

VIEW OF ELDERS / PASTORS

Biblical View and The Specific Roles and Expectations of Elders / Pastors

We believe the Word of God clearly teaches that elders (overseers, pastors) are to be the spiritual leaders of the local body of Christ. We believe that the scripture teaches that the elders should be male, plural, ministers in the body, servants, and qualified. In addition, the elders rule in a shared leadership that sets no one man in a place of solo or unchecked authority. Below are the scriptural principals that back these beliefs.

- I. MALE LEADERSHIP** – God’s Word ordained and demands that males alone can fill the leadership role of an elder. This was not an issue that only applied to the culture of the New Testament in the early first century of the Middle East. (*I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9*)
- A. Jesus appointed male apostles** – He blew away all cultural norms and bowed to no one’s culture. He could have changed male headship at this point and He did not. (*Mark 3:12-15*)
- B. In God’s teaching on marriage in *Ephesians 5:25-32***, the headship-submission roles are not about culture, they like our submission and Christ’s headship, are the essence of marriage. Women have leadership roles as deacons (I Tim. 3: 11, Rom. 16:1) in the scripture.

Summit Elders

- As elders we are called to live out the biblical model of manhood as demonstrated by Jesus. *Practically, we are to be men that other men can say to their boys – look at his life and watch his ways – this is what dad wants you to grow up like.*

II. SHARED LEADERSHIP – “equal say, different gifts.” “First among equals”

No where in the New Testament is there a place where one pastor was appointed with an under board. The first statement we use to describe our leadership model is “equal say, different gifts”. This means when an issue that affects the entire church must be decided, the entire elder team has equal input and say into how the matter will be decided. No one person has more power in their say than another. While each elder has equal say and we operate under the stance that all decisions will be unanimous, each elder does not have the same gift. Therefore some are teachers, some are administrators, some act more in the shepherd role, etc. Each leads as they are gifted. In addition, there is usually one that has a strong leadership and teaching gift that may lead him to be the “first among equals”. This does not give him more say in a vote, it just clarifies what is lived out by gifting. This person leads the team as a voice in the majority of the time. He is not the sole giver of vision or direction, and should not be the sole teacher. In keeping with the biblical evidence to this end, we have a teaching team and every elder has input into the vision and direction of the body. (Elders are plural in *Titus 1:5, I Tim 5:17; Acts 14:23, 15:2,6, 20:17; I Cor. 16:15-16; I Thess. 5:12-13; James 5:14; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24*)

Summit Elders

- * As elders we all have an equal say in all matters to be decided by the elders.
- * What is to be decided by the elders are: obvious matters that affect the whole of the body and matters that via discussion amongst the elders it is determined this is a matter the elders must decide. One elder can determine that this is an elder issue. Sensitivity to unity and not bogging the elders down with every matter must be taken into account.
- * All elder decisions must be a unanimous decision.
- * We will have a first amongst equals because of gifts and calling. This person, the lead pastor, will usually have the most widely heard voice, the most often heard voice, and will have the gifts to lead discussions that affect all. However, his vote is just one of the team.

- III. PASTORAL LEADERSHIP** – This means all elders are to be ministers of God’s grace actively involved in teaching, shepherding, and leading the people. The word pastor (*poimen*) is only used to describe a major function of the elder or overseer role – to shepherd. This team is not a board that just makes decisions. It

is on the front lines equipping the body to serve and serving alongside others. (*Acts 20:17-32 – Note in this passage and in I Peter 5:1-3, the terms elder, overseer, and pastor are used interchangeably to describe office and roles of the same person. It was not until the 2nd century that separate offices of pastor, elder, and overseer [or bishop] appeared on the scene in the church. All scriptural evidence and early church history point to a team of men who led the church serving as overseers of the ministries, pastors of the people, and elders in servant leadership and teaching.*)

Summit Elders

- * As elders, we will all be involved in pastoring and discipling men and couples in the body formally and informally. This means there needs to be times we are meeting with men (or couples) on a consistent basis helping them grow in the gospel in a way so they can give this away to others.
- * As elders, we will all shepherd a team or teams of deacons in this body. As we do this, we must oversee with care, truth, and love. This means we will need to spend time to meet the unique needs of the deacons we oversee.

IV. SERVANT LEADERSHIP – Ownership of the body is God’s alone and this demands that an elder lay down His life for the body of Christ. Servant leaders lead by example as Jesus did and this is an obvious qualification through scripture set by Jesus Himself. (*Acts 20:17-32*)

Summit Elders

- * As elders, we will oversee a ministry team or teams. If we directly lead the team, this will involve vision, direction, guidance, and development of leadership on the team. If do not directly lead the team, this will involve appointing and developing deacon leadership for this team and as this leadership develops, helping them be about the appointing and developing of further leadership for this team.
- * As elders, leading as servants means putting your team first as you lead them.
- * As elders, leading as servants means giving, setting-up, tearing down, etc. – alongside those you are working with.
- * As elders who lead, we must be about locating and developing future leaders.
- * On the Summit Elder Team – we will each be responsible for overseeing specific ministries. Not every elder will be involved in the daily oversight of every ministry. However, through constant communication, we must be aware and involved in the breadth of the body so we can be praying for and have wisdom when decisions need to be made.

V. QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP – Only men whose spiritual maturity is a way of life and not a series of acts to meet a goal are qualified to lead the body. “Above reproach” is the phrase used. This does not mean perfect or without error. It means – one whose maturity has no glaring weaknesses. The call to be an elder is a high calling and demands qualified men who lead out of who they are in Christ not out of what they think other’s need them to be or look like. (*I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9*)

Summit Elders

- * As elders, our family life comes first. If a season comes where this needs our full attention, we will step down for a temporary season to minister to our family.
- * As elders, our holiness is a result of daily gospel transformation. It is not a matter of a check list. We are held to a higher standard but much grace applies when we deal with an elder in sin.
- * As elders, we will meet twice a month to pray for the body, pray for one another, communicate, be further equipped together, and make needed decisions for the body.
- * As elders, we will try and gather all our families quarterly for connection, fun, and prayer.
- * As elders, we will try and retreat once a year for connection, fun, and prayer.