaluate law in light of the constitution. They make judgments about what the Scripture says and how it applies to the life of the church, its ministry and vision. The staff in this analogy, including the senior pastor, is like the executive branch. They put the elders' vision into practice.

The point is that the staff cannot set the theological and scriptural vision of the church. That's the elders' responsibility. But having set that vision, the staff, and especially the senior or lead pastor, needs to be free to put that vision into practice. They need the trust it takes to actually lead out in the direction that the elders have set.

In the second example with which this article began, the young elder wants to review every decision the pastor makes on the grounds that they are all pastors. But he has lost sight of the fact that, while they are all pastors, they are not all staff. Of course, a wise pastor will seek input and counsel from his fellow elders. But at the end of the day, the elders need to remember that they have hired him as staff so that he will have the time, ability, and freedom to lead.

“Of course, a wise pastor will seek input and counsel from his fellow elders. But at the end of the day, the elders need to remember that they have hired him as staff so that he will have the time, ability, and freedom to lead.”

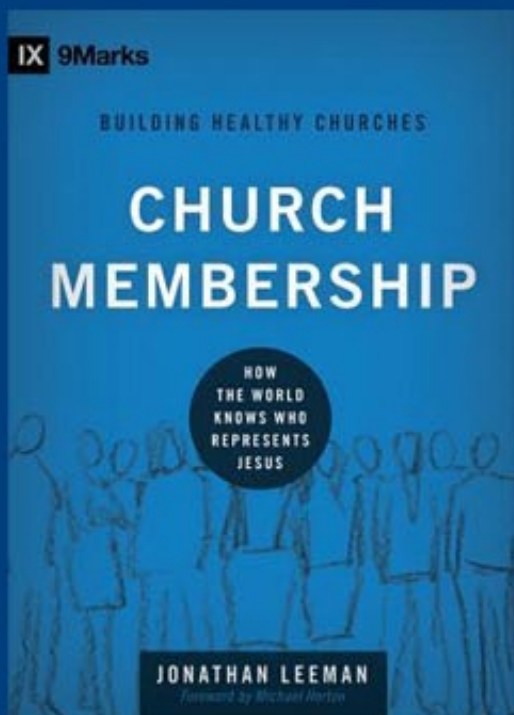
Unless his leadership compromises Scripture or the mission and vision that the elders have set, they should trust him to carry out that mission and vision faithfully. If they can't, once again, the answer is not to involve themselves more minutely in the operations of the church. The answer is to find a lead pastor they can trust to implement their vision.

The question of when to defer and when to intrude is never easy and is rarely as clear as the examples I've offered. So much rests on relationships of trust and patterns of healthy communication. But perhaps thinking more clearly about the precise relationship we're speaking into will allow both our intruding and deferring to produce better fruit in the lives of our fellow elders, our staff, and our congregations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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By Greg Gilbert

The Curse of the Rubber Stamp

One of the more common troubles that trips up church elder boards is the “Curse of the Rubber Stamp.” You may know what I mean: One group of elders, often the lay elders, feel like they are being asked to “rubber stamp” the decisions of the staff elders. And they grow to resent that impression. Over time, disunity and discord creeps into the elder board, and some of the lay elders determine to stop supporting the staff at all, and to check them at every turn.

Now, to be perfectly honest, we should probably recognize that, in any organized group, some people will have more information than others. That’s a fact of life. And the ones with more information will be more involved in decision-making. But that reality doesn’t have to become a curse. Even if it’s unavoidable that different elders will play different roles on a board, the disunion, discontent, and outright suspicion are avoidable.

HOW TO AVOID THE CURSE OF THE RUBBER STAMP

Here are a few pieces of advice for both staff and lay elders that I have given to men on my own elder board in an effort to avoid the Curse of the Rubber Stamp.

Staff Elders

First, staff elders:

1. Remember that there is no biblical office called “Staff Elder.” The men who serve with you, whether they spend fifty hours a week at the church building or fifty hours a week working downtown, are *elders*, full-stop, just like you are. Of course there are different roles that various elders will fill, but there is also a biblical truth to keep in mind here: a man who has been called by the church to be one of its shepherds will ultimately give account to the King for the well-being of the flock.

That is an important point for staff elders to remember as they sit around the table with other men: when the Day comes, King Jesus will not ask only the *staff elders* for an account, he will ask *the elders*. Remember that, and it will keep you from thinking that you alone are responsible for the church—and therefore that you alone should determine its direction.

2. Discourage the middle from going mushy. Encourage every elder in your church to take responsibility for thinking hard and speaking confidently about the issues that come to the board. Neither the church nor the staff elders should want an elder board filled with men who—for whatever reason—lack confident opinions and are content to vote for whatever the senior pastor or other staff elders propose. I realize that for many pastors, such a situation sounds like the Promised Land! But really it is not, and left unchecked, it amounts to having no elder board at all. What you as the staff elders should encourage is not a culture of quick acquiescence to you, but rather a board full of like-minded, confident men who share your heart and will think hard about the ideas you propose, not for the purpose of stymying your plans but for the purpose of making them better.

There are a couple of practical ways we try to encourage this kind of culture among our elders. One is for the chairman to frequently go around the table and ask every elder to speak to the issue at hand. Another is that we strongly discourage abstentions in voting. Unless a brother has an obvious conflict of interest, we encourage one another to vote on every question—“You’re an elder,” we say, “*precisely* because the congregation has called you to do the work of making decisions.” More than once “forcing a vote” has saved us from making stupid decisions, where otherwise 2 had voted “yea,” 1 had voted “nay,” and 4 had abstained!

3. Be willing to lose votes gracefully, even on issues that are important to you. Don’t create a culture on your elder board in which lay elders are “punished” for voting against you. Make it clear that you are able to be defeated in a vote and not take it personally. That will go many miles toward encouraging your elders to take full responsibility for the office the church has called them to.

“Don’t create a culture on your elder board in which lay elders are “punished” for voting against you. Make it clear that you are able to be defeated in a vote and not take it personally. That will go many miles toward encouraging your elders to take full responsibility for the office the church has called them to.”

This happens to me occasionally—not frequently, thank goodness!—at my own church. For example, just a few weeks ago we adopted a budget for the coming year. At one point in that process, I succeeded in winning a vote among the elders to make significant changes to part of our missions strategy.

A week later, though, one of the lay elders on our board found some leverage on another proposal I was making, and proceeded to dismantle—step by step and vote by vote—everything I had won the week before.

Now this was not a minor issue in my mind. I cared about it for several reasons, and I really, really wished he had left it alone. After the meeting, though, I made it a point to shake his hand and hug him, and I even sent an email to the whole elder board the next morning congratulating this brother—tongue-in-cheek of course—for his “brilliant victory” the night before.

You see, I trust that brother deeply as an elder, and I am glad that the congregation recognized him as one. So even as I lost the vote, I wanted to encourage him for fully embracing that responsibility, not signal to him that it would cost him in the future to cross me.

4. Do not be afraid to lead. As I have been saying, different elders on a board will fill different roles. And one of the things the congregation has set you aside to do as a staff elder is to think for 40+ hours a week about the life, direction, and administration of the church. Embrace that!

Come to your elders' meetings with ideas to put in front of them—not to hang on to your proposals tightly, but to let the other elders pick at them, pull at them, change them, redirect them, or even discard them.

And keep in mind, too, that even if they don't adopt your ideas wholesale, you have led them by doing a huge amount of thinking in advance and showing at least a general way forward.

5. Finally, remember that, in general, a group of elders thinking together will come to better conclusions than anybody working alone. I am constantly amazed at the way the ideas I and my staff bring to the elders are improved by lay-elder objections and redirections. From financial policies to staffing decisions to missions strategies, the Lord regularly blesses us as a board by allowing us to arrive at conclusions that are enormously better than what I initially proposed.

You as the staff elders might initially think it would be great to have a "Rubber Stamp." But you actually want to encourage something very different. For the good of the church, your desire should be to cultivate a group of elders who all recognize their responsibility before the Lord to seek the good and faithfulness of the church.

Lay Elders

Next, here is a word for lay elders:

1. Don't be a rubber "APPROVED" stamp, but don't be a "DENIED" stamp either. More than a few elders believe their role on the elder board is to serve as a check on the staff elders: to hold them back, in the name of prudence, from doing what they want to do. But that is never the role of any elder.

“You are not a foil or a check on another elder. So lead. Don't simply thwart leadership.”

No, the role of every elder—lay or staff—is always to do what is best for the church. That is how you should think: you are an elder *in your own right* called by Jesus to lead his church. You are not a foil or a check on another elder. So lead. Don't simply thwart leadership.

2. Trust the staff elders, and encourage them in their leadership. Remember that while you have responsibilities at your own job, the church has called the staff elders to give 40+ hours a week to the direction and administration of the church.

As a lay elder, that's a huge blessing both to you and to the church as a whole. Encourage those men, therefore, to embrace the responsibility of thinking hard and well about the life of the church. Don't discourage them from that task by being upset when they come to you with well-formed ideas; celebrate that!

By all means, fulfill your responsibility as an elder by thinking carefully about every idea and every direction, but approach those ideas with an attitude of trust and encouragement, not skepticism.

3. Be sure your overall vision for the church lines up with the other elders. Every elder board—even ones marked by deep love and respect—will have disagreements and divided votes. We should pray and hope, though, that most of those divided votes will be about a particular issue, not about overall vision and direction. Elders will often divide over *how* to carry out a vision, but it is not good when they divide regularly and in a prolonged way about the vision itself.

For that reason, it is important for you not to let yourself become a rival “center of gravity” in terms of the overall direction of the church. If you find yourself in disagreement with the vision of the men that the church has called as staff elders (or a majority of the elders as a whole), generally speaking, the worst thing you could do is launch a war of attrition against them. That will only result in exhaustion for all the elders and harm to the church as a whole. Unless it is a matter of faithfulness to Scripture’s teaching, it will almost always be better, more godly, and more faithful simply to submit to the majority than it will be to dig your heels into the dirt and try to make their progress as slow and as arduous as possible.

4. Do the work of an elder! That’s what the church has called you to do. They have not called you to rubber stamp the decisions of the staff, nor have they called you to act as a counter-balance to the staff. Rather, just like those who are employed by the church, they have called you to shepherd the flock: to watch out for them, to work for their good, and to seek to build a church that will glorify its Lord and King.

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Greg Gilbert is the senior pastor of Third Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky and is most recently the author, with Mark Dever, of *Preach: Theology Meets Practice* (B&H, 2012).



By Walter Price

Balancing Relationships Between Staff and Non-staff Elders

How should staff elders and non-staff elders relate to each other?

To be more specific:

- How should staff elders balance their roles and the multiple hats they wear? For example, a “senior pastor” may be both fellow elder and supervisor, with other paid pastors as both his fellow elders and supervisees.
- How can a staff elder handle being under the senior pastor’s authority in day-to-day ministry and then, when the elders gather, view him as an equal?
- How can a senior pastor create an atmosphere in which fellow staff elders can speak freely among the elders as a whole without fear of later reprisal from the senior pastor?”

Some churches seek to resolve these tensions by having “pastors” who aren’t elders, and having the senior pastor as the only paid elder. However, Scripture uses the terms “elder,” “overseer,” and “pastor” synonymously (e.g., Acts 20:17, 18; Tit. 1:5-9), and teaches that every local church should have a plurality of elders/pastors/overseers (e.g., Acts 14:23). In other words, every pastor is an elder and every elder is a pastor. Therefore, this attempted solution seems out of accord with Scripture, and seems to reflect the idea that there is really only one pastor of the church. Why would a church exclude from its eldership those whose lives are given 24/7 to the care and feeding of the flock? But that’s a subject for another article.

How then should teams of elders seek to resolve these tensions? I gathered our team of staff pastors in my office and asked them to talk about it. They do an excellent job of handling this tension in a godly way. Here are some key suggestions that have come for my personal meditation and from my conversation with them.

1. Freedom for staff elders to share among all the elders begins with the senior pastor’s encouragement.

The wise senior pastor trusts his fellow staff pastors and wants to operate as a team. Iron sharpens iron, and fellow staff elders are a precious source of reliable counsel. God can use them to sharpen us and sometimes check us with needed cautions. A senior pastor should encourage the other staff pastors to speak their minds and not react proudly when they do.

There have been occasions when I have gone to a fellow pastor after an elders' meeting and encouraged him not to be reticent in sharing because I am in the room. I may not like everything they say, but I need to resist pride in my heart and believe that we are all God-called shepherds of this church. Is there ever a time when other pastors should hold back? Yes, we'll come to that later.

One of our Pastors told me about the first time he could remember expressing to the elders an opinion that differed from mine, about 15 years ago. He did so with fear and trembling, afraid what might happen the next day. But nothing happened. In fact, the opposite of what he feared occurred: I told him I was fine with him saying what he did, even though I did not fully agree with it. He realized then that the elders, including me, were serious about the plurality idea. As a result, he felt great freedom and an even stronger desire to be supportive.

2. Absolute equality among the elders is not realistic.

Absolute equality, whether among the staff elders, non-staff elders, or the eldership as a whole, is simply not realistic. For example, because of his prominent teaching and godly example, a senior pastor will probably have more influence than any other elder. So he is a kind of *primus inter pares*, first among equals. This awareness will often help a fellow staff elder to maintain the balance in the elders' meetings. The idea that "We're all equals here" does not justify a rebellious, mutinous attitude.

Which brings us to the times when a staff elder should be reticent to disagree with the senior pastor in elders' meetings. Often the staff elders as a group will have discussed issues related to the church, as well they should, and hopefully have come to a consensus. When that discussion has taken place and the senior pastor or another staff elder brings that recommendation to the elders as a whole, that is no place for a "minority opinion" that would undercut the senior pastor or the consensus of the staff elders.

However, there have also been times when I know that one of the other staff pastors has had sincere questions or concerns, and I have asked him to share that with the elders. A wise pastor knows when to disagree and when not to disagree with his senior pastor. Often a private discussion would be more edifying than a public dispute.

3. Other staff elders: Remember the burdens the senior pastor bears.

One of our other pastors told me that it is good for him to be reminded that there are unique pressures and responsibilities that fall on the shoulders of the senior pastor. He bears burdens that no one else has. (When he said this, another of our pastors who is a former senior pastor said a hearty amen.) Therefore, one responsibility of pastoral staff is to be Aaron and Hur to the senior pastor, to uphold him and seek to make his ministry successful. This can be done very effectively by showing support in the elders' meetings.

4. Every pastor should strive for the unity and health of the body.

When all the staff pastors are concerned more for the health and unity of the church than for their own agenda they will be careful to display Christ-like humility in their dealings with one another. If the church's full-time pastors cannot demonstrate loving servanthood toward one another, how can they expect their fellow elders and the church as a whole to do it?

A suggestion to senior pastors: if you haven't already, talk with your fellow staff elders and clearly tell them what your desires and expectations are for them in the elders' meetings. Let them know that frank disagreement is okay when done

in the right spirit. Encourage them not to always look to you for the lead in what to say. Give each one the freedom to be an elder as you are.

And a suggestion to other staff pastors: don't be quick to disagree with your senior pastor. When you feel you must, disagree in a way that enhances unity and doesn't sow the seeds of division.

Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God, the good of the church, and the good of your fellow pastors.

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An Interview with Matt Schmucker

Disagreements and Differences Among Elders

Matt Schmucker answers more practical questions about elder life, particularly about disputes and differences with other elders, and yellow flags about finding elders.

ON DISPUTES WITH OTHER ELDERS

9M: *What do you do when you struggle to get along with a fellow elder?*

MS: First you have to distinguish whether these struggles are doctrinal or personal. Assuming the question is related to personal, I would pursue God in prayer to ward off Satan in the relationship. Insofar as Satan loves to divide, he often does it between two leaders. And he'll use whatever he can, even simple issues of personality.

Next, pursue the brother to build the relationship. Often, irritation arises out of ignorance. Work to know the brother, and remember that you often don't have all the facts.

Finally, be humble. Even if, in the end, you don't understand why a person is the way he is, God has tolerated far more from you. Also, you can trust that God has given that man to the body, with his particular combination of strengths and weaknesses, to build up the body in ways that you cannot. Study the body passages in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and elsewhere, and know that God intends good through such differences, even though, in our fallen state, those differences may involve a lack of camaraderie.

9M: *Have you ever struggled to get along with another elder?*

MS: Yes.

9M: *Umm, anything else on that?*

MS: Over the years, I've had to practice the very things I listed above. Far more is at stake than my own personal likes, dislikes, and unsanctified turf-wars. The health of the church is at stake, which means that the glory of God itself is at stake (from a human responsibility standpoint).

Often, the personal struggle with another elder can arise as a result of an elder rejecting your ideas at the table. So it's been important for me to separate my ideas from my identity (which is justified in Christ!). Thus a rejection of my ideas is not a rejection of me. Along these lines, developing personal relationships outside of the elders meetings makes the work of eldering easier to do.

9M: *With thirteen elders at your church, how do you find time to care for these particular relationships?*

MS: It's difficult to do in a growing church and a busy city. Yet at the beginning of every meeting we shepherd each other before we shepherd the church. We do this by sharing concerns, confessing, praising, and then praying for one another. Basically, we let one another know what's going on in our lives. We can take up to an hour of the elder's meeting to do this. Beyond this, we try to meet together individually for lunches and dinners from time to time.

ON DIFFERENCES WITH OTHER ELDERS

9M: *Let's move to differences of principles. How do you as an elder know when to back off from pressing your conviction and when to hold your ground?*

MS: The clearer it is in Scripture, the firmer you hold your ground. On the one hand, I'm not going to yield on the deity of Christ, even if the other twelve elders do. On the other hand, I personally have strong convictions about birth control that are not obvious and clear in Scripture; and these convictions are not shared by all of my fellow elders. On this issue, therefore, I tread more lightly. A situation involving the question of birth control actually came up a while back. I vigorously argued my position biblically and practically. Yet then I had to submit—joyfully!—to the other elders who may have been sympathetic to my position but finally voted otherwise.

Recently, I returned to the elders from a sabbatical and was asked what I learned during the break. I realized that the church continued to prosper without my active involvement and opinions as an elder. This caused in me a healthy realization that I should hold my opinions more lightly.

UNITY AND MATURITY

9M: *Given the importance of unity and maturity among the elders, what are some traits or characteristics of potential elders that ought to raise yellow flags?*

MS: I think there are a bunch of obvious ones: volatility, instability, bad reputation in the community, unruly children, and so on.

So let me point to several less obvious yellow flags. One less obvious one would be that of a contrarian spirit. You know the sort of guy I mean. If you say "black," he'll say "white." No matter what you say, that's what you get. The spirit that is perpetually looking for the "on the other hand" or waiting for "the other shoe to drop" is not helpful in building up the church. In Acts 6, for instance, Paul instructs the church to appoint deacons not only for their proficiencies, but because these men will bring unity between the Greek-speaking and the Hebrew-speaking widows. How much more should an elder be someone who builds unity and works to resolve rather than to merely offer up an opposing opinion?!

Another yellow flag that is commonly overlooked is the question of a man's spiritual fruit in the lives of those around him. To put it positively, this is what drew our attention in 1998, for instance, to a church member named Andy Johnson. He had been quietly discipling other single men on a consistent basis, resulting in real spiritual progress in their lives. To put it negatively, then, no spiritual fruit is a yellow flag, even if the world would recognize the man as being "successful."

Finally, an unsupportive wife is a yellow flag. Eldering done right is a demanding task. It takes time to pray. It takes time to prepare to teach. It takes time to disciple. It takes time to give hospitality. All of these impact the home, and places

certain demands on a wife. How does she feel about doing hospitality? How does she feel about losing her husband every other Thursday night to an elders meeting? Does she welcome the unexpected visitor at the door who's in need?

9M: *What positive qualities would you want to emphasize in looking for elders?*

MS: Too often we look toward worldly success to measure a man. We must teach our churches to look for men of the Word—to measure men based on their knowledge of, their submission to, and their ability to proclaim God's Word. I like what Mark Dever says: an elder's "ability to teach" means that when wolves come near the flock, the sheep know that they can trust this shepherd to expose the wolf and, in turn, to protect them. That's the elder's great calling.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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By Jonathan Leeman

Elder Meeting Attitudes

The biblical qualifications for an elder don't require an elder to be sinless (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-10). Otherwise, we wouldn't have elders! Rather, an elder must be *marked* by the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy and Titus. They must characterize his life as a whole.

I trust this is not true of all churches, but I have discovered that elder meetings can have an unexpectedly difficult social dynamic. There you sit at the table with a number of godly men. You are hashing out this or that issue. And somehow the room feels tense, even political!

"Why is he contradicting me?" "Is he just posturing?" "Why did he say it like that?" "What a jerk!"

Truth be told, you can see my own small-heartedness and sin in such responses. But I am confident I am not alone.

THE BIGGEST LESSON

Here's the biggest lesson I've learned about the social dynamic of elder meetings: *fear of man sometimes keeps us from saying the things we should say, and fear of man sometimes provokes us to say things we shouldn't.*

That is, sometimes we fail to say what we should say because we are afraid of saying something different, something wrong.

But sometimes we speak more than we should, or harsher than we should, because we are afraid of losing control or losing the argument. We think persuading the brothers depends upon us. So we push too hard. We clutch our ideas too tightly, because we are afraid of losing face. And that is just another form of fear of man.

Different sized elder boards, no doubt, have different social dynamics. I remember sitting on a small elder board, where all the men had good relationships. So it was easy for us to trust one another, but it was also easy for us to fall into group think.

Larger boards can fall into group think, too, but there are more personalities to challenge it. Indeed, factions can form which challenge it, but then factions are problematic for other reasons.

I remember when I first became an elder at my present church, everybody told me not to talk much for a while, but just listen and learn. And in general, that is very good advice. So I decided to speak only when I thought the elders were heading in a bad direction, and they really “needed” my input. Well, there are a couple things wrong with that approach, one of which is that you only talk in order to disagree. Second, when those moments come, you will probably push too hard because, by the nature of the moment, you are already convinced the guns of others didn’t work so it is time to bring your bombs.

HOW TO SPEAK IN ELDERS’ MEETINGS

So when should you speak in an elder meeting? What is a useful attitude to adopt toward the other brothers? Here are few tips, but let me admit this is the counsel of a novice, and the counsel of someone who is not naturally good at the politics of group meetings. I’m writing this because no one else has, and maybe it will inspire someone else to write something better.

1) Begin by thanking God for placing each of the other men in the room (Acts 20:28).

When you walk into a meeting, look at the faces around the room, and thank God for each of them. The Holy Spirit made them overseers, remember? He put them in the room. And who are you to defy his wisdom? Thank God for the sacrifices of time and energy they have made to be there and to serve the church. They might even be making financial sacrifices to be there. Praise the Lord!

2) Become an active listener (James 1:19).

Oh, this one is hard for me. I’m so quick to be convinced of my opinions. But determine to work hard at listening and *understanding* what the other brothers are saying. On a related note...

3) Give the benefit of the doubt.

I’m not sure I have a proof-text for this one. But you know what I mean. Assume good motives, even when you disagree. Assume also that their perspective might possess a better rationale than they are capable of articulating. Can you even help them state their point? On a related note...

4) Be convinced that there’s wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14; 24:6).

I say “be convinced” because I know you know there is wisdom in many counselors, but we all forget it. Here’s the deal: I have difficulty thinking of a time in which a good idea was presented, and nobody in the room could improve it. Somebody *always* improves it, making the good better. Other brothers also expose the bad. Don’t you see God’s purposes of reminding us of our finitude in the wisdom of many counselors?

5) Look for ways to facilitate unity and understanding (Ps. 133:1; Eph. 4:3).

When I realized the problems with *only* speaking when I thought the elders were about to go off the rails, I decided to change my approach: be *most* interested in speaking to bring clarity or unity to the brothers. Maybe two brothers disagree, or are speaking past one another. Is there something I can say to facilitate unity and understanding between them? The focus moved from “Let my deep wells of wisdom save you fools” to “How can I promote peace and truth?”

6) Beware group think (Mark 7:8-9).

You want to promote unity, yes, but you also want to keep going back to Scripture, and making sure you are all in accord with Scripture. It is so easy to fall into patterns of thinking and traditions that subtly, silently take us away from Scripture.

In fact, apart from constant recourse to Scripture, we *will* slip into either conservative fundamentalisms or liberal compromises.

7) Be shrewd (Matt. 10:16).

It is a good skill to learn how to persuade people, and frankly, it is a skill that I am not sure I have. But I know I need to learn it, especially for the sake of elder meetings. Can anyone help me? I've been told it has to do with knowing when to come at issues head on, and when to come at them from the side—understanding what makes other personalities tick and how to step around their personal landmines. Frankly, it requires paying attention to others and being conscientious, and if you are not naturally conscientious, it will be difficult. I think that's probably my problem. Such conscientious shrewdness, ironically, *can* be an activity of love, at least if you are seeking to help others gain wisdom, assuming that wisdom is what you have to give.

8) Be courageous (Josh. 1:7).

God has made you an elder. The church has affirmed you. You are in that meeting for a reason. So stop fearing men, fear God, and be willing to speak and even make mistakes. It's okay to make mistakes. You'll learn. When you do, stand up, and keep walking. Try not to make the same mistake again. And ask God for a thick chest.

9) Trust God!

Trusting God, finally, is the antidote to fear of man. Trust God that the fate of the church does not depend on any one meeting or decision. Trust God that the fate of the church does not depend upon any one church! Frankly, you can wreck your church (please don't!) and Jesus will still come back to redeem his people and show his glory to the nations. Being confident of Jesus' victory will help you to keep things in perspective. Your compass for when to push, and when to hold back, will be more accurate.

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Jonathan Leeman is the editorial director of 9Marks and the author of *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* and *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus* (Crossway, 2012).



By Eric Bancroft

Family Size: Lessons for Large and Small Elder Boards

I was an only child until age fifteen, when God blessed my parents with a daughter. As a family of four, our meals were quick and decisions were relatively easy. Not so with friends of mine who came from families of eight or more siblings. For them, bathroom time was coveted and possibly scheduled. Meals were a production rivaling a military mess hall. And their family vans looked like Noah's Ark. The lesson was simple: the number of people living under one roof greatly influences the dynamics of how things get done in that family.

The same is true of elder boards. Elder dynamics vary considerably with the size of the board.

I have had the privilege of serving on both large and small elder boards: in one church we had over thirty elders; my current church has around seven. Whether you serve on a large or a small elder board, it is good to recognize the dynamics that vary with size.

FIVE LESSONS FOR LARGER ELDER BOARDS

Here are five lessons drawn from my experience for larger elder boards. By "larger" I have in mind elder boards of more than ten men.

1. Value Organization

First, value organization. Plan ahead with a thoughtful agenda that ranges from ministry oversight to doctrinal matters to member care. A large elder board is typically a response to the needs of a large church. Such a sizable ministry needs to be accounted for, which cannot be done haphazardly or spontaneously.

2. Delegate Decision-Making

Second, delegate decision-making. Does the entire elder board need to be involved in the decision to reduce the membership class from six sessions to four? Does the elder board as a whole need to approve every new small group? Arguably not. So mark out clearly delegated areas of responsibility and then let those assigned elders lead. This shows you trust your peers' wisdom and are content to defer.

3. Appreciate the Moderator

Third, appreciate the moderator. The elder meeting moderator or chairman needs willing participants who both know their contribution is valued *and* exercise discretion. The goal is not to simulate a junior high lock-in and stay up all night. Feel free to contribute, but ask yourself what would be missed if your contribution was not shared.

4. Remember Where You Are

Fourth, remember where you are. All this talk of efficiency and delegation might tempt some of your elders to feel like they are in the boardroom at the office. They are not. They are under-shepherds of Christ's church. Meaningful times of prayer, sobered accounting of the lives entrusted to you, and patient leadership of a congregation should be hallmarks of your elders' meetings.

5. Regard Relationships

Fifth, regard relationships. The men you are seated with, praying for, and shepherding alongside are your brothers. You have a vision for how your sheep will relate to one another; practice that yourself. Yet elders' meetings alone will probably not give you the chance to do that. So be intentional to privately pursue each other with your spouses, and plan group times where there is no agenda except to strengthen the bonds of partnership in the gospel. Ways to do this include an annual elders' retreat, a Christmas party, a summer BBQ, or competing in a Tough Mudder.

FIVE LESSONS FOR SMALLER ELDER BOARDS

Next, here are five lessons for smaller elder boards. When I say "smaller" I'm thinking of the two- to ten-man range.

1. Prepare for Impact

First, prepare for impact: verbal impact. Smaller environments lend themselves to intimacy and free dialogue. However, this can come at the cost of inefficient and ultimately ineffective meetings. So review your church's goals and intentionally move in that direction in your planning and ministry development. In other words, work to keep your meetings from going around in circles.

2. Realize Your Limitations

Second, realize your limitations. The size of your elder team can make you feel like Seal Team Six: small, capable, and efficient. While a smaller elder board certainly has its strengths, it can tempt you to take on more than you should in a single meeting. So prioritize and pace yourself. Ideas are usually not the problem. Eagerness to implement them rather impulsively can be.

3. Clarify Responsibility

Third, clarify responsibility. Because smaller elder boards are often engaged in so many discussions together and find their relationships with the sheep overlapping, it is not uncommon to assume one of the other elders is caring for a person or overseeing a ministry need. Meanwhile, other elders make the same assumption. So direct elders toward specific people and responsibilities accordingly.

4. Remember the Sheep

Relationships on small elder teams can grow close and personal. But this can come at the expense of remembering why you are there: to "shepherd the flock of God" (Acts 20:28). I have seen ministry teams grow so close together that if

none of the people they were leading actually showed up at church, they might not have known. Make member care an important part of your meeting agenda.

5. Value Congregational Communication

Fifth, value congregational communication. Smaller leadership environments benefit from the time they afford for lengthy discussions and deliberate decisions. Yet the transition from deliberation to declaration needs to be thoughtful, clearly defined, and owned by every elder.

FIVE LESSONS FOR ALL ELDER BOARDS

Whether you are serving in a small church with a small elder board or a large church whose membership rivals the population of a small town, your work as an elder is equally important. The value of your work is not in the size of your ministry but in the charge given to you. A small flock has just as great a need of green pastures. It too needs protection from lurking wolves. With that in mind, here are five lessons for elder boards of all sizes:

1. Pray...for Real

First, pray...for real. Your time of prayer should not be a spiritual good-luck charm. Prioritize it. Purpose to pray for each other, individual members, and the church as a whole. Consider devoting entire meetings to prayer.

2. Remember Your Charge

Second, remember your charge. Elders are called to shepherd the flock of God. This involves teaching, discipling, counseling, confronting, and comforting. Use your meetings as a chance to remind each other of these things and equip each other in them. Spend some time looking into a passage together, reading a brief article, or discussing a chapter of a book that you are reading together.

3. Value Confidentiality

Third, value confidentiality. Pastoring members can be both encouraging and discouraging. Elders often deal with broken marriages, personal addictions, warring factions, and a host of other sins. This is part of your calling. Such information, though, can tempt one to gossip. Be sure to convert that impulse into a prayer for the gospel to transform those who are struggling with sin. Also, be discerning about what you share with your wife. Her love and care for you does not mean she needs to bear those full burdens too.

4. Be Patient

Fourth, be patient. Help your fellow elders transition from a business environment to a church environment. The Lord's work is not the same as your work. "Efficiency" and "expediency" can conflict with the patient, gentle work of shepherding people in local churches. Remember it is always easier to make a decision in a room of likeminded men than it is to lead the entire church through the change that such a decision will bring.

5. Let the Members Minister

Fifth and finally, let the members minister. You equipped the people; now let them do what you have taught them to do: minister to each other. Too many churches' elder boards exhaust themselves feeling the need to inquire about, approve, and manage all the ministry their members do. Doing so stunts ministry capacity. Instead, teach your people of their ability to minister in a real and valuable way to one another.

A GREAT PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Elders, the Holy Spirit has made you overseers in the church (Acts 20:28). This is a great privilege and responsibility. Pray that God would use your investment of time and gifts to make an impact into eternity. For it is in heaven that the ultimate family reunion will eventually take place.

Recommended Resource: *Meetings That Work: A Guide to Effective Elders' Meetings*, by Alexander Strauch. For a condensed summary download [this pdf](#).

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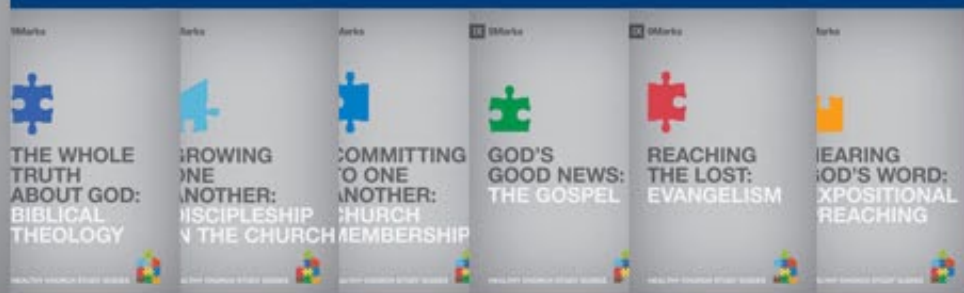
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By Matt Schmucker and Nick Roark

The Contents and Purposes of the “Elder Packet”

If you are looking for an easy way to make your elders’ meetings more efficient, helpful, and unifying, then you might consider using what we call the “elder packet.”

PURPOSES OF THE PACKET

When Capitol Hill Baptist Church appointed our first slate of elders, friction unexpectedly arose between the staff and non-staff elders. At the heart of the problem was access to information. Staff elders spent a good part of their week together and naturally shared and vetted issues, while the non-staff elders were busy with their jobs. In early elders’ meetings, when the two groups came together, the non-staff elders found themselves pushed to make decisions in the meetings when they didn’t even know beforehand what was on the agenda, let alone have time to pray and think through the matters at hand.

We rectified this by requiring every elder who wanted to bring some matter to the board to write a memo and submit it to the elder chairman (and the shorter, the better!). The chairman then assembled all of these and passed them out one week prior to each elders’ meeting. This extra administrative step proved to be a huge aid to the non-staff elders, and it helped to unite the elders. It also forced long-winded brothers to write down their thoughts succinctly.

CONTENTS OF THE PACKET

Today, there are two main types of elders’ meetings at CHBC: member-centric meetings and issues meetings. The former focuses on all things related to membership, while the latter centers on important topics that the elders want to devote an evening to discussing. Below is a list of the typical documents included in the elders’ packets.

Member-Centric Meeting

For a “member-centric meeting,” there are two components to the packet: the main packet, and the membership packet. Here’s what gets put into both.

Main Packet:

- Agenda sheet
- Schedule of upcoming meetings
- Headlines and prayer: A time in which the elders briefly update the rest of the board about what is going on in their lives. Then the elders pray for each other.
- Hymn
- Scripture reading and prayer: The elders read aloud the passage of Scripture that will be preached the upcoming Sunday and then praise God in prayer for specific truths they see in the text.
- Minutes from the previous elders' meeting
- Relationships reports: This report is generated from our church membership database. It is used to help the elders pray specifically for members of the church. We typically cover one or two letters of the alphabet (of members last names) in every meeting.
- Care list: In an effort to provide the best care for the congregation, the elders identify members who need particular care. The various categories of care include those living in unrepentant sin and those in some type of circumstantial, financial, or physical trial. The elders use this list to discuss how to best care for these members and then to pray for each of them.
- Memos: These include various items of business for the meeting. The presenter of each memo is also listed.
- Deacon review: Each elder is assigned to oversee and provide attention and care for a number of deacons.
- Executive session materials: The elders keep more pastorally sensitive discussions for the executive session portion of the elders' meeting. At this time any invited guests— including pastoral assistants and CHBC interns—are asked to leave the meeting. All the materials needed for these discussions are included in the elders' packet.

Membership Packet:

- Cover page: This page functions like a table of contents.
- Membership report: This document includes the most up-to-date additions and resignations as well as the names of any those whose membership is pending baptism.
- Photos of every applicant for membership
- New member applications
- Member resignations: Every member who seeks to join another church is asked to submit a resignation letter. These letters are included along with the person's name, photo, and the church they are currently attending.

The membership packet varies in length depending primarily on the number of membership applicants.

Issues Meeting

Here is what goes into the main packet for an "issues meeting."

Main Packet:

- Agenda sheet (as above)
- Upcoming meeting schedule (as above)

- Headlines and Prayer (as above)
- Hymn (as above)
- Scripture Reading and Prayer (as above)
- Elders' Meeting Minutes (as above)
- Memos – This, too, is the same as above, but it typically takes up the lion's share of the discussion time, as opposed to the "Relationship Report" and "Care List" described above. These memos include various items of business for the meeting. The presenter of each memo is also listed.
- Book Review – Sometimes the elders read through a book together and then review it chapter by chapter at the issues meeting. A different elder leads the discussion each time.
- Deacon Review (as above)
- Executive Session Materials (as above)

FYI Packet for Both Meetings

For both types of meeting, a "For Your Information Packet" is also included.

FYI Packet:

- Cover page: This page functions as a table of contents.
- No-Significant-Relationships Report: This report lists church members who, as far as the elders know, are not in any significant relationships with fellow church members. It is generated from our church membership database.
- Missionary updates: We include newsletters and updates from foreign workers sent out by CHBC.
- Financials Report

PULLING THE PACKET TOGETHER

One of the elder chairman's main goals is to have a printed and digital copy of the elders' packets to the elder board one week prior to the meeting. This ensures they have time to review the materials and can come prepared to the meeting.

Therefore, one week before elders meeting:

1. A pastoral assistant puts together a draft of the agenda for the elders meeting.
2. The chairman of elders reviews the agenda order and then finalizes the agenda.
3. Once the agenda is finalized, a pastoral assistant ensures that all elder memos and other documents needed to create the elder packets have been received.
4. A pastoral assistant prints out the materials and gets them in order.
5. An intern or a pastoral assistant stuffs the materials in labeled envelopes and leaves them in the elders' mailboxes at the church office.
6. A pastoral assistant scans all packets and emails these digital versions to the elders for any who wish to read it on an eReader.

CONCLUSION

The elder packet process helps enable a free flow of information to the entirety of the elder board. It gives all the elders, staff and non-staff, an opportunity to come to the elders' meetings prepared to better shepherd our congregation for Christ's glory.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Matt Schmucker is executive director of Together for the Gospel and has served for many years as an elder of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC. Nick Roark is a pastoral assistant at Capitol Hill Baptist Church.



By Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright

The Math Doesn't Work: Why the Future of Church Planting is Bi-Vocational

We are experiencing a national, trans-denominational revival of interest in planting new churches that are biblical, gospel-centered, healthy, growing, and reproducing. Our own church, the First Baptist Church of West Palm Beach, is taking part in this movement as we gear up to plant 100 churches in South Florida.

But as we look at the landscape of church planting in North America it is clear that we have a critical problem with our methodology: the math simply doesn't work.

In order to reach the tens of millions of lost people living outside of Bible-belt suburbs, we need to plant thousands of healthy churches. However, the majority of church plants fail because they run out of startup money before they are financially viable. We are writing to propose a simple, sustainable strategy for church planting in the most un-evangelized and under-churched regions of North America: bi-vocational ministry.

THE MATH DOESN'T WORK

While we applaud the heroic efforts and sacrifices many churches and planters make, we believe that many fail to apply basic, realistic arithmetic. Let's think through an example.

Step 1: Expenses

First, consider the expenses a church plant will likely encounter.

Rent a school or building	\$1,200/wk	\$62,400/yr
Part-time “worship-guy”	\$300/wk	\$15,600/yr
Part-time “kids ministry person”	\$200/wk	\$10,400/yr
3 small mail outs (\$3000/ea)	\$175/wk	\$9,100/yr
Misc expenses	\$250/wk	\$13,000/yr
Totals	\$2,125/wk	\$110,400/yr

Of course, you can play with the numbers, and they may vary according to location and other factors. Some can and do plant churches with less money. Regardless, plug in your own numbers and do the math. In our example we are at well over \$100,000 in expenses, and we haven’t included salaries, benefits, or other expenses for the pastor or pastors. So add in \$75-\$100k in salaries, benefits, and other expenses for one pastor. (It will take every penny of that for a family to live in any urban center like New York, Seattle, Chicago, Miami, and so on.) You are now at around a \$200k annual budget. We also are assuming that a sending church or church-planting network covers startup costs such as sound equipment, website, moving expenses for the pastor(s), and so on. If someone else doesn’t cover those expenses, then add them on as well. In our experience, many well-meaning church planters underestimate the actual expenses.

Step 2: Income

Second, what about income? Well-connected, networked church planters can often raise several hundred thousand dollars in initial support, typically pledged over 3 years. At the end of three years, supporting churches normally expect the church plant to be self-supporting or close to it.

Let’s do some more math. Say at the end of year three, the church plant has 150 members, which would be wildly successful in most urban contexts. If each person gives \$20 each on a weekly basis, the income would look like this: 150 adults @ \$20/wk = \$3000/wk = \$156,000/yr. If your budget is close to 200k, the numbers still do not add up.

And there is a bigger problem: it is very ambitious to assume that new Christians will give \$20 per week. Unless you are reaching a lot of displaced committed Christians, or are starting with a significant core group or church split, it is unlikely they will give anywhere close to that level. In Miami, church planters agree that average giving at new church plants is more like \$7-\$10 per head per week. These giving patterns are validated every week as we speak with church planters nationally. Again, consider the math:

(Overly) Optimistic:

100 adults	\$20/ea	\$2000/wk	\$104,000/yr
150 adults	\$20/ea	\$3000/wk	\$156,000/yr
200 adults	\$20/ea	\$4000/wk	\$208,000/yr

Realistic:

100 adults	\$10/ea	\$1000/wk	\$52,000/yr
200 adults	\$10/ea	\$2000/wk	\$104,000/yr
300 adults	\$10/ea	\$3000/wk	\$156,000/yr

You get the idea. If the expectation is that a church plant will pay its own expenses within three to five years while supporting the pastor or pastors and their families at a middle-class lifestyle, then most churches need to grow to 200-300 people in just 3 years. The math does not work.

THE HAIL MARY

Here is what frequently happens. On day one the church planter begins receiving funding from a constellation of churches, family, friends, and networks. The planter begins to hear the clock ticking. He knows that in three years or so his funding will run out. So the pastor and his team work like dogs for three years trying to attract enough “giving units” to make the church self-supporting. It is the church-planting equivalent of the Hail Mary pass in football. It rarely works, but when it does it makes SportsCenter—and everyone focuses on the seldom-successful Hail Mary plant as the model to emulate.

About two years into the work a church planter can begin to panic because expenses are higher than he predicted and income is much lower than he had hoped. At the end of year four or five, the church (if he is successful) may be running around 150-200, but it still cannot pay him enough to support his growing family.

At this point the planter declares himself a “catalytic” leader who specializes in “starting new things” and moves on to a different ministry job that can support his middle-class lifestyle. The church is then taken over by someone else, often a bi-vocational pastor. Despite the success of the new church, the pastor had to leave. Why? Because from day one the math didn’t work.

BIVOCATIONAL MUST BE THE FUTURE

When we began to dream about planting dozens of churches in South Florida, we knew that we would not get the job done by throwing hundreds of Hail Marys. It would take too long and cost too much. So we decided to go bi-vocational. We became convinced that church planting with bi-vocational pastors has been effective in a variety of nations and cultures throughout church history. We have concluded that in order to make the math work in South Florida, we must find pastors who are willing and able to support their families without taking a salary from the church—maybe ever.

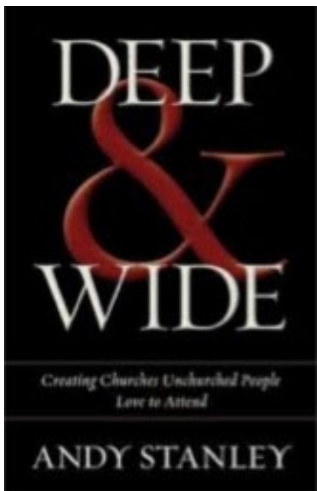
We recently began to cast this vision of bi-vocational church planting to our church family. This fall, we launched a two-year residency for pastoral ministry with ten men who are committed to bi-vocational church planting. Surprisingly, we found most of these men right here in our own congregation: a couple of financial planners, an IT guy, a pharmaceutical salesman, a Chick-fil-A owner, a guy who runs a charitable foundation, and so on. All of these men already live in South Florida, and they already love our community and our church.

We believe this strategy of recruiting and training men who already live on our mission field and already have gainful employment is one that could be duplicated in other contexts. In order to reach the millions of lost people in North America, we are going to need thousands of new churches. The old method of displaced, seminary-trained church planters throwing a Hail Mary is proving to be insufficient. We believe that locally identified, locally church-trained bi-vocational pastors provide the best opportunity to make the math work.

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ (Luke 14:28-30)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright are pastors of the First Baptist Church of West Palm Beach, Florida. Get more information about their strategy at www.sendsfl.com.



BOOK REVIEW:

Deep & Wide

Reviewed by Zach Schlegel

Andy Stanley. *Deep & Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend*. Zondervan, 2012. 352 pages. \$24.99

When I enrolled in seminary, I knew I wanted to preach God’s Word, tell people the good news of Christ, and help others follow Jesus. And to this day I am grateful that I have been able to spend my life this way. So when my professors assigned a number of books on pastoral leadership and church growth, I was happy to read them. I had fundamental questions to answer before I hoped to lead a church: What is the church? What does it mean to be a pastor? How do these two (church and pastor) fit together? What is success in ministry?

Have you ever asked questions like these? Maybe you already pastor, but are still asking these questions, like the guy who finds himself flying the plane at 30,000 feet and is desperately flipping through the owner’s manual. Needless to say, you know the importance of getting answers to the fundamental questions and getting them right.

Andy Stanley understands this too. Near the beginning of his new book *Deep and Wide* he writes, “One of the perplexing things we face as church leaders is that most church people don’t know *what* the church is or *why* it exists” (51). Absolutely! Any discussion about church or pastoral ministry should begin there. If we get that right, our marching orders should be clear.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH AND WHO IS IT FOR?

Let me begin with the author’s conclusions: the church *is* a “movement” (ch. 3) and it is *for* unchurched people—people who have not attended a church in five or more years (chs. 4 and 5).

If the church is a movement, we should not hold onto any specific tradition or ministry model, but should always look for new ways to help people love and follow Jesus. If the church is for unchurched people, then whatever we do as a church should aim at them.

One helpful thing in this book is its call for evangelism. Stanley writes passionately about reaching the lost and wants to provoke churches to be zealous with the gospel rather than settle into maintenance mode. I appreciated this and was challenged by Stanley's discussion of ways to do spiritual formation (chs. 6-8), church environments (ch. 9), and preaching (ch. 11). In whatever he does, the author leads his church to ask, "How can we do this to reach those who are not yet followers of Christ?"

But does that mean a congregation can be indiscriminate in how they "do church" so long as they attract unchurched people? Are there costs that come with such an approach that would undermine the effort to evangelize? To answer these questions let's consider the author's two major claims and a crucial consequence of them.

"The Church Is a Movement."

First, what about Stanley's contention that the church is a "movement"? In chapter three, Stanley points out that the Greek word for "church" in the New Testament (*ekklesia*) simply means "gathering." From there he traces through history to make the claim that over time "what began as a movement...had become an insider-focused, hierarchical, ritualized institution" (63). Clearly, not every institutional development in church history has been a good one. But what I don't understand is how Stanley came to the conclusion that the church is a "movement" and not an institution. Does the Bible teach this?

In Matthew 16, 18, and 28 we see Jesus give the local church the authority to mark off God's people from the world through the practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹ In this way, the church is a gathering with the unique responsibility of helping both the confessor (like Peter in Matt. 16:16) and the world (Jn. 13:35) know what it means to be a Christian. The church's boundary line of membership illustrates the world's separation from a holy God *and* the fact that it needs a Savior. This boundary is not something the church should blur in order to attract the unchurched; it should make this line bright and clear *exactly for the unchurched*.

"The Church Is for Unchurched People."

Stanley's second major claim is that the church exists for unchurched people. Does the Bible teach this idea? Yes and no. "Yes" in the sense that God's evangelism plan involves congregations that display his gospel as they embrace his rule (Jn. 13:35, Eph. 3:10-11) and cling to an unshakeable hope (1 Pet. 3:15). We should want every person to hear the gospel, and so everyone should be welcome to attend.

But "No" in the sense that the Bible places the focus of the church's corporate gatherings on building up *Christians* (1 Cor. 14:4, 12, 17, 26). The church is made of people who are born again. Non-Christians are welcome to come when the church gathers, but in a very important sense, they don't belong: they are not part of the body (1 Cor. 12), or part of the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), or part of the people of God (1 Pet. 2:10). They come to *witness* these supernatural realities, yes, but not to be lulled into thinking they are part of something supernatural when they are not.

A church that is unclear about "who belongs" in order to attract unbelievers may be "nice," but they are also unloving.

This is where Stanley's advice is dangerous. He is vague about what he means by "participating" in (91), being "part of" (69), or being "admitted" (72) to the church. Does he mean for non-Christians to be members of the church? Whether he teaches this or not, the practices he promotes lean in that direction. He encourages "nonbelievers to sign up for short-term mission trips" (79), "nonbelievers [to] serve in as many roles as possible," (80) and points out that "you can join our church online without talking to a real person" (81).

“Innovation Is Essential.”

Finally we need to question a conclusion that Stanley draws from these two claims. That is, is innovation important to having an effective ministry?

Stanley suggests innovation is essential. “Culture,” he writes, “is like the wind. You can’t stop it...But, if like a good sailor you will adjust your sails, you can harness the winds of culture to take your audience where they need to go. If people are more interested in being happy, then play to that” (115).

Later on he explains, “Every new and innovative approach to ministry has an expiration date as well. Every single one. Nothing is irresistible or relevant forever” (265).

This makes sense if you are running a business. But as John Piper teaches us, we are not professionals. Neither are we sailors catching the wind of culture or innovators coming up with the next idea that will keep people’s attention. Pastors are shepherds called to feed the flock and lead it according to the unchanging and all-sufficient word of God.

CONCLUSION

Do ministry models have expiration dates? If they are centered on anything other than God and his Word, they *will* lose their luster. But if a ministry model is ordered according to Scripture with the aim of displaying God, it is timeless.

¹ See the discussion of these passages in Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), chapter 4.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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WHAT IS
SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP?

*the life
of GOD
in the soul
of the
church*

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"For anyone who doubts the practical relevance of good theology,
this book will be a turning point." —MICHAEL HORTON



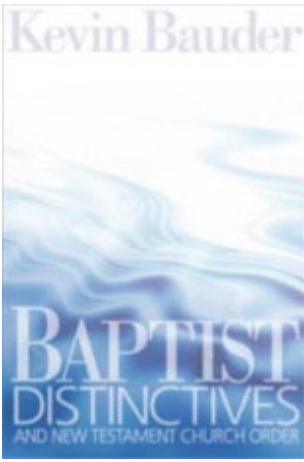
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BOOK REVIEW:

Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order

Reviewed by Kevin Wilkening

Kevin Bauder, *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*. Regular Baptist Press, 2012.

What is a Baptist? This is not a rhetorical question. This is a test. Keep calm and carry on.

Kevin Bauder, research professor of systematic theology at Central Baptist Seminary, is concerned that Baptist church members do not actually know what Baptists believe. Thus, he has written *Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order*, a short, “nontechnical work that would explain what a Baptist is” to “people who are not theological experts” (11).

Baptist Distinctives and New Testament Church Order is divided into two parts. The first six chapters address six theological Baptist distinctives. The final five chapters address the application of these Baptist distinctives to five practical problems facing Baptists today.

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

There is much to commend in this book. In the first part, Bauder continually appeals to the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture. Thus, it is the Bible that addresses how God wants his church to live, worship, and order itself (ch. 1). The author rightly points out that Baptists believe that the proper subjects of baptism are believers, and the proper mode of baptism is immersion (ch. 2). What is more, he contends that the proper place for observing the ordinance of baptism is in the local church. The third Baptist distinctive that Bauder addresses is regenerate church membership (ch. 3). Obviously, the idea of regenerate church membership carries with it specific implications: namely, baptizing believers alone, having a baptized church membership, admitting only believers to the Lord’s Table, and practicing church discipline.

Bauder next highlights the responsibility of the individual Christian (ch. 4). This specific Baptist distinctive encompasses both the individual Christian's call to understand and obey the word of God, and the priesthood of all believers. The author then turns our attention to the Baptist characteristic of having a congregational church government (ch. 5). Finally, Bauder contends that Baptists believe in the separation of church and state, arguing that, as a general rule, governments must not interfere with the free exercise of religion (ch. 6).

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH ORDER

In the second part of the book, Bauder shows how these Baptist distinctives relate to five practical issues facing Baptists today: how Baptists have sought to organize themselves in associations (ch. 7), why Baptist church councils are important and how to organize them (ch. 8), the problem of Landmarkism (ch. 9), baptismal regeneration (ch. 10), and how to organize a Baptist church (Ch. 11).

Again, there is much to commend in this section. Bauder has an excellent grasp of the history of the Northern Baptist movement and Northern Baptist fundamentalism. Thus, his history of various associations and the formation of local church councils is very accessible. In addition, his exhortation that Baptist churches “train the next generation of pastors for their churches” (156) and his commitment to church planting (243) are encouraging.

WHAT DOES BAPTISM SYMBOLIZE?

Bauder claims that this book will offer an answer to the question, “What is a Baptist?” for those unfamiliar with technical, theological language. Yet as a Baptist reading this book, at times I found myself thinking, “According to Bauder, am I really a Baptist?” Here's an example.

In chapter 2, “Believer Baptism,” Bauder seeks to address what baptism symbolizes. He says, “we have seen that baptism functions as a picture of the gospel, public profession of faith, as a first step of obedience, and as a badge of initiation and identification” (41). He continues, “Nevertheless, Baptists have always insisted that baptism does not wash away sins. It does not even symbolize washing” (41). In another place he states, “Baptism does not wash away sins, either literally or symbolically” (43).

Yet many Baptists in history have contended that baptism does indeed symbolize the washing away of sin. For example, chapter 40 of the *1644 London Baptist Confession* states:

The way and manner of the dispensing of this ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water: it being a sign, must answer the thing signified, which are these: first, the *washing the whole soul in the blood of Christ* [emphasis mine]; secondly, that interest the saints have in death, burial, and resurrection [of Christ]; thirdly, together with a confirmation of our faith, that as certainly as the body is buried under water, and rises again, so certainly shall the bodies of the saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ.

The text that these early Baptists used to communicate that baptism symbolized the washing of sin was Hebrews 10:22: “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (ESV).

Furthermore, when addressing the issue of baptism, the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession and the 1742 Philadelphia Baptist Confession both use Acts 22:16 to speak of baptism symbolizing the washing away of sin: “And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (ESV).

Thus, in light of Baptist history, it would seem that Bauder is too narrow in regard to this specific Baptist distinctive. Contrary to his claims, one can be a Baptist and believe that baptism symbolizes the washing away of sin.

IS A SINGLE ELDER SUFFICIENT FOR A LOCAL CHURCH?

Another place where I'd differ with Bauder's take on church order is his contention in chapter 5 that a church can have a plurality of elders, but that this form of church government is not a binding norm. He writes, "Permission does not constitute mandate" (102). He continues, "If the New Testament does give churches permission to have more than one elder, this permission does not entail a requirement for multiple elders" (102). Again, in another place he notes, "A single bishop is adequate to fulfill the requirements of 1 Timothy 3. If the text does not require plural elders, we have no right to require plural elders" (104).

However, I would argue that a plurality of elders is not merely permitted by the New Testament, but mandated, except for where providential circumstances inhibit. Paul appointed *multiple elders* in each church he planted (Acts 14:23). And commanded Titus to do the same, indicating that this was part of the "order" into which churches should be set (Tit. 1:5). Therefore, this is a pattern that churches should follow today, not merely an option (again, except for those places where circumstances hinder it). Further, while plural eldership is not a Baptist distinctive per se—many Baptist churches throughout history have had just one elder—it is nevertheless true that many Baptists throughout history have embraced plural eldership as the biblical model.¹

CONCLUSION

If you can confidently answer the question, "What is a Baptist?" then you might not need to purchase this book, though it could provide a useful refresher. This book is designed to be a primer on six Baptist distinctives, and, in that regard, it is a welcome addition.

¹ See, for example, James M. Renihan's statement that "the majority of the [seventeenth-century] Particular Baptists were committed to a plurality and parity of elders in their churches," believing plural eldership "necessary for a completed church" (*Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705* [Studies in Baptist History and Thought 17; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008], 101). See also William B. Johnson, the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention, who argues that churches today should have a plurality of elders (William B. Johnson, "The Gospel Developed," in Mark Dever, ed., *Polity: Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life* [Washington, DC: Center for Church Reform, 2001], 190-195).

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