



Community: Its Purpose, Its Power, and Its Promise  
The Conclusion!

- It's Purpose: Commission

Gen 1:26-28

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

NKJV

- It's Power: Unity

Gen 11:5-7

5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. 6 And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them."

NKJV

- It's Promise: Discipleship

Matthew 16:18

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

NKJV

The first 13 apostles of Jesus listed in the New Testament were given authority by Jesus that no one else received after them.

- They were given the authority to perform the signs of an apostle. (2 Cor. 12:12)
- They were given the authority to bind and to lose in the church. (Matt. 18:18)

This is the language that the Jews would use to ordain a rabbi and it is only used in Matthew which is the gospel to the Jews. It meant the apostles were given authority determine right and wrong for the church of Jesus Christ. Peter was the first to receive this

authority because of he was the first to declare the deity and divinity of Jesus Christ. What Peter loosed declared as necessary to be believed and practiced by the disciples here, was ratified by God. And what he declared unlawful to be believed and practiced (i.e. what he bound), was actually forbidden by God himself.

- They were given the authority to turn wayward members of the church over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh so that their soul could be saved. (1 Cor. 5:5)
- They were given the authority to the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt. 16:19)

Peter was the first to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the Jews and then the gentiles. He used those keys at Pentecost with the Jews and then with the household of Cornelius for the Gentiles to receive forgiveness of sins.

Our faith in Jesus is founded on the apostles and the prophets. (Eph. 2:20)

The apostles ordained elders in the church. Elders were under the authority of the apostles and their instructions. God forbid that any elder should claim the authority of the apostles.

According to the New Testament, elders are responsible for the primary leadership and oversight of a church. The function and role of an elder is clear in the bible.

- Elders lead the church [[1 Tim 5:17](#); [Titus 1:7](#); [1 Peter 5:1-2](#); [Hebrews 13:7](#)]
- Elders teach and preach the Word [[1 Timothy 3:2](#); [2 Timothy 4:2](#); [Titus 1:9](#)]
- Elders exhort and admonish the saints in sound doctrine [[1 Timothy 4:13](#); [2 Timothy 3:13-17](#); [Titus 1:9](#)]
- Elders visit the sick and pray [[James 5:14](#); [Acts 6:4](#)]
- Elders judge doctrinal issues [[Acts 15:6](#)].
- Elders protect the church from false teachers [[Acts 20:17, 28-31](#)]

In biblical terminology, elders shepherd, oversee, lead, and care for the local church.

Elder, pastor, and overseer are not three different offices in the church. They are three different words for the same office used interchangeably.

[Acts 20:28](#)

[28](#) Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

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[1 Peter 5:1-4](#)

[The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.](#)

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The English word pastor occurs in the NT only one time.

[Eph. 4:11](#)

[11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers....](#)

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The Greek word that is translated pastor in Eph. 4:11 is translated shepherd the other 16 times it is used in the New Testament. This is the same word that is used to describe the function of Elders.

The chief role of the pastor/teacher in Eph. 4:11 is to feed the flock through teaching. This is the primary role of elders according to Titus 1:9.

The title Pastor in Eph. 4:11 is obviously talking about elders.

[Therefore, pastor, elder, and overseer are used interchangeable for the same office and describe the responsibilities of the same office.](#)

Our church currently has a plurality of elders. I have been appointed by our congregation according to our constitution to be the senior elder. As the senior elder I have been entrusted with the responsibility to be the primary teaching elder. As the senior elder I have been entrusted with the responsibility to determine how we are going to fulfill the mission of our church. This is also called the vision of our church. As the senior elder I have been entrusted with the responsibility of determining the jurisdictions and ministry responsibilities of our other elders and our church staff. As the senior elder I have been entrusted with the responsibility of directing the training of the elders on our church staff. I meet with them as a team on a monthly basis and I meet with each one of them one to one each week.

I do not have the authority to hire an elder to serve on our church staff. I do not have the authority to determine how the money of our church will be spent.

The congregation of our church determines who will be the senior elder, who will be hired to serve on our staff of elders, and how the money given to our church will be spent. Our church has a board of trustees made up of men who do not serve on our staff that make sure that we as staff elders are carrying out the will of the congregation.

- Teaching and preaching the Word is hard work.
- Protecting the church from false teachers is hard work and takes a lot of courage.
- Visiting the sick is hard work and can be disheartening.
- Counseling is hard work and can be discouraging.



But of all the responsibilities of being an elder, I think any of our elders would tell you that the most difficult responsibility in the contemporary church is leading.

And specifically I would say that the most challenging responsibility is leading the church to be a community that works together in unity to fulfill the mission of the church and leading individuals in the church who are making personal decisions.

Why?

- Leading the church is difficult because as a leader you do not always have a clear Word from God in the scripture that tells you what is the right thing to do.

It is difficult to always know the right the thing to do

In Acts 15 there were 2 different circumstances that were causing division among brothers.

In the first circumstance, the issue was circumcision and whether or not the church should require all gentiles to be circumcised.

In the second circumstance, the issue was a young man named John Mark and whether or not he was qualified to accompany the apostles Paul and Barnabas on their second missionary journey.

The first circumstance was a doctrinal issue. The second circumstance was a personal issue.

The most difficult decisions to make as a leader are those that are personal issues. But a decision had to be made so after a heated discussion Paul and Barnabas decided to form two missionary teams and go their separate ways. Leading the church is difficult because you do not always have a clear Word from God in scripture to guide you.

- Leading the church is difficult because all men are sinners (1 John 1:8)
  1. I am not perfect. My heart is not always right with God. My perception or my understanding is not always right.

I keep trying to learn from others that I see are effective and successful leaders. There have been times when I have followed the wrong counsel for our church that I received from someone I thought was trustworthy.

I keep trying to surround myself with men in our church that I see are effective and successful leaders. Unanimity in a committee meeting does not always mean you have discerned God's will.

But I do believe that in abundance of counselors there is wisdom. (Prov. 24:6)

2. You are not perfect. Your heart is not always right with God. Your perception or your understanding is not always right.

In your state of imperfection some of you do not trust God to work through your spiritual authorities.

Why?

- You have not been taught that God works through your spiritual authorities to guide your life. (Hebrews 13:17)  
Heb. 13:17  
17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.  
KJV

We should honor all our authorities and obey them as long as we are under their jurisdiction. (Romans 13:1). This includes our parents, our civil authorities, our employers, and any other organizations we join.

But God works through our spiritual authorities to guide the church and to give us guidance for personal matters.

Jesus guided 12 men to be his disciples. Those men guided a total of 120 people to an upper room in Jerusalem. They then guided 3000 new converts to Christ at Pentecost. They guided the church to devote themselves to their doctrine, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. They then guided them to sell their possessions and give to the poor. They then guided them to meet daily in the temple and meet house to house. They then guided the church to select seven men to serve as the first deacons.

In the gentile church the elders of the church at Antioch guided Paul and Barnabas to be missionaries. Paul then guided Timothy and Titus to become elders. Through Timothy and Titus God guided other men to become elders in the church...and so it goes!

God first used an associate Pastor and then my Pastor to guide me into the ministry. God used my Sunday School teacher to guide me to OBU. God used my BSU director at OBU to guide me to my late wife Debbie, to Southwestern Seminary, to First Baptist Yukon, and to Western Hills. They never gave me a command me about these things but I listened closely and seriously to their counsel, prayed about it, and followed it because I understood that God works through our spiritual authorities to guide our life.

Have you learned this yet? It would sure save you a lot of pain and suffering. It would sure help you fulfill your destiny. It would sure cause you to be less divisive in your local church. It would sure cause you to experience a greater sense of community in your local church. It would sure make it easier for your elders to lead you.

There are so many men in the church who want their wife or their children to respect their spiritual authority who do not respect the spiritual authority of their elders.

- You are a rebel by nature. (Eph. 2:1-3)

A rebel is self-centered. A rebel is proud and arrogant. A rebel does not want other people telling them what to do. A rebel listens to people who tell them what they want to hear. A rebel always makes excuses for not submitting to authority. A rebel leads others to rebel. A rebel is easily deceived. The freedom they seek always leads to slavery. (Debt; Disease; Divorce; Emotional disorders; Addiction; Prison; Death)

It is impossible to lead a rebel. The most challenging rebel to lead are independent religious rebels.

A rebel needs a new nature. (2 Peter 1:3-4) Only God can change your nature. Only God can make you into a new man. He will change your nature if you will receive His Son Jesus as your Lord and savior.

Invitation

- Repent for not submitting yourself to the guidance of your spiritual authorities.
- Repent for being a rebel.