

Copyright © 2021 Larry Edward Rednower

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

IMPLEMENTING A TRAINING MINISTRY FOR DEVELOPING
HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP AT NEW HAVEN
BAPTIST CHURCH, FLINT, MICHIGAN

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Larry Edward Rednower
May 2021

APPROVAL SHEET

IMPLEMENTING A TRAINING MINISTRY FOR DEVELOPING
HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP AT NEW HAVEN
BAPTIST CHURCH, FLINT, MICHIGAN

Larry Edward Rednower

Read and Approved by:

William D. Henard (Faculty Supervisor)

Timothy K. Beougher

Date _____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Context	1
Rationale	4
Purpose	5
Goals	5
Research Methodology	6
Definitions, Limitations, Delimitations	7
Conclusion	8
2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR DEVELOPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP	9
Exodus 18:13-27	9
Exodus 24:7-11	13
Titus 1:5-11	17
Acts 6:1-7	18
Acts 20:17-38	25
Ephesians 4:7-16	32
Conclusion	37
3. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPING HEALTHY LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN THE LOCAL CHURCH	39
Introduction	39

Chapter	Page
The Roman Catholic Model of Church Government	41
The Presbyterian (USA) Model of Church Government	43
The Congregational/Single Elder View of Church Government	46
The Congregational/Plural Eldership View of Church Government	49
Succession	56
Bridges	58
Conclusion	69
4. DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A COURSE ON HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP	71
The Six-Week Course	72
Conclusion	82
5. PROJECT EVALUATION	84
Evaluation of the Purpose	84
Evaluation of the Goals	85
Strengths of the Project	86
Weaknesses of the Project	89
What I Would Do Differently	90
Theological Reflections	92
Strategies Going Forward	93
Personal Reflections	95
Conclusion	96
 Appendix	
1. SURVEY QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE THE KNOWLEDGE OF BIBLICAL AND HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP	98
2. LESSONS ON HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP	101
3. PASTORAL INTERVIEWS	118
BIBLIOGRAPHY	120

PREFACE

First, I want to thank the New Haven Baptist Church for allowing me the time to study through all the years of my pastorate. It is a true joy to be your pastor. I also thank my dear and patient wife for letting me leave boxes of books scattered throughout the dining room for so many months. My gratitude should also be expressed to Dr. Bill Henard, my patient supervisor during the writing of the project. Finally, and most of all, I thank our Lord Jesus Christ who gave me strength and skill to complete this project.

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev 5:8)

Larry Rednower

Flint, Michigan

May 2021

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Through the years a pastor comes to see that leadership is crucial. It is even more crucial in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the church the gospel is preached, people's destinies are changed, and the Word of God goes forth. Healthy leadership may be seen in the corporations and organizations that make up our country, but it must also be seen in the church. For the church to then extend its ministry past its own day, it must train leaders as an intentional part of its ministry.

Context

The issues within the ministry setting that have given rise to this project stem from a church plant of the New Haven Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan, in 2006. The attempted and successful completion of a church plant produced unexpected problems within the original congregation.

An unusual and vigorous division developed among the lay leadership over distribution of finances. These difficulties were exacerbated by the downturn in the economy in Flint, Michigan, and around the country in 2006 and 2007. Many of the older members of the church were factory workers at General Motors which had laid off many of its local workers and closed several of its factories. Therefore, a widespread pessimism crept in and produced a tendency to challenge local mission efforts and new church plant and introduce a debilitating withdrawal of local mission efforts. There was much discussion about cutting back and saving money rather than spending money on needed programs. Further, in our naiveté, we thought that "If we build it they will come." We built the new facility and then tried to gather the congregation. It was perhaps a lack of

wisdom and an excess of zeal that prompted the church to do so. The congregation learned that sometimes people may just get tired of all the work and just go to church somewhere else.

The success of the new church plant with an accompanying insecurity on the part of a few older and somewhat disgruntled members, who were still the primary decision-makers, was also a problem. Some of these older members felt their positions were being crowded out and in some cases it was true. The church had nearly doubled with younger families who simply did not want to sit in classes of older teachers who seemed out of touch or whose lessons were thought to be irrelevant to the experience of their Christian life. The younger Christian men did not want to be led by what they considered a hesitant and timid board of deacons.

The unexpected resignation of the mission pastor was a further complication. The church had originally intended that the original pastor of the church would take the 11 a.m. service of the new congregation and the assistant pastor would take the other 11 a.m. service of the mother church. He had adequate support from the North American Mission Board. When he suddenly resigned, there was no time to find such support for another pastor. That meant that the present pastor had to serve both congregations until such time as adequate support could be raised. It also meant that one of the churches had to move the worship time to 10 a.m. rather than 11 a.m. Which one? To the younger leaders, it was obvious that the older members were more likely to attend an earlier service. For the older members, some of the more vocal ones declared, "We were here first." This dispute led to a rancorous business session in which the debate turned on who should get up one hour earlier. Since a Baptist church is ruled by a majority and the younger and newer families were a majority, it was decided the original and older congregation should go to a 10 a.m. worship service and Sunday school would follow. The result was a further weakening of the fellowship and an exodus of many of the church's critics. Again, there was less money in the offerings.

Several areas have shown encouraging signs. Although the mother church had been reduced to half its normal attendance and was in serious decline, several things began to happen in sequence. First, the remaining members of the original and sponsoring church developed an assurance that the pastor was not going to leave them in such a low state. It was with this encouragement that they labored for over two years. They gained the confidence that, if they had to start over, it would be with the same leadership that had helped them build up the congregation in the beginning.

Secondly, a talented young man from the new congregation felt led by the Holy Spirit to come and help with the music program. He developed a band and led the worship. He brought his young and talented wife and little baby. These musicians attracted other musicians and soon the church had one of the best worship bands in the area. As a young family, they also attracted other young families. Income began to rise to the point that the church was able to pay him a small but regular amount each week for expenses. Morale began to build and people were being encouraged.

Third, the mission church grew to the point where it could financially support the older church until it could recover. The new church graciously gave to repair the buildings of the older congregation, contributed to the church staff salaries, attended other functions important to both churches, and reached out in love and kindness with ways they had not done previously. Several events were planned together, and a successful revival was held as joint effort. With the shrill voices gone, healing had begun.

Finally, in what can only be described as one of the greatest morale builders to date, the large and well-known mortgage holder, approached the church with a most remarkable offer. Knowing the financial pressures the church was under with the new buildings and grounds, they had come up with a plan that would write off over two-thirds of the mortgage amount. This would reduce the mortgage payment from twelve thousand per month to less than three thousand per month. For many people, including me, it was nothing less than a miracle. The bank and both churches together made it happen.

New Haven Baptist Church now seemed poised for a great comeback. With many of the older leaders gone, who would be the new decision-makers? How will they be chosen? Who should be chosen? The crisis events brought out weaknesses in leadership that surprised everyone. The church does not want to repeat that mistake so, what are the characteristics that reveal a healthy leader? What are the duties and qualifications of these new leaders? This project was needed because the church needed new leaders and new kinds of leaders. A curriculum on healthy church leadership enabled the new and younger members to select their primary leaders for years to come. With this project and intervention, it seems that a return to powerful momentum may be achieved once again.

Rationale

There was a lack of mature leadership at New Haven Baptist Church since many of the older leaders died, moved, or left the congregation altogether. The issues to be addressed in this project were the lack of leaders, the lack of maturity in the leaders then present, and the lack of discernment the church as a whole brought to the leadership issue. Several events have brought the church to the place where new leaders and leadership training was needed.

For one, the sponsoring church had an aging congregation. Many of the younger congregants have joined the new church. This older body of believers now needed to prepare for the future and choose leaders. Many did not feel qualified to do this activity. In truth, many actually lacked such qualifications and their feelings are justified. Further, the church has had two deacons for at least fifteen years. One of them had an invalid wife, now deceased, and had little time to deal with church issues. The other deacon has a heart problem that forbids him from taking on any stressful ministry that might require lifting, rigorous labor, intense interaction, or any other activity of a robust nature.

In addition to the older congregation being in need of new leaders, the new church plant has been without a recognized diaconate for ten years. The previous board

of directors has disbanded and a pastor, treasurer, finance chairman, and two music directors, are the limits of the entire decision making body in both congregations.

Further, as the sixty-nine-year-old pastor, I see the great need for training a new generation of young Christians to take leadership positions. They must see not only the need, but the importance of the qualifications and foundations of biblical leadership. Although both churches now seem stable, it will take new leadership that is chosen by an informed membership to lead the congregations in the twenty-first century.

Finally, there was an opportunity to bring an entirely new way of thinking about church and its offices and gifts to both congregations. This lack of leadership is actually an open door. The opportunity could not be missed. There was also a sense of urgency and importance on the issue of leadership currently present in the churches. What does the Bible teach? Should the church have a plurality of elders? How important are the gifts of the Spirit? How biblical are committees? Other questions were, what is distinctive about Baptists and how important are these distinctions? These are a few of the questions being asked. It was now time for definite answers.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a six-week course on healthy church leadership at New Haven Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan.

Goals

Three goals evaluated the success of this project.

1. The first goal was to evaluate the knowledge of healthy church leadership among the key leaders of New Haven Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-week course for healthy leadership.
3. The third goal was to increase the knowledge of healthy church leadership by implementing the six-week course.

Research Methodology

The success of the project was determined by three goals. The first goal was to evaluate the knowledge of healthy church leadership among the key leaders of New Haven Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan. In the first week of the project, a questionnaire helped to determine the leadership knowledge of key members. The pre-project questionnaire tested participants' knowledge of church leadership. Evaluating the knowledge of the key leaders included knowledge of the terms used for leadership in the Old Testament and the New Testament. This goal also assessed the church's faithfulness to the patterns of both Old and the New Testament. The goal was deemed successful when the pre-project test was completed and the participants' knowledge of the key leaders was determined.

The second goal was to develop a six-week course for healthy leadership. This course was taught during a six-week period. The course sought to include precision in the definitions of leadership terms from the Old and New Testaments as well as practical application for the church. This course was discussed and evaluated by at least three local pastors in the State of Michigan and the Genesee Baptist Association. These pastors evaluated the course and its conclusions for biblical faithfulness and loyalty to the Southern Baptist Faith and Message.¹

The third goal was to increase the knowledge of healthy church leadership by implementing the six-week course. This goal sought to increase knowledge of healthy church leadership by defining terms, explaining the historical and biblical backgrounds of the terms, and exegeting relevant passages of Scripture. This goal was measured by a pre- and post-project test to evaluate the knowledge of the current leadership. This test measured the knowledge of healthy church leadership before the six-week course and then after the six-week course. Success was determined when the post project test showed

¹ See appendix 3.

an 80 percent positive statistical difference in the biblical knowledge of church leadership among the participants.

Definitions, Limitations, Delimitations

The following terms are used throughout the project.

Leadership. *Leadership* is defined as “someone who presides over or comes to the aid of others,”² based on Romans 12:6. This definition will apply to “elders” in the church also.

Elders. An *elder* is also be considered as a “bishop” or “pastor” (Titus 1:5, 6). The synonymous use of *elder* and *bishop* is seen by comparing 1 Timothy 3:1 with Paul’s similar passage in Titus 1:5, 6. Paul uses the terms interchangeably in these passages.

Disciple. A *disciple* is defined as someone who is a Christian but in varying degrees of maturity. After studying the term for many years, Michael Wilkins writes,

The term “disciple” is simply the most common title for a person who has made a commitment of faith to Jesus. Disciples were not called because they were better than other people; they were called as sinners who were in need of salvation and were transformed by their association with Jesus.³

Wilkins also writes, “The disciples are never characterized as a higher form of believer. Indeed, the picture painted of them is quite negative at points. Rather, the disciples are examples of the normal process of growth for all Christians.”⁴ One also notes that in Acts 11:26, “The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”⁵ These texts indicate the terms are essentially synonymous. Therefore, just as there are varying degrees of maturity in a Christian, so there are varying degrees of maturity and progress with a disciple.

² Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996), 768.

³Michael J. Wilkins, *Following the Master: A Biblical Theology of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 133.

⁴ Wilkins, *Following the Master*, 133.

⁵ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

The limitation of this project was the six-week minimum time allotment for the ministry project. A delimitation was the six-week period in which the students completed the course. Another delimitation was the number of qualified people chosen to take the course. This selection was based on the level of commitment and maturity already demonstrated and the amount of time available to the volunteers during the course of instruction. Further, this project was only available to the membership of New Haven Baptist Church and to men and women who were willing to meet on a regular basis and are over sixteen years of age. The entire project required six to eight weeks.

Conclusion

This project raised awareness of the need for healthy church leadership at New Haven Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan, and assisted the church toward the selection of the next generation of leaders.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION
FOR DEVELOPING CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Leadership is as old as the book of Genesis. God led Adam but gave him authority to function and have dominion under God's leadership. Adam led Eve and she was given to him as a "helpmeet" (Gen 2:18). In recent years, hundreds of books on church leadership have been published and promoted as essential for growth and health in the local church. The Bible presents the training and cultivation of healthy leadership among God's people as a priority in both the Old and New Testaments. This training is necessary to expand and extend the work of God. It is also vital to the increase and protection of the spiritual health of God's people. This chapter seeks to show the biblical basis for healthy leadership as well as the need for its succession to the next generation.

Exodus 18:13-27

One of the first biblical texts to show the importance of leadership and its wider participation is found in the Book of Exodus:

The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws." Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will

bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.” So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went away to his own country. (Exod 18:13-27)

The background of the story in Exodus 18 is the deliverance and guidance from the man Moses as he leads the tribes of Israel who had been in Egyptian bondage for 400 years. It was quite a crowd. Exodus 12:37 says, “And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children.”¹ There must have been close to three million people counting the women and children. Once in the wilderness, this number of people, nearly all former slaves and servants, had many conflicts and disagreements during the journey. A casual reading of the book of Numbers bears this fact out (11:1-3; 14:1-4; 14:1-11; 16:41). Moses would sit down each day and settle the disputes by teaching the people what God wanted them to do and making decisions for them. This exercise led to the practice in the New Testament of “The Chair of Moses.” Matthew 23:1-3 says, “Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, so practice and observe whatever they tell you—but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice.’” Not only does this text indicate that the Scribes and Pharisees viewed themselves as being in the place of Moses in New Testament times, but also that their verdicts on theology and conduct were considered final at that time. Even today Christian teachers speak of the “chair of philosophy” or the “chair of evangelism.”

During one of Moses’ busiest days, his father-in-law, Jethro, came to see him and bring to him his wife and sons to reunite his family together. Jethro feared God, and over the course of the many years that Moses spent with him in his household, he must have had numerous conversations about the true God. Jethro was received warmly, and

¹ After discussing the Hebrew word *elep* (a “thousand”), Victor P. Hamilton acknowledges that he knows of no translation that alters the number of “600,000” men, although he calls it “stratospheric.” See Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 194.

after the telling of the Exodus story, he confesses his faith: “Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them. And Jethro, Moses’ father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses’ father in law before God” (Exod 18:11-12). Moses and Jethro worship together. Then, Jethro watched Moses as he judged, counseled, and was the final arbiter for approximately three million people.

Jethro decided to give Moses some advice:

Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing is not good. 18 You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. 19 Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God. (Exod 18:17-19)

Jethro tells Moses he will exhaust himself and the people too if he maintains this daily routine. Therefore, he makes this suggestion:

Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace. (Exod 18:21-23)

Jethro’s guidance was simple. Moses should delegate his authority to qualified men. He should focus on finding reputable men who would share in the decision-making process on behalf of the people of Israel. Jethro’s advice was: do not implement these judgments on your own. If you do, you will burn out spiritually or physically or both. The people will grow frustrated and exhausted as well. If you delegate, the decisions the people will go to their place in peace (Exod 18:23). The overall picture is that of delegation, not only for the sake of the leader, but also for the people who are led. Readers of Exodus 18 may observe that there is one basic leader, Moses. Moses recognizes that the next generation will follow a similar pattern. He even prays for the people that the next leader would be one man functioning as a shepherd over the flock: “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation

who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd” (Num 27:16-17).

Moses is not alone, however. This one man also has a necessary team. This concept of one leader with a team is found, not only in Exodus 18, but is confirmed in Numbers 11 as well:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. 17 And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone. (Num 11:16, 17)

These elders also participate in the decision-making process as the equivalent of the people they represent.² The kingdom of God was evidently made visible when the people of God came together and Moses met with the “heads” over them. Deuteronomy 33:4-5 says, “Moses commanded us a law as a possession for the assembly of Jacob. Thus the Lord became king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people were gathered and the tribes of Israel met together.” In fact, when these leaders made a decision on behalf of the people, it held up even when the people disagreed with it. The leaders acted as representatives of the people to the extent that the leadership decision was the equivalent of the people’s decision. Joshua 9:18-21 reads,

But the people of Israel did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. Then all the congregation murmured against the leaders. But all the leaders said to all the congregation, “We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them. This we will do to them: let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them.” And the leaders said to them, “Let them live.” So they became cutters of wood and drawers of water for all the congregation, just as the leaders had said of them.

² This practice seems to have developed more fully in Israel as time passed. See for example, Ezra 10:14: “Let our officials stand for the whole assembly. Let all in our cities who have taken foreign wives come at appointed times, and with them the elders and judges of every city.”

Christian teachers might also point out that when the heads that led the people did not protect the people from idolatry and sin, it was their heads that “rolled” (they were hanged), not the people (Num 25:4). The reader may then see that in the Old Covenant, there was generally a single man at the helm with supporting eldership at his side. These leaders and their teams worked in sync on behalf of God and his people in the same spirit of faith. This concept of eldership continues through the Old Testament with similar duties and qualifications (2 Sam 5:3).

Exodus 24:7-11

This model of eldership is further developed and illustrated in Exodus 24:7-11:

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.” Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

After the preparation of the people for entering the covenant (Exod 19) and the verbal acceptance of the covenant document (Exod 24:3), Moses and the elders actually represent the people before God and then God to the people.³ The substance of Exodus 20-24, which comprises the content of the covenant, may be divided into two sections: the “commandments” (Exod 20) and the “ordinances” (Exod 21-23). William Dumbrell outlines the sections:

But there is a clear distinction made between the Decalogue of Exodus 20 and the further legal material of chapters 21-23. This is a distinction which is observable firstly in name, perhaps to heighten the intimacy of the nature of the divine address and to underscore its personal nature, is styled in Hebrew as the “ten words.” The social, economic, and agricultural commands of chapters 21-23 are termed “judgments,” and the most customary sense which the Heb. term *mishpat* (judgement) is that of a case decision which rests on some prior precedent established.⁴

³ For an introduction to ancient covenants and covenant making ceremonies, see Meredith G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Eugene, OR: Wipac and Stock, 1989).

⁴ William G. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation* (Carlisle, CA: Paternoster, 1984), 92.

Dumbrell concludes that Moses and these elders represent the people even in the fellowship that follows the document agreements: “Seventy elders are now summoned to come up to the mountain where they conclude a meal in God’s presence. Fellowship thus follows upon covenant and consecration.”⁵ The fellowship of Moses and the elders as they ate with God was the equivalent of the people eating with God. Some have viewed the making of the covenant in Exodus 24 with the New Covenant and the observance of Holy Communion.⁶ Others have viewed Jesus and the church as a new Israel.⁷ This theme continues when Jesus chooses twelve disciples as the new beginning of the new Israel and then the seventy evangelists (Luke 10:1), which correspond to the seventy elders in Exodus 24.⁸ That concept may be true. The Old Testament does seem to be a purpose-built echo chamber for the New Testament message as well as the organization of churches.

Is Moses a Pattern for New Testament Pastors?

The question might be asked as to whether Moses can be a valid paradigm for a New Testament pastor. Moses said of himself that he was a prototype of coming prophets and ultimately the Messiah himself: “You shall be blameless before the Lord your God, for these nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do this. The

⁵ Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 94.

⁶ See for example John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018), 182.

⁷ R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, England: Intervarsity, 1985), 86.

⁸ I still remember the first time I heard the twelve patriarchs and the seventy elders in Exod 24 was an adumbration of the seventy evangelists in Luke 10:1. Although only the KJV and NKJV translate Luke 10:1 as seventy (following the Majority Text), James B. Jordan of Niceville, FL, first brought this comparison to my attention. Jordan brought out the similarities between Israel and the church in a cassette tape over thirty years ago. Sadly, over the years, I have lost access to the tape and to Jordan but the points he made still impress me to this day. For an example of how James B. Jordan uses the Old Testament, see James B. Jordan, *Through New Eyes, Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999).

Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen” (Deut 18:13-15).⁹

Peter found this prediction to be significant enough that he quotes it in the New Testament in one of his first sermons: “Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people’” (Acts 3:22-23). Can Moses also be a paradigm for New Testament pastors? The short answer is yes, since pastors are also expressions of the risen life of the Messiah.

There are several evidences of such applications of Moses as a pattern pastor in the New Testament. For example, Moses was commanded to teach: “And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess” (Deut 4:14). In the same way, the New Testament pastor is to be a teacher (1 Tim 4:11). Moses is also called a “servant of the Lord” (Josh 12:6); so too, Timothy is called a “servant of the Lord” (2 Tim 2:24). Moses is called a “man of God” (Deut 33:1); Timothy is called a “man of God” (1 Tim 6:11). Moses also “charges” his successor, Joshua (Deut 3:28); Paul charges his protégé Timothy (1 Tim 1:18). Moses lays hands on Joshua (Deut 34:9); Paul lays hands on Timothy (2 Tim 1:6).

An interesting distinction in the Torah is that Moses is set apart from the other elders of the Israel: “Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, “Keep the whole commandment that I command you today” (Deut 27:1). In the same way, the teaching pastor is distinguished from the other elders in the New Testament congregation: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17). A further indication that Moses may be paradigmatic is that Paul uses episodes from Moses’ life to warn his students of men who would resist the truth, just as Moses had men who did the same.

⁹ The passage may not be particularly messianic as much as it simply sets out the standards for being a prophet, of which Christ was one.

Second Timothy 3:8-9 says, “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.” Phillip Towner writes,

Paul alludes to these two figures generally in the way that the rabbinic writers did. His readers presumably know the developments surrounding these two characters in tradition. The function of the reference is to link the present (eschatological) adversaries—the false teachers—with the age-old spirit of deception and opposition embodied in the figures. In this appropriation of the traditional symbol the unity of God’s story is understood: what has gone around is now (again, in “the last days”) coming around. The pattern established in the early stage of God’s story of redemption finds new yet continuous expression in the opposition of “the last days.” Equally present in the adoption of the analogy, though more implicit, is a comparison of Moses’ authority with Paul’s. As in the seminal story, so in the latter days God’s representatives and people will triumph over all opposition.¹⁰

Moses may therefore be used as a pattern for New Testament pastors, but some restraint is advisable with such a hermeneutic. In the New Testament, just as in the Old Testament, God’s leaders have similar characteristics. Delegating authority is seen here in Exodus as one of those traits that, not only the Messiah showed with his disciples (Matt 28:18-20), but both Old and New Testament leaders have in common. In this way Moses is a pattern. Victor Hamilton also sees parallels and qualifications according to the patterns of Exodus 18 and 24. In addition, the apostles delegate certain ministries to the first deacons of Acts 6:3-4:

The twelve apostles will have more than enough to do as they give themselves to “prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The seven “male” deacons are “chosen” (6:3) to take care of the daily needs of certain widows who might otherwise be neglected (6:1). But not just any men will do. They too must demonstrate certain assets: “full of the Spirit and wisdom” (6:3a)¹¹.

From these texts and patterns, one sees the emerging forms of leadership and the delegation of authority with God’s people.

¹⁰ Phillip H. Towner, “1, 2, Timothy and Titus,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 907.

¹¹ Hamilton, *Exodus*, 288.

Titus 1:5-11

Paul begins his letter to Titus by telling him to recruit new leaders for the church and by describing the leadership that a church requires. Paul's requirements may be described as "being" (Titus 1:6-9) and then "doing" (Titus 1:10, 11). Titus is given the assignment of finding a certain kind of person who can do a certain type of work. In "being a certain kind of person," Paul says,

If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9)

In the "doing" section, Paul says, "For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, specifically those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach" (Titus 1:10-11). Paul ordained and appointed Titus to this weighty task of choosing effective leaders in Crete. Donald Guthrie thinks there is an orderly pattern of delegation and succession here in Titus 1 when he writes,

While there does not appear to be any uniformity to Paul's practice there is no reason to doubt that he ordained elders on his first missionary journeys where occasion arose. It is essential for Christian churches to possess some orderly scheme of government and the apostle had previously impressed this on his close associates. In the phrase, as I appointed thee (RSV better 'as I directed you') the I is emphatic, bringing out, not Paul's egotism, but his authoritative endorsement of the elder-system. The close link between elder and bishop seems to show that the terms are virtually synonymous.¹²

It should be noted that Titus' job in Crete is somewhat different than Timothy's job in Ephesus. George T. Montague points out,

The challenge Titus faces is very different from that facing Timothy. The latter is in charge of a relatively mature community, where leaders are already in place and where attention must be given to the qualifications of any new appointees. But in Crete the communities are without presbyters and the church is a young, tiny seed planted in rough soil. Though we do not otherwise know of a visit by Paul to Crete,

¹² Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 184.

the situation presented in this letter that he left Titus with much organizing work still to be done. Paul's directives in this letter tend therefore to be more forceful and urgent.¹³

Just as in Exodus, there is a heavy emphasis on character, marriage and family, as well as one's standing in the community. Additionally, just as in Exodus 18, there is a delegation to others. Paul is delegating the work and protection of the church to Titus, and then Titus delegates the same work to the Cretan elders. Readers may see the leading work of one man, Paul, then the one man, Titus. The work may be relatively easier with Timothy or more difficult for Titus, but the vocabulary and the transfer of authority expresses continuity, not only between Timothy and Titus, but the Old Covenant and the New Covenant people of God. This process is a very real delegation of authority. To stop the growth of false teaching in the new community of faith, it was essential to have a new generation of leaders. These new elders will be stewards of God's new church in Crete. They are being recruited for a solemn and awful task; it is truly being handed over to them. They will soon have no Paul or a Titus to give direction. H. H. Harvey writes, "In fact, Titus was to remain there only till the coming fall or winter, and then come to Paul at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), from which last place he probably accompanied the apostle to Rome, and thence went, not to Crete again, but to Dalmatia (2 Timothy 4:10). There is no evidence whatever, in or out of Scripture, that Titus was ever again in Crete."¹⁴

Whether it is Moses to Israel's elders or Paul to Timothy and Titus, there are not only men led by God but also men who prepare for the next generation.

Acts 6:1-7

The book of Acts displays a time of numerical growth in the church. Acts also gives rich insights into the need for new leadership:

¹³ George T. Montague, *First and Second Timothy, and Titus*, A Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, ed. Peter Williams and Mary Healy (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 217.

¹⁴ H. H. Harvey, *Commentary on The Pastoral Epistles, First and Second Timothy and Titus and The Epistle to Philemon* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1890), 129.

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:1-7)

In Acts 6, the apostles handled a wide array of necessary activities that accompanied a burgeoning church. The church does not have to be exploding in growth before it demands attention for a great many things to which the pastor may not be qualified or called. A pastor may be required to serve as a marriage counselor, youth director, legal advisor, loan specialist, janitor, architect, grounds keeper, exorcist, prophet, teacher, evangelist, author, administrator, fund-raiser, motivational speaker, and certainly an intercessor. His role may also likely include being a husband, father, grandfather, neighbor, and friend. Relationships count. The apostles, though, knew that their time must primarily be given to two things:

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pickout from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:2-4)

One may view the first apostles as the first New Testament pastors. Their office is called a "bishopruck" (Acts 1:20 KJV).¹⁵ In a church, the pastor or bishop may be in charge of the benevolence fund as part of his job requirements or because no one else seems to be suited or willing to do that particular job. The early apostles found themselves with responsibilities which they did not feel was their highest calling and greatest priority. There are always people in need of monetary assistance. All of ministry

¹⁵ Acts 1:20 reads, "For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopruck let another take" (AV).

is important. What should the pastor's priorities be in light of these varied job descriptions listed above and the urgencies of the moment? The early church experienced this dispute between the Christian Greek-speaking widows and the Christian Hebrew-speaking widows as to how much they receive from the church's largess. After all, Jerusalem was Jewish and the majority of the new Christians would have had at least some Jewish background, so such mistakes in distribution would have been easy to make. One has no doubt the intention to meet people's need in a just and equitable manner was in the church from the beginning. The apostles acted quickly. F. F. Bruce explains,

They therefore called the community together and bade them to select seven men to be responsible for administering the charitable allocation. These seven must be of honorable reputation so that their probity might command complete confidence; they must be wise men, competent in administration and also qualified to deal wisely with a situation where there were such delicate human susceptibilities to consider; above all, they must be men filled with the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

The reader sees, once again, the emerging pattern in the Old Testament come to fullness in the New Testament. The apostles summoned the congregation together and well qualified men were ordained to do this particular work. They were chosen with sensitivity to their spirituality, maturity, and cultural background (Greek). The spiritual leaders were then free to spend more time with God to get his daily guidance and to be steeped in the Holy Scripture. R. C. Sproul writes,

Every year, seventeen thousand ministers in America leave the ministry. A primary reason is that ministers in the modern church are not encouraged, equipped, enabled, or allowed to devote themselves to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Today a minister is expected to be the CEO of a corporation. He expected to do the administration and the work of development; he is expected to be an expert in counseling and pastoral care. As a result, we have raised up generations of pastors who are jacks of all trades and masters of none, and one of the reasons why they do not open the Word of God for the congregation on Sunday morning is that they do not know how. They have spent their time learning everything else but the texts of Scripture.¹⁷

¹⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 128.

¹⁷ R. C. Sproul, *Acts*, Saint Andrews Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 127.

Both the apostles and the people were now happy with this new arrangement and the church prospered and grew.

A period of extended growth and prosperity followed the organizing of the new deacons and the delegating of authority to the new ministry. This process enabled the apostles to maintain their true calling and priority.

The Primacy of Preaching and Prayer

Jesus was the first apostle (Heb 3:1) because he was sent from the Father to preach the Word of God. Mark 1:36-38 says, “And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” How did Jesus get his sermons? How did he know what to say? How did he know which texts to use or even where to go to preach? This guidance comes from prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Jesus carried a great weight: the very Word of God. He never spoke unless God told him what to say: “So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me” (John 8:28). Also, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works” (John 14:10). Further, John 12:48-50 says,

The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.”

It is also evident that he not only kept his teaching to exactly the words and teaching that God gave him, but that these words were laden with great solemnity. Believing these words brought eternal life (John 12:50) The twelve apostles recognized this truth as they progressively recognized who Jesus was as the Messiah of the Jews: “So Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘Do you want to go away as well?’ Simon Peter answered him,

‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God’” (John 6:67-69).¹⁸

His words, which God gave him to speak, brought eternal life. No one else had such words. Having received these words, the apostles were sent to preach the same: “And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). Just as God gave the words to Jesus, so Jesus gave the words to these twelve apostles who were sent with the same task and same content: “Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me” (John 17:7-8). The words were handed to the disciples just as Jesus had received them from God. They were inviolate and inerrant. This included even the vocabulary. This message was now in the hands of the disciples of Jesus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:18-20). The disciples were not commissioned to march in a protest of the Roman government and its oppressive iron hand, nor were they ordained to be community organizers or to spend their energies in social and charitable causes. These things may have been good, but the apostles’ lives and times were fraught with the gravity of the words of eternal life. These were God’s own words through Jesus Christ. Paul also recognized this weight: “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess 2:13). To reject such words from Jesus

¹⁸ It is not until Matt 16:16 that Peter confessed Jesus was the Christ (Messiah). Even then, the disciples did not seem to understand that the Messiah had to die on a cross. Note Matt 16:21-22: “From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.’”

through the apostles was to reject Jesus for they preached Jesus' word, which he had received from the Father. Such rejection was a rejection not only of Jesus the Messiah, but God himself: "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me" (John 13:20). The judgement accrued from such rejection would be worse than one can imagine: "And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town" (Matt 10:14-15).

There could be nothing more breathtaking to a man than such a charge as this would be to his heart and soul. These apostles had to get it right; they had to say it right; they had to do it right; they had to pray so their preaching was right because it was the very Word of God and the hearer's eternal destiny rested on their response. The pattern comes into focus. God delegates authority and message to Jesus. Jesus transfers the same to the apostles. Often with prayer and fasting, the apostles then ordain elders in the congregation and charge them with the same task: "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed" (Acts 14:23). The succession of revelation from heaven continues through the preaching of the Word of God and the prayers of those early preachers. As the church grows, problems arise. This requires a new and different kind of leadership found in Acts 6. The apostles ordained seven servants to assist in the affairs of the new church. This new leadership enabled the Word of God to be proclaimed unhindered and more effectively than ever.¹⁹

¹⁹ It is stated in Acts that, after the selection of new leaders, "The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith" (6:7).

Are These the First Deacons?

The noun “deacon” is not actually used here in Acts 6, but the verb form is used in verse 2.²⁰ Some Baptist churches have used this passage to argue that the pastor is in charge of the pulpit and the deacons are in charge of the money—that argument is hard to sustain from Acts 6. A deacon is a servant. He serves Christ, the church, and the pastors. George M. Cole wrote a little booklet years ago of his take on the origins of the Greek word *dia-konia* or “deacon,” which is used in the New Testament:

Etymologically, the word is a compound Greek word, “dia” - through, and “konis” – dust, according to Thayer. Dr. A. T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar of another generation declares: “The original meaning of “dea-konos” is ‘one who executes the commands of another, a servant, attendant, minister.’” The original meaning of the word is that of a servant who in his haste to do the bidding of his master raises dust in his diligence.²¹

One might think of the master in his chariot with his faithful servant running in the dust beside him. The servant is ready to be dispatched to whatever assignment he is given. Perhaps that is a bit overstated, but it should be noted that these first deacons, if indeed they were deacons, were not given any authority over the church or the apostles. The apostles laid their hands on these servants of the people, thus extending and delegating their authority to them. This method is according to the pattern of Moses with Joshua (Num 27:18, 19). The reader would not think that the early deacons would be calling meetings or requiring the apostles to give account of themselves or their ministries. They were to balance out the full ministry of the apostles. Albert Mohler, Jr. writes,

Deacons, according to the Scripture, are to function as the chief servants within the church. In fact, the Greek word deacon (diakonos) means “servant”. Deacons are qualified members of the church (1 Timothy 3:8:13 who serve the physical and administrative needs of the body. Some churches today view deacons as primary leaders and teachers within the church. But the New Testament is quite clear that the task of theological leadership falls to the overseers-elders or pastors-of a congregation (1 Tim 3:1-7).²²

²⁰ “To serve (diakonien) tables” (Acts 6:2).

²¹ G. M. Cole, *What Is a Deacon?* (Fort Worth, TX: Thomas and Morrow, 1964), 7.

²² R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *Acts 1-12 for You* (n.p.: Good Book, 2018), 90.

The deacons insured that the ministries of the Word of God and the practical mercies of God flowed out from the church. These first deacons were extensions of the ministry of the apostles and may have been temporarily appointed. After Acts 6 they are not even known as deacons, but whenever they are referred to, as Stephen for example, he is a “great worker of miracles” (Acts 6:8) and later on, Philip is an “evangelist” (Acts 21:8). The reader may conclude that serving as a deacon or benevolence seemed to be their primary task. As the church grew and spread geographically, the role of the deacon became more than just a temporary assignment. Paul develops character description of the deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-11:

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.

Further, when Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, he specified the two leadership groups in that early church: “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons” (Phil 1:1). Deacons were evidently necessary to the unity and effectiveness of the early church.

As the young church matured, the two primary leadership groups became known as the bishops and deacons.

Acts 20:17-38

Paul is generally known as an evangelist and church planter. In this passage one also finds he is a brilliant and passionate organizer with a gift for delegation.

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that

I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship. (Acts 20:17-38)

This journey is Paul's third missionary journey. He is anxious for some final words to the churches in Ephesus. Paul wanted to go to Ephesus but his desire to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost was a priority. Bruce writes,

In spite of his natural desire to see Ephesus again, Paul had decided that this was impossible if he was to be sure of reaching Jerusalem in time for Pentecost: therefore, instead of setting sail from Troas in a ship which called at Ephesus, he chose a quicker one which took the straight course from Chios to Samos, across the mouth of the Ephesian Gulf.²³

A rare glimpse into the heart and life of the apostle Paul may be seen in this passage. To stay on schedule, he decided to have the elders come to him in Miletus.

While the ship remained in harbor at Meletus, Paul sent a message to Ephesus, which lay some thirty miles away, asking the elders of the church in that city to come and see him. Ramsay calculates that they arrived at Miletus on the third day of Paul's stay there. Paul's desire was to give them such encouragement and exhortation as they needed, and the speech that follows (vv. 18-35) gives a summary of what he said (Acts 20:17-38)

One sees Paul's passion, message, commitment, conscience, warning, commendation, example, and final departure.

²³ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 410.

Paul's Passion (20:19)

Paul's humble approach to ministry along with the tears shed in his sincere teaching ministry had built up the church in Ephesus and made it strong in the faith. This ministry lasted over two years (Acts 19:8-10). Paul was emotionally invested in the church. One may learn from this Pauline passion that effective ministry often flows from a heart that loves people and cares about them fervently.

Paul's Message (20:20-21)

Paul's ministry in Ephesus was characterized by teaching the Ephesians whatever was profitable. Teaching and evangelism were his main efforts in Ephesus. Paul was not a man with a lot of goals. He was single minded in teaching and evangelism. Paul's priority and passion would save many pastors from what Thom Rainer calls "ministry schizophrenia," which occurs when "churches and church leaders are not sure who they are."²⁴ Paul taught for three months in the synagogue and then for two years in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10). Ignorance is darkness and biblical ignorance is even greater darkness. Day after day, week after week, Paul taught until all of Asia heard the Word of God (Acts 19:10). Thom Rainer also writes, "Perhaps one of my greatest concerns about the church in America is the well-documented ignorance that many Christians have about the doctrine of the faith. Without a clear understanding of what we believe, we lose our distinction, our reason for existence, our direction, and our purpose."²⁵ This passage links up with Acts 6 and the ministry of the apostles. Just as the early apostles gave priority to preaching and prayer (Acts 6:4) so Paul gave his emphasis to preaching and teaching whatever was profitable (20:20), including repentance and faith in Jesus as Messiah (20:21), the gospel of the grace of God (20:24), and the kingdom (20:25). He left nothing out that might be difficult or offensive and included the whole

²⁴ Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 21.

²⁵ Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 73.

counsel of God (Acts 20:27). He is now passing this ministry on to the elders of the church. He tells the elders that they are now to be the overseers of the church, which God bought with his own blood (20:28). R. C. Sproul writes,

At the beginning of this text Paul speaks about assembled elders. Later on, he calls them to pay attention to the tasks to which they have been delivered as guardians and shepherds of the flock. The English translations have “guardians” or “overseers” or shepherds” of the flock when the word in Greek is *episcopos*, the very word from which we the word Episcopalian, which everywhere else in the Bible is translated by the English word, “bishop”. The difficulty of discerning the biblical structure of church government occurs because in the same context Paul calls those assembled here “elders” and “bishops,” indicating that, at least at that stage in church history, the titles “elder” and “bishop” were used interchangeably.²⁶

To confirm Sproul, it is notable that Paul uses this vocabulary in 1 Timothy 3 when he calls the elder a bishop and then gives the necessary qualifications for him. These similar traits are used in 1 Timothy 3 for the office of a bishop.²⁷ This teaching and preaching ministry protects the church and its privilege and authority is passed on to the next generation of elders.

Paul’s Commitment (20:22-24)

Paul knew that hard times lay ahead (20:23). Even imprisonment and other afflictions were coming. His concern was not his own life or what would happen to him in the near future. His primary concern was to finish the course God had given him and the ministry he had received from the Lord Jesus (20:24). Paul did not guard his own life, but he guarded the church’s life. This oversight, or bishopric, he now delegated to the elders. Paul set the example for all elders or bishops who would follow in his steps.

Paul’s Conscience (20:25-27)

Paul knew in his heart that he would never be back to Ephesus (20:25). Even though that was a grief to him, he also knew that he had done what he could. Paul says he

²⁶ Sproul, *Acts*, 345.

²⁷ Compare 1 Tim 3:1-7 with Titus 1:5-9. This is further evidence the terms “elder” and “bishop” are interchangeable.

guarded the church before himself or his own finances. He proclaimed himself as innocent of the blood of all men (20:26). He had done all he could. He had trained men to follow his example. He was turning it all over to them. He had finished in Ephesus what God had assigned him. The leader has not finished the work until there are men and women to whom the leader can now entrust the work and the life of the church. The prophetic call of Ezekiel could be heard in his ears. As a watchman, the prophet was responsible for the safety of the city. To sleep or wander from the assigned post would bring blood guilt upon your head. Ezekiel 33:1-7 says,

The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman, and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people, then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand. So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me.” Paul had blown the trumpet. He had warned the city. There was no blood on his head or his hands. He now gives that charge to the elders of Ephesus.

It is important for the pastor to conclude his ministry with a clear conscience. There must be nothing stolen, no stumbling blocks laid in front of new Christians, and no hidden sins that can be revealed and dishonor Christ and his church.

Paul’s Warning (20:28-31)

Paul’s final words are more specific. There are bad actors waiting in the wings. When he is gone, they will make their appearance. They will not come from outside the church but from within their own congregations (20:29, 30). They will not draw disciples to Jesus Christ the Lord but will seek to attract the sheep to themselves. Sproul writes about Paul’s words:

In this concern, he echoed Jesus, who warned, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matt. 7:15). The secular people are not the concern. We know where they stand. It is the clergy who

to be watched. It has always been the clergy. The greatest threat to the nation of Israel was not the Philistines or the Syrians or the Babylonians but the false prophets in the midst of the people who took the truth of God and twisted it and distorted it and carried away the people to idolatry. Jesus greatest enemies were the clergy of his day, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Church history bears witness to the fact that those who bring unbelief into the church are not the secular professors; they are the seminary professors who deny the resurrection and the cross and train ministers of a new generation to deny the very essence of biblical truth. The church lives out the drama of *Little Red Riding Hood* every day.²⁸

Paul indicates that the greatest threat will come from professed Christians, and even more, self-styled clergy and teachers who for money or status sow seeds of doubt in a whole generation. There are or were professed Christians who take a liberal and skeptical approach to the Christian faith in general and to the Bible's reliability in particular.²⁹ It matters little their motives because the results are the same. Paul says to be on guard against them.

Paul's Commendation (20:32)

Paul now leaves the elders in the care and oversight of God and his Word. They are to care for the church, and they also have one who cares for them. These elders are not left without resources. They have their God and the Word of God. Paul is not leaving them just any word, or even the words of the law of Moses, but it is the Word of Grace (20:32). There is evidence that indeed Paul's warning came to pass. Bruce writes,

That this development did in fact take place at Ephesus is evident from the Pastoral Epistles (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19f.; 4:1 ff.; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17 f.; 2:1 ff.) and from the letter to the Ephesian church in Rev. 2:1 ff. The Pastoral Epistles tell of a general revolt against Paul's teaching throughout the province of Asia; and John is bidden to reproach the Christians of Ephesus for having abandoned their first love.³⁰

²⁸ Sproul, *Acts*, 348.

²⁹ See for example, Bart Erhman, *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005). For a rebuttal of Erhman and others like him, see Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2007).

³⁰ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 417.

There may have been a restoration by the second century, according to Sproul. He quotes second century Ignatius that there was a revival in the Ephesian church and that it was restored.³¹

Paul's Example (20:33-35)

In this section Paul reminds the leaders of the example he had lived out in front of them. Some of these elders or even many of them may have come to Christ during Paul's ministry there. They had been close enough, long enough to know his life. They had watched him, and they knew Paul was real. He worked hard (20:34) and made enough to help those who were vulnerable in society (20:35). He offers a quote from Jesus that one would otherwise not have had since it is not given anywhere else in the four gospels. Paul passes on a lesson about the blessing that giving is greater than the receiving. He learned it from Jesus. He passes it to the elders. The pattern of succession continues in the apostles and the elders continues.

Paul's Departure (20:36-38)

Paul must bid them farewell. In this emotion laden scene Paul kneels in prayer. The normal posture for Jewish prayer was standing (Matt 11:25) while lifting hands to God (1 Tim 2:8). Here, Paul, probably with the others, knelt down and prayed. To kneel was a sign of special need and distress (Luke 22:41). Though in great anguish, Paul does his duty and departs for Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost. Other ministry awaits, and other trials as well. Paul will not be deterred. Before he departs, he made sure that the elders of the church know that the church is going to need them. Wolves are coming and they must be alert. What Paul did for them they must now be prepared to do for others. They must protect the flock of God, the church of Jesus Christ. Albert Mohler summarizes,

³¹ Sproul, *Acts*, 348.

In fact, Paul, as so often, has a strategic, Christ-centered impulse which drives his mission. Paul has intentionally disengaged himself from the direct oversight and leadership of the Ephesian church. When Paul first moved into a given region, he would go to the synagogue and preach to the Jews. He would then preach to the Gentiles. After he had established a church, he would work to grow the congregation organically through indigenous leadership. His ultimate goal was to have a local, autonomous, self-sufficient congregation.³²

Paul is an example of a leader who recognizes the importance of the next generation leaders and makes provision for them. He has not only taught them but has modeled true leadership before them.

Ephesians 4:7-16

In Ephesians 4:7-16, Paul connects the various gifts and leadership with the ascension of Christ. Gifted men are from Christ and Christ has graciously poured out his Spirit upon them. Paul says,

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph 4:7-16)

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul described the Christian life as being greatly blessed by God (1:3). The Christian is chosen (1:4), predestined (1:5), adopted (1:5b), redeemed (1:7), obtained an inheritance (1:11), and sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13). The Christian is loved by God (2:4), quickened, and raised up with Christ (2:4-6). All of this was from God and for his glory (2:8-10). Paul continues this litany of

³² R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *Acts 13-28 for You* (n.p.: Good Book, 2019), 109.

wonders to the Christian all the way through chapter 3, where he concludes with a passionate prayer for the believers in Ephesus (3:14-21).

Beginning in chapter 4, Paul turns to the Christian lifestyle in light of all God has done for the church. The Christian is to be different. What God has done will issue forth in how the Christian lives. The Christian will embrace unity with other believers and will grow in maturity as a church (4:13). The Christian will no longer be a child, susceptible to every prevailing social change (4:14a) or to deceitful people who would lead him astray (4:14b). The Christian will grow up in every way as he depends on the living Christ (4:15), growing spiritually and loving one another (4:16). The question is, how does the believer get there? How do believers reach their potential as a church and obtain by experience all that is given at salvation? The answer lies in Ephesians 4:9-12:

In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and the pastor-teachers are to equip the saints for the work of ministry so that they are is built up and become strong through the risen Christ. The saints are to do the ministry. These gifted men empower the saints. The authority of the ascended Christ flows through gifted men to enable them in their work. These apostles (Eph 4:11) are probably not the original twelve apostles since the power mentioned here flows from the ascended heavenly Christ and not the earthly Christ. They may be viewed as those who begin a work of God, which would include missionaries, church planters, and others who can cross cultures and live in new environments. They expand into new territories. Some of those who fall into this more extended category of apostles include Barnabas (Acts 14:4; 1 Cor. 9:6), Andronicas, and Junia (s) (Romans 16:7). There were likely many others.³³

³³ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 257.

Prophets are those unique individuals who can give a revelation from God as regards the present duties or future dangers. God's people can anticipate the problem and act accordingly. Acts 11:28-29 says, "And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). Thus, the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea." The prophetic ministry was evidently widespread in the first century and Paul told the church in Thessalonica to test everything and hold on to that which is beneficial (1 Thess 5:20-22). Paul does not want the church to be gullible. Evangelists were able to present a persuasive case for the gospel. Such a one was Philip. Clinton Arnold says evangelists were "those individuals within the churches whom the ascended Christ had especially gifted to make known the redemptive message of 'the gospel.' . . . Luke referred to Philip as one who was gifted in this fashion (Acts 21:8), and Paul appeals to Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5)."³⁴

In Old Testament paganism, one had to be an evangelist to his idols and bring the false god news of victory of his enemies (1 Sam 31:8, 9). In the New Testament, the one who brings good news is seen taking the news of victory to the people from their God, for he has won the battle and has been exalted on high. Frank Theilman suggests, "'Evangelists,' then, are probably those whom God has especially equipped to travel from place to place with the good news of peace through Christ."³⁵

Finally, the "pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11) would be the stable and local shepherds of the flock who labor in the word and doctrine (1 Tim 5:17). After discussing the functions and views on whether the pastor and teacher are identical, Theilman suggests they are "leaders within the Christian communities who held positions of

³⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 259.

³⁵ Frank Theilman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 274.

authority and were charged with the communities' well-being.”³⁶ The word “bishop” seems to be the title of the office indicating authority. “Elder” seems to be their qualification, indicating maturity. “Pastor (shepherd)” seems to be their function or description. Teaching seems to be their primary calling and the means by which they protect and guard the flock of God.

These gifted men then equip the saints to do ministries that God calls them to do, which builds up the body of Christ into maturity and love. The reader can discern observable patterns in the organization of God’s people in both the Old and the New Testament. God’s people have always had leaders and those leaders have always had a team of support. Leaders of each generation would train the next so that the spiritual and doctrinal health of the elect may be secured.

Does the New Testament Teach One Man Leadership?

One final issue regarding governance in the local New Testament church needs to be addressed. Is church governance an eldership of qualified men over the church or a single individual who leads them all? It is clear that there are persuasive reasons for believing in a plurality of elders. Mark Dever writes, “Before Jesus established the church, the Jewish towns of Palestine were accustomed to being governed by multiple elders. Thus, in Luke 7:3, the centurion sent several elders of the local Jewish community in Capernaum to Jesus to plead on his behalf for help.”³⁷

The Old Testament speaks regularly about elders in the plural (Num 11:16; Deut 9:12). If someone was sick, James prescribed the contacting of the elders (plural) in the local church to come and pray (Jas 5:14). This text leads John MacArthur to write,

Nearly every church we know of in the New Testament is specifically said to have elders. We are told, for example, that “from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and

³⁶ Theilman, *Ephesians*, 276.

³⁷ Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 57.

called to him the elders from the church” (Acts 20:17). It is significant that the church at Ephesus had elders, because all the churches of Asia Minor—such as those listed in Revelation 1:1—were extensions of the ministry at Ephesus. We can assume that those churches established their leadership after the pattern in Ephesus, namely, that of a plurality of elders.³⁸

There is also evidence that, among those elders, most often a single candidate would arise with unusual gifts and leadership qualities. This idea is first seen in the Old Testament with Moses and his elders. Moses prayed for a single man:

Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.” (Num 27:15-18).

A single office for the bishop may be the reason 1 Timothy describes the “bishop” in the singular (3:1-7) but the “deacons” in the plural (1 Tim 3:8-13). Further, when circumcision became a controversial issue in the book of Acts, the text says, “The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter” (Acts 15:6). but after everyone spoke, it was James, the leading figure in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17) who gave the final “sentence” (ESV) or “judgement” (KJV), indicating a final decision. James’ decision came after listening to such stalwarts as Peter and Paul. James is indeed giving oversight. It may be that among the elders, there was a leading role, supported by church finances, that enabled some to labor in the Word and doctrine. As seen previously, their priority was preaching and teaching: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim 5:7). Further, the reader can see how the angel/messengers of Revelation 2 and 3 would have been a single individual.³⁹ They were the “leaders” (TLB) of the individual church. They were given a message to the churches. It was not a letter sent to all the elders, just

³⁸ John MacArthur, *Ephesians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 147.

³⁹ It would be difficult to understand how a literal angel could have delivered the sermon. The best translation of *angelos* is “messenger.” For an example of this usage, note Luke 7:24.

the one who would deliver the message. Dever sums up the subject of a single preaching elder:

In the New Testament, we find hints of the main preacher being distinct from the rest of the elders. There are a number of references in the New Testament to preaching and preachers that would apply to all the elders in a congregation. For example, in Corinth Paul gave himself exclusively to preaching in a way that nonstaff elders in a church could not. Probably the church only supported a limited number of elders full-time (cf. Acts 18:5; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 4:13; 5:17), whereas elders seemed to be already part of the local community (Titus :1:5).⁴⁰

The place of a leader among leaders can be found to be biblical and helpful when it is time for the next generation to lead.

Conclusion

God has always had a people. As far back as Cain and Abel, there was division between the lost and the saved (1 John 3:12). Leaders always emerge from among God's people. These gifted and charismatic men are often effective communicators and motivators. Among these leaders, a single man emerges, such as Moses and the elders of Israel; Samuel and the prophets; David and his mighty men; or Peter and the apostles. One is the bishop among the pastors. He is equally an elder and does not lord it over them but humbly serves them. These successors are carefully chosen for their maturity, spirituality, and even cultural backgrounds. In the Old Testament and in the New Testament church, these positions and titles are often given by a public ceremony. Moses laid hands on Joshua (Num 27:18), and Paul laid hands on Timothy (2 Tim 1:6). Among the leaders, some are especially adept at understanding, interpreting, and communicating the Scriptures (1 Tim 5:17). Although the position of leader has similar and delegated authority, the preaching and teaching position has the priority. Finally, a local church may also have a variety of preaching skills and abilities, which different needs and conditions require (Eph 4:11).

⁴⁰ Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 242.

The texts in this chapter show the importance of healthy church leadership and the necessity of training them and delegating authority to them. At some point, new leaders will succeed present leaders. It is preferable and more biblical that these leaders be trained and authorized by the local church. Since these new leaders will succeed present leaders, this intentional training and guidance will make their succession a successful.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR
DEVELOPING HEALTHY LEADERSHIP
TRAINING IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Introduction

The intimate and life-giving union which the risen Christ maintains with his people by the Holy Spirit does not exclude structure or expansion. For this maintenance and expansion to be effective, God has ordained leadership in the local church. Leadership training not only enhances the body of Christ but also fulfills the discipleship models in the New Testament and extends the church's future beyond a single leader or a single generation. Before church leaders can implement the training of other church leaders, there must be some measure of understanding of what these leaders should do and where they fit in the context of the New Testament. The reader may ask of what church authority consists or from where church authority comes? In Daniel Akin's book on theology, Mark Dever states in his section on the church that "God's eternal plan has always been to display his glory not just through individuals but through a corporate body."¹ Dever's high regard for the local church is seen when he states, "The congregation's responsibilities cannot be delegated."² The church cannot relinquish its authority to outside entities. As it retains autonomy under Christ, it maintains its calling and dignity.

Both Israel and the church bear similar titles in the Bible, thus indicating their continuity.³ They also share the same vocabulary regarding church leadership, such as

¹ Mark Dever, *A Theology for the Church*, rev. ed., ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B & H, 2014), 604.

² Dever, *A Theology for the Church*, 624.

³ Dever, *A Theology for the Church*, 605.

“elders” and even the word “church.”⁴ Dever writes, “The direct evidence in the New Testament indicates that the common and even expected practice was to have a plurality of elders in each local congregation.”⁵ It is not difficult to observe that churches and denominations have often divided over the forms that church government should take. Several models have emerged over time. Church leaders may categorize these into four basic models, and though I will use my own terminology, I will draw from and interact with these four models from the work of Steven B. Cowan.⁶ At the same time, I recognize other works that summarize and describe these same models though sometimes under different names.⁷ To make the point that the issue of church government is important in history, Cowan writes,

Disagreements over matters of ecclesiology, including forms of church government, have been the source of numerous church schisms in church history. For example, in seventeenth century England, ecclesiological debates led to the formation of three major Protestant traditions. The Presbyterians and the Congregationalists separated from the Church of England and in part from each other over the nature of church government. Baptists parted ways with all of the above over disagreements involving either infant baptism or church government.⁸

From his response of the hierarchical model, Peter Toon explains,

It is amazing to me that among those who make the claim that sacred Scripture is authoritative not only for faith and morals but also for the details of church government, there is no agreement as to precisely the church polity presented and taught by our Lord and his apostles. If the sovereign Lord had intended to make the precise details of church government part of the apostolic message, then he would have surely caused his servant to make the matter clear to all of sound mind. . . . One problem that stares all of us in the face is that the godly readers (or professors with their Ph.D.'s using the most advanced exegetical tools) do not agree on what the New Testament says and how it is to be interpreted and collated. Further, it

⁴ See for example Exod 24:9 and Titus 1:5 for “elders.” Further, Acts 7:38 calls Israel “the church in the wilderness.”

⁵ Dever, *A Theology for the Church*, 631.

⁶ Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Who Runs the Church? 4 Views on Church Government* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

⁷ See for example Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman, eds., *Perspectives on Church Government* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2004).

⁸ Steven B. Cowan, “Introduction,” in Cowan, *Who Runs the Church?*, 8.

appears that most seem to find therein what they had in their minds before they began to look at the documents!⁹

It is important to bring clarity and confidence to the issue of church government and how it should be exercised before new leaders can emerge successfully. Those who would lead use this greater clarity and confidence to ensure greater unity and true authority in training the leaders of the local church.

The Roman Catholic Model of Church Government

One approach to New Testament leadership and perhaps one of the oldest with a post-AD70 background is a hierarchy or episcopacy.¹⁰ This model was seen primarily in the development of the Roman Catholic Church and its very influential bishops in the early years of the Roman church. Partly because Rome became central and authoritative in the first century, it took on a special role of protection and guidance for the other churches much like large and influential mega-churches do today. Since evangelism was a priority in the early church, the gospel spread throughout the Roman Empire. L. Roy Taylor notes this in his section on Presbyterianism:

By the late second century (the time of Irenaeus and Tertullian) bishops had begun to oversee several churches within a geographical area. In the mid third century, Cyprian had proposed the idea of the prominence of Peter and those who followed him as the bishops of Rome though he regarded the other apostles with high honor and authority. Cyprian called Rome, the *matrix et radix* (“womb and root”) of the church. . . . By the Council of Nicea (AD 325), urban bishops were given prominence over rural bishops. Five of the major cities of the Roman Empire had become centers for Christian expansion. . . . Rome was regarded as “first among equals”; Constantinople was second. Callixtus, bishop of Rome (AD 217-220, claimed to be pontifex *maximus* (highest pontiff) and *episcopus episcoporum* (bishop of bishops), though Tertullian sarcastically denounced such pretensions.¹¹

The place of martyrdom for many early Christians, including Paul and presumably Peter, also added to the mystique with which many first-century Christians

⁹ Peter Toon, “An Episcopalian’s Response,” in Cowan, *Who Runs the Church?*, 222.

¹⁰ Cowan uses the term “episcopacy” for this particular model of church government. I have chosen the term “Roman Catholic” simply for teaching purposes. It is the most recognizable and largest of the hierarchical forms.

¹¹ L. Roy Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” in Cowan, *Who Runs the Church?*, 88.

viewed the Roman congregations. Over the centuries, these developments morphed into the Roman Catholic model. This model may be considered a “top down” form of government. It is also called “the Episcopalian” form of government.¹² This form of church government, as Cowan explains, “Is hierarchical, with the bishop ordaining and governing the leaders (often called priests or rectors of several local parish churches. The territory and churches over which the bishop rules is called a ‘diocese.’ In many episcopal denominations, an archbishop has authority over many (or all) the other bishops.”¹³ In other words, decisions come from outside the church and include the operations of the schools and buildings associated with the congregations. Even the Sunday liturgy and readings are assigned from an external authority. Individual voting has little influence on the direction or the leadership of the church. During the Reformation Period, the Roman Catholic Church did not recognize Protestant churches as true churches. The reasons were not only doctrinal but ecclesiastical. R. C. Sproul writes, “The Reformers wrestled with that question, since Rome did not recognize the Protestant churches as authentic. Rome said in the past that the church can be defined like this: Where the bishop is, there is the church, and if there is no authorization by a Roman bishop, then whatever societies spring up are not valid churches.”¹⁴

Some movement to return to the Roman Catholic Church has taken place (among the more congregationally-run churches) because, to them, such hierarchy reduces conflict and controversy. A lack of personal and deeper participation in any organization is preferable to many modern Americans. They desire to avoid stress in their church experience.

¹² Cowan, “Introduction,” 12.

¹³ Cowan, “Introduction,” 12.

¹⁴ R. C. Sproul, *What Is the Church?* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2013), 62.

A weakness of the Roman Catholic model is its emphasis on the tradition and history of the church rather than the New Testament. Toon, however, points to the patristic period of the early church to commend it for a present-day church polity. He calls it the “Anglican” approach:

The Anglican approach to doctrine, worship, discipline, and polity has been deeply influenced by the commitment to norms found in the patristic period of the early church. This commitment has been put simply in terms of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The Anglican Way rests upon *one* canon of Scripture with *two* testaments, *three* creeds (Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian, summarizing the essentials of the catholic faith as found in Holy Scripture), *four* ecumenical councils (from Nicea in AD 325 to Chalcedon AD 451, setting forth dogma, doctrine, and canon law) and *five centuries* of historical development (of polity, canon law, liturgy, etc.). Thus any exposition of Anglican polity or church government is always an exercise in the use of Scripture and tradition. The full authority of Scripture is not in question or doubt but the way it is received and interpreted is significant.¹⁵

Other denominations that follow the hierarchical model of the Roman Catholics would include (but are not limited to) Eastern Orthodox Churches, Episcopal Church in the United States, United Methodists, and some Lutheran congregations.¹⁶

The Presbyterian (USA) Model of Church Government

The Presbyterian Model is described by L. Roy Taylor as consisting of a “session,” a “presbytery,” a “synod,” and a “general assembly” He explains,

The representative leaders in a local church are the ministers and elders, called a *session* in the Presbyterian tradition or a *consistory* in the continental Reformed tradition. The *presbytery* is the church court consisting of ministers and ruling elders representing churches from a smaller geographical area. A *synod* is the church court consisting of ministers and ruling elders representing the church in a larger geographical area. The *general assembly* is the church court consisting of ministers and ruling elders representing churches from the entire denomination.¹⁷

For the Presbyterian church, the beginning of authority lies in the congregation. Therein lies much of the difference with the Roman Catholic system. The Presbyterian model is not “top down” until it is first “bottom up.” Apart from the doctrinal differences

¹⁵ Toon, “Episcopalians,” 24.

¹⁶ Cowan, “Introduction,” 13.

¹⁷ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 74.

with the Roman Catholic model, though, much of the authority and participation of the local church is then given over to the governing decisions of the bureaucracy. To the dispassionate laymen, this model may seem indistinguishable from the Roman Catholic form.

Taylor argues for the benefits of this Presbyterian form of government, not only from its doctrinal fidelity but also its mutual accountability. He brings in his basic marks of a true church to buttress this Presbyterian form of government:

Historically, the Reformed-Presbyterian church have regarded the “marks of the church” to be (1) the faithful preaching of the Word, (2) the proper administration of the sacraments, and (3) the practice of discipline. In a Presbyterian system, the members of the local church are accountable to the elders of that church, ministers and churches are accountable to the presbytery, and presbyteries are accountable to the general assembly. Carefully detailed procedures are to be followed once a judicial process of discipline has been instituted.¹⁸

Another cogent argument from Taylor is his appeal to the whole biblical revelation of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament:

When Presbyterians discuss church government we begin in the Old Testament because we believe that the church composed of the people of God in both the Old and New Testament. Presbyterians believe that the church is not exclusively a new Testament body of God’s people, but that it spans testaments. That is, the church originated in the Old Testament and the New Testament church is directly connected to the Old Testament company of the people of God. . . . Therefore, Presbyterian ecclesiology (theology of the church) prefers the term “biblical church,” not just the “New Testament church.”¹⁹

Taylor’s references to the continuity of the two Testaments is appealing. Moses summoned the elders to let them know God sent him to lead them to the promised land (Exod 3:16). Elders accompanied Moses to announce their intentions to Pharaoh (Exod 3:18). Seventy elders accompanied Moses to worship in confirmation of the covenant (Exod 24:9-11). When Moses prayed for God to kill him because he could not

¹⁸ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 97.

¹⁹ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 76. It should be noted that, at the time of his writing, Taylor was the stated clerk/coordinator of administration of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. This differs substantially from the United Presbyterian Church in USA, which is much more liberal. One could even call it apostate.

carry the burden, God gave him seventy elders (Num 11:14-16). Joshua continued the practice of eldership and shared leadership after he entered the land (Josh 8:10). Ezra recognized the need for the leaders to represent the whole assembly (Ezra 10:14). This practice of shared leadership took on special significance after the exile of the nation of Israel to Babylon in AD 586. Taylor describes the growth and major development of elders and shared leadership after the exile:

Though the office of elder as spiritual leader was instituted in the days of Moses over 1,400 years before Christ, it did not blossom until the inauguration of the synagogue system in the sixth century BC. After the Babylonians destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 586 BC and deported the people of Judah, the exiles began to gather for the reading of Scripture, worship, the exposition of Scripture, and prayer.²⁰

The postexilic spread of synagogues (especially before the temple was rebuilt) brought the role of Jewish eldership into full relief. When Jesus and Paul began to preach in the first century, numerous synagogues were scattered throughout the Mediterranean region from which they could launch their preaching and teaching missions. Taylor makes several references to New Testament eldership (Acts 20:28, 6:4; 1 Tim 4:14; Jas 5:14, etc.), which he believes is the natural development from the Old Testament patterns.²¹ He also connects the Presbyterian form of government with the teaching of John Calvin.²² Paige Patterson responds to all this evidence by saying,

The two major differences between these positions focus on the final nature of scriptural authority and the question of the relationship of the church to the Old Testament people of God. First, regarding the authority of Scripture, I was surprised to read the advocacy of “church courts” consisting of sessions, presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies. Where is the precedent or mandate for these “courts” in the Bible? Some arguments might be marshaled for presbyteries in the New Testament sense, but the others are without mention in the early church. Surely this system of “courts” belongs to a post-New Testament era. If so, then how does Taylor’s scheme

²⁰ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 78.

²¹ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 80.

²² Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 90.

differ from that of Toon [Roman Catholic]? Both essentially find the New Testament pattern inadequate or, at the very least, in need of future development.²³

The Congregational/Single Elder View of Church Government

The congregational/single elder form of government rises from the congregation itself. This form posits two offices in the church: the bishop and the deacon (Phil 1:1).²⁴

The bishop is also called a pastor or an elder. Paige Patterson writes of this congregational model by stating,

Although congregationalism is no guarantee that a church will get things right, this paradigm still seems preferable to me for three reasons. First, any sort of hierarchical system is in the nature of the case a bureaucracy, and bureaucracies are seldom efficient and often self-serving. Second, the long history of abuse in hierarchical forms of church government provides its own warning. Finally, the burden of proof for the necessity of abandoning the congregationalism that seems often present in the New Testament still rests on the advocates of elder rule and Presbyterianism.²⁵

Patterson also makes the case for the single elder (or, bishop) with four arguments:

First, the general pattern that emerges in the Bible that God calls a leader from among the people. Moses was clearly the leader from among the people. Moses was clearly the leader assisted by Aaron and others. In the book of Judges God would raise up one judge at a time to deliver Israel from oppression. . . . There are twelve apostles, but soon Peter seems to emerge as the de facto leader. The testimony of Acts 15 seems to suggest that however many elders there were, James the half brother of the Lord seems to be recognized as the pastor in Jerusalem.

Second, this pattern is also true to the development of church history and the psychology of leadership. John Chrysostom was the obvious pastor at Antioch and later at Saint Sophia's in Constantinople. Augustine was the clear leader at Hippo. Jonathan Edwards was the pastor at Northampton, etc. Even in congregations where more than one elder functions, the contemporary milieu often finds one designated as senior pastor, almost always a reference to his priority in leadership rather than to his age.

Third, most scholars acknowledge the synagogue's influence on the life and worship of the early church. And most synagogues apparently had a stated leader, a archisunagogos, the president of the synagogue . . .

²³ Paige Patterson, "A Single Elder Congregationalist's Response," in Cowan, *Who Runs the Church?*, 109.

²⁴ Paige Patterson, "Single Elder Congregationalism," in Cowan, *Who Runs the Church?*, 134.

²⁵ Patterson, "A Single Elder Congregationalist's Response," 108.

Finally, note that the letters sent to seven historical congregations in Asia Minor appearing the Apocalypse are addressed “the angel of the church” at Ephesus, at Smyrna, etc. Various proposals can be found for the identification of these “messengers” thus addressed and a final conclusion is doubtless not possible. However, the majority of the commentators seem to favor the position that this is John’s reference to the pastor of the congregation.²⁶

Patterson has criticized the use of the Old Testament as a pattern for New Testament governance,²⁷ so it difficult to understand how his first point appeals to the Old Testament for his single elder view. He also labors to appeal to the Old Testament while holding to an extreme position of discontinuity between Israel and the church, even suggesting that the church is not one body at this present time, even in the gospel, and that he doubts the church will be one throughout eternity.²⁸ This view is hard to fathom in light Paul’s clear words to the Ephesian church that believers are all “members of the same body” (Eph 3:6) and also Paul’s words to the Galatians that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Also, if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:28-29). Patterson continues,

A connection of grace certainly exists between the operation of God in the Old Testament and the revelation of the church in the New Testament era. But by the same token the church is a mystery of God anticipated in the Old Testament only by references a coming new covenant, promises of a Messiah, and the vision of an era of Gentile responsiveness to God (Jer. 31:27-40). According to Paul, this mystery of the church was not made known to the sons of men in other ages but was revealed by the Spirit only to his holy apostles and prophets, namely, that the Gentiles should be included in the plan of God (Eph. 3:1-7). This mystery, Paul continues, was hidden by God, only to be made known by the church (vv. 9-10).²⁹

Patterson then argues from this discontinuity that the Old Testament did not anticipate the church and so New Testament believers should not draw polity from it. Paul actually said that the mystery “was not made known to the sons of men in other

²⁶ Patterson, “Single Elder Congregationalism,” 150-51.

²⁷ Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist’s Response,” 109.

²⁸ Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist’s Response,” 109.

²⁹ Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist’s Response,” 110.

generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles” (Eph 3:5). Paul does not say that it was not revealed; rather, he says it was not revealed as it is now. There was certainly development in the progress of revelation in the Old Testament but not quite the great disconnect which Patterson asserts in one place and then appeals to in another.

These views of a single eldership do have several admirable points. Like Patterson, the single elder view often prefers Scripture as the single most important authority and even the single authority to follow in determining the model of church government. His view of apostolic succession is commendable when he writes, “True apostolic succession is maintaining and propagating the faith delivered to the church the apostles who were also authors of the New Testament.”³⁰ Patterson continues, “I remain uncomfortable with placing any factors such as common sense, culture, local circumstances, or Christian wisdom in a sentence parallel with the Bible and biblical principles. In my own view, the Bible is the final authority, not only for faith but also for practice.”³¹ I also appreciated the emphasis on the priesthood of the believer and the clarity he brought on the autonomy and authority of the local church. He is perceptive when he writes, “When the church at Corinth had a problem member with whom to deal, even Paul, armed with apostolic authority could not demand the obedience of the church (1 Cor. 5). Still less can one find any record of a hierarchy of ecclesiastical ‘courts’ to which adjudication of an issue was remanded.”³² Overall, Patterson is sound theologically, biblically, and in keeping with the adopted *Southern Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) on the church, he states,

The New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in the by His Word, and

³⁰ Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist’s Response,” 106.

³¹ Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist’s Response,” 108.

³² Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist’s Response,” 110.

seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural offices are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.³³

Patterson's views are representative of most of the single elder Congregationalist approach to church government. Some single elder approaches may use different vocabulary and appeal to various historic events for validation but remain within the parameters of Patterson's arguments.

The Congregational/Plural Eldership View of Church Government

There seems to be an agreement, at least in general, that the New Testament church had a plural eldership. Taylor writes, "The first-century church continued the practice of accepting a plurality of elders as spiritual leaders, a practice obviously endorsed by Christ's own apostles."³⁴ Southern Baptist scholar H. E. Dana concurs: "The evidences are abundant and convincing that there was a plurality of elders in each church (Acts 1:20; 20:17, etc.)."³⁵ Even Patterson, in his surrejoinder to Taylor, writes,

Regarding the role of elders and deacons in those assemblies, Taylor did not accurately represent my position. For example, he insists that I posit the pastor as usually the only elder in the local church. In fact, I argue to the contrary that any local assembly which experiences growth would soon, of necessity, have multiple elders. I also argued, to borrow a phrase from Sam Waldron, for a primary elder congregationalism, recognizing the leadership role of the teaching elders in this arrangement. However, no mandate for multiple elders in a given congregation is distinguishable in the New Testament.³⁶

Most biblical scholars also agree that this plurality of eldership flowed out of the matrix of the Old Testament practices, especially in the synagogues. Even the Greek word

³³ Patterson, "Single Elder Congregationalism," 138.

³⁴ Taylor, "Presbyterianism," 78.

³⁵ H. E. Dana, *A Manual of Ecclesiology* (Kansas City, KS: Central Seminary Press, 1944), 253.

³⁶ Paige Patterson, "A Single Elder Congregationalist's Closing Remarks," in Cowan, *Who Runs the Church?*, 280.

translated in the New Testament as “assembly” (of Christians for worship) is the root of the English word, “synagogue.”³⁷ This view of plurality of eldership will be my personal view, so a brief look at the weaknesses and strengths of this view seems to be appropriate.

Weaknesses of a Plural Eldership

Readers may find weaknesses in all the views listed in this chapter and some dangers too. For example, there is a kind of tension between the democracy of the local church and the rule of the eldership. How much authority goes to elders? How much submission does a church owe to those who rule over it (Heb 13:17). How can a church still call itself autonomous and congregational with authority transferred to a small group of men in the church? As with many other things, this tension has to be worked out within the congregation while it continues to maintain a balance between the elders and the congregation. Wisdom would call for both to work together and pray together (including debate) until solutions have been reached under the Lordship of Christ who is the only true head of the body.

Another difficulty of plural eldership is parity among elders. If one becomes stronger and more vocal, does the church not simply become a single elder rule? Appeals for this style may be made to Moses and his elders, Peter and the other disciples, and Paul and his missionary team of Barnabas and Timothy and Luke. Can one say these groups were truly equals? Can one say that C. H. Spurgeon was only one elder among the other elders at Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, or that W. A. Criswell had a system of *primus inter pares* (first among equals)? It does seem that one elder, likely a teaching elder, usually emerges as the primary leader or spokesman. Even in the first church in Jerusalem, James, the half-brother of the Lord, seems to emerge as the spokesman for the elders in the early church. Taylor refers to the early history of the church as an example

³⁷ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 78.

of an emerging single spokesman. He writes that, after the church began to drift into various heresies in the second century,

the “monarchical bishops” arose. Ignatius of Antioch (d.AD 117) mentioned this monoepiscopacy (only one bishop as head of the local church). In reflecting upon earlier centuries of the church, fourth-century church father Jerome (c.342-420) noted, “Ancient presbyters were the same as bishops but gradually all the responsibility was deferred to a single person, that the thickets of heresies might be rooted out.”³⁸

The Bible teaches plurality of eldership and even a strong teaching elder to emerge from among them. Experience and observation tell that all elders may have an equal vote but not all will have equal influence. Like everything else, the collective drift into error of any kind has to be guarded against and mid-course corrections will have to be made to stay true to the biblical and apostolic form of church government.

Strengths of a Plural Eldership

There are also many strengths associated with a plural eldership, not the least is the reams of biblical evidence in the Old and New Testaments. Although Patterson reaches a different conclusion, he still makes a valid point in his reply to Toon’s “episcopacy,” which is based in large part on the traditions and history of the church. Toon says that Patterson is “poor” because he does not have the riches of tradition (Patterson readily admits he is poor). Toon calls Patterson a man with a “half empty basket” when it could have been full.³⁹ Patterson retorts, “To this I only need to suggest that it is better to have a half basket full of the revelation of God, which is true, than to have a full basket of the “revelations” of saints, some which are in error.”⁴⁰ To this illustration I tend to agree, though Patterson’s final conclusions are not precisely the same as mine.

³⁸ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 87.

³⁹ Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist’s Closing Remarks,” 276.

⁴⁰ Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist’s Closing Remarks,” 276.

Further, this view that the church delegates authority to an eldership preserves the autonomy and dignity of that assembly as the body of Christ. No eldership may usurp the prerogatives of the church. No elder, though a member of the body, is more important than the body. Though elders do rule, they do not rule as the world views it. Politics should be shunned. Triumphalism should be viewed as unlike the Christ who came as a servant. As Peter wrote,

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. (1 Pet 5:1-3)

Pastors are called to implement servant leadership. I also agree with Taylor, that “the purpose of a plurality of elders would be a *shared* [italics his] leadership. The second generation shared in Moses’ authority to command the people of God (Deut. 27:1). Joshua continued the practice of shared spiritual leadership through the elders (Josh. 8:10).”⁴¹

Pastor James White adds another positive outcome of an eldership. He finds the illustration of the church as a family helpful and practical in selecting spiritual overseers. He says that majority rule is a form of government rooted, not in the Bible, but in the American political and democratic system. Arguing against majority rule, he writes,

The second misgiving about majority rule, and one far more serious, is that the Bible teaches that a church is a family. (see Gal. 6:10; Heb. 2:10-12; 1 Peter 4:17). In most family structures, the immature members (children) outnumber or at least equal the mature members (parents). In my family, there are two parents and four children. In the early years of our family, if we had voted on everything, we would have ice cream for dinner every night, never have gone to bed, and taken up permanent residence at Disney World. A church is a family and, as a result, contains members who are at different levels of spiritual maturity. If every decision is made the majority instead of the most spiritually mature, then there is a very strong chance that the majority could mislead a church.⁴²

⁴¹ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 77.

⁴² James Emery White, *Rethinking the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 117.

One does not have to think that hard to find biblical examples of the dangers of following the majority. “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” (Exod 23:2 KJV). God knows this tendency. One could consider Noah and the flood (Gen 7:13), Moses and the ten spies (Num 13:32), and who could forget the prophet Samuel pleading with the people regarding the selection of a king like the other nations (1 Sam 8:6). Even in the New Testament, the majority of the Jews rejected Christ (John 1:11) and the apostle Paul (Acts 9:23). In general, there is always a collective drift toward darkness. As John says, “And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). In the church, which consists of both good and bad, the saved and lost (Matt 13:24-30), as well as “little children” (1 John 2:1) and “infants in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1), the Bible reader will find the need for spiritual fathers (1 John 2:14) and thus, elders. The church often draws hurting and needy people. Their lives may be out of control and in great disarray; they may be dysfunctional. Although they may receive baptism and even church membership, it would be ill advised to give the new converts the authority to give direction to the church of Jesus Christ especially during a crisis.

Martin Luther’s Call for *Epikēia*

One of the characteristics for leaders discussed during the last days of Martin Luther was what he called *epikēia*. This idea was an attribute of leaders necessary to avoid a kind of extreme legalism. This attribute places the gentleness and flexibility of a mature and caring adult over the rigid and unsympathetic response of a law.⁴³ H. G. Haile writes,

He especially appreciated Aristotle’s concept of *epikēia*, that discretionary judgement we must use when applying general principles to specific cases. Lawyers, Luther knew, prefer formulaic, mechanistic administration of justice, ‘but what is a good magistrate, or a good prince? I say he is the living law. If he wants to act in

⁴³ H. G. Haile, *Luther: An Experiment in Biography* (Garden City, NY: Double Day, 1980), 345.

accordance with the dead law and follow only what is in the books, the he'll make a lot of mistakes. That is why you to have epikeia.”⁴⁴

In response to fears of giving men power to make such leadership decisions for the whole, Luther replied, “We will just have to see to it that a truly prudent person is at hand. You cannot dispense with epikeia.”⁴⁵ Haile continues his description of Luther’s concept of epikeia:

Epikeia, a concept which Luther had used during his entire professional life, had concerned more and more after cut himself loose from the church authorities, until at last it grew into his most poetic, and perhaps his most important vision. He encountered it first in the monastery as a quite specific provision for exceptions to canon law. One can still find an occasional scholarly treatise on epikeia in this sense, but Luther is never mentioned. I suppose this is because he devoted no special tract to the term. Nonetheless, he did develop epikeia more imaginatively than any other thinker. . . . When he became involved in temporal affairs from about 1520 on, epikeia was a frequent reference in his pleas for reasonable, equitable administration. His attempt to translate Paul’s use of the word use of the word in the Epistle to the Philippians had by this time begun to broaden his understanding of the idea. He considered Latin equivalents, *equitas*, *clementia*, *commoditas*, then confessed he could no better German word than *gelindickey*—“gentleness.”⁴⁶

Hailey then quotes Luther directly:

Unyielding people on the other hand, are the ungentle ones who make no exceptions for others, but try to direct things according to their own way of thinking. They confuse everybody and are the cause of all strife and misery on earth. And then they claim they have done nothing except what was right! Even the pagans knew *summum jus summa injuria*.⁴⁷

Summum jus summa injuria (Supreme justice equals supreme injustice) was one of Luther’s favorite quotes.⁴⁸ *Epikeia* shunned extremes but invited moderation, flexibility, and mercy. This moderation can only take place when mature, compassionate, and wise men make decisions and are not simply following laws written down. Luther would not include God’s law as if God has only made suggestions rather than giving

⁴⁴ Haile, *Luther*, 345.

⁴⁵ Haile, *Luther*, 345.

⁴⁶ Haile, *Luther*, 346.

⁴⁷ Haile, *Luther*, 346.

⁴⁸ Haile, *Luther*, 346.

commands, but the sympathy, concern, and creativity that come with compassion and experience is needed also. This flexibility is especially needed in areas of which the Bible does not speak. This large arena of decision making in which there are no clear scriptural guidelines is quite large.

Part of Luther's emphasis on *epikeia* grew out of the peasant uprising of 1525. Luther had called for violence against the peasants but the German nobility exceeded the violence of Luther's language.⁴⁹ Hailey quotes Luther again: "Where the public peace is imperiled, let our queen and teacher, the moderator of the law who bends it to mildness, be love. Of course, such moderation does call for heroic and singular men."⁵⁰

In a lecture on Deuteronomy 1:17,⁵¹ Luther's comments are perceptive:

Please note that by installing judges before he constituted laws, God recommended *epikeia* to us. Judges are the living law, and superior to it. . . . Into their hand is given both the law and the sword. This is to prevent applying the law in contravention of the law, as happens when silly people fix their gaze on the law, disregard the circumstance of the case, and mouth: "Thus is it written, so be it."⁵²

Luther put confidence in the character of the decision maker. Hailey describes Luther's focus on the personal over the impersonal: "A child of absolutistic times, he placed his trust in individual judgment, in the devoted father, in the experienced magistrate, and in the divinely appointed prince. It was up to them to correct failings as they arose, 'not with laws, but by personal presence in accord with the will of God.'"⁵³

Mark 1:31 also illustrates this attribute of *epikeia* in Jesus himself. Jesus encounters a leper who runs up to him and by doing so violates the law of Moses which

⁴⁹ Haile, *Luther*, 347.

⁵⁰ Haile, *Luther*, 347.

⁵¹ Deut 1:17 says, "You shall not be partial in judgment. You shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. And the case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it."

⁵² Haile, *Luther*, 347.

⁵³ Haile, *Luther*, 349.

clearly says, “He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp” (Lev 13:46). Jesus does not rebuke the man for his desperate disregard for the Old Covenant as well as Jewish custom. On the contrary, Jesus reaches out and touches him. R. C. Sproul weighs in on this passage by commenting,

Not only was the leper not allowed to touch a non-leper, the non-leper was not allowed to touch a leper. But Jesus touched him, notwithstanding any controversies with the Jewish religious leaders that would come after that. Mark shows us that Jesus was the Lord of the ceremonial law, with the authority to set it aside for his own redemptive processes. Sometimes you find yourself in a traffic jam. Maybe there has been a minor accident, and a police officer shows up to direct traffic. You come to the street corner and the traffic light is red but the officer waves you through. His presence supersedes the written law, so you must obey the embodiment of the law and the enforcer of the law. Just as God brought the world into existence by his word, by the divine imperative, so Christ exercised that divine imperative in the case of this leper.⁵⁴

The “embodiment of the law” is superior to the law itself. The elders of a church embody the law of Christ and the spirit of love.

Though churches need constitutions, by-laws, and even creeds and confessions, churches also need a loving group of carefully selected men to guide its future and protect its spiritual and physical wellbeing.

Succession

Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (John 15:16). Jesus not only desired fruit but he also desired enduring fruit. God’s work is meant to be passed on. Moses’ ministry passed on to Joshua, Elijah anointed Elisha, David’s vision passed on to Solomon, Jesus’ work was transferred to the apostles in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), and Paul laid hands on Timothy.

⁵⁴ R. C. Sproul, *Mark: An Expository Commentary* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 31.

There are various ways of viewing succession. There is, for example, the succession of the Old Testament to the New Testament. This era is a great leap for the progression of God's revelation. The Old Testament prepared for the New Testament, predicted it (Jer 31:31), and Paul called it a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). There is also the succession of one generation to another. The Psalmist writes, "So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come" (Ps 71:18). The church should consider and prepare for those who are yet to be born even to the third generation. "He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments" (Ps 78:5-7). This instruction is primarily the work of parents and grandparents (Deut 6:6-9) as well as the teachers among the people of God. Further, each church must have a succeeding generation of believers. New and modern problems will arise with which previous churches did not have to grapple. Old churches must transition to new churches and old congregations will transition to new ones. Each generation will have its own time to carry out its mission and bear its witness. Then, of course, is the very succession of one pastor to the next pastor. True success needs succession. Bob Russell describes the importance of succession with an analogy to runners in a mile-long relay who pass the baton to the next runner:

Four runners running a mile each can cover the complete distance faster than any one man. The fastest runner can complete a mile in about four minutes. A relay team going full speed for a quarter of a mile can complete a mile in 3.5 minutes. A proper passing of the baton is the most crucial part of the race. Relay teams practice it for hours. The United States relay team was by far the most talented in a recent Summer Olympics but lost the race because the baton was dropped.⁵⁵

Russel and Bucher's book then lists some of the "rules" to successfully pass the baton in a relay race. He points out, first, that the one passing the baton must keep running full

⁵⁵ Bob Russell and Bryan Bucher, *Transition Plan* (Louisville: Ministers Label, 2010), 46.

steam until the baton is passed. Though exhausted, the first runner must continue his full effort until the transition is complete. Another rule is that the runner without the baton must start running before he receives it. The second runner cannot begin from a standstill but should be going full throttle when the baton is passed. Third, both runners must stay in the same lane and go in the same direction. They cannot have different agendas. Fourth, the transition must have a timely finish. One cannot always be passing the baton. It has to be completed. Finally, Russell says that once the baton is passed, the first runner must step off the field and cheer on his successor from the sidelines. He does not run beside him and tell him how to run.⁵⁶ These are helpful suggestions for successors in the ministry and in the work of the gospel. Russell quotes approvingly, John Maxwell, who says, “Achievement comes to someone when he is able to do great things for himself. Success comes when he empowers followers to do great things for him. But a legacy is created only when a person puts his organization into the position to do great things without him.”⁵⁷

Bridges

The question arises, what are the means by which these transitions are made? How may believers cross these treacherous chasms between one generation and the next, or, one church and the next? How may a pastor transfer the work from his own life to the next? Several bridges can be proffered for successful succession.

Gospel Doctrine

One bridge is certainly the old path of Scripture and especially the gospel doctrines of the New Testament as taught by the apostles. The church is hereby staying in the same lane. Taylor seems to have obtained agreement among many when he wrote,

⁵⁶ Russell and Bucher, *Transition Plan*, 46.

⁵⁷ Russell and Bucher, *Transition Plan*, 22.

“Presbyterians, along with Lutherans and low church Anglicans, believe that true apostolic succession is maintaining and propagating the faith delivered to the church by the apostles who were also authors of the New Testament, and following the apostolic practice of obedience to the revealed will of God given in Holy Scriptures.”⁵⁸ This quote is repeated by Southern Baptist Paige Patterson with approval.⁵⁹ If succession is effective, then it must travel the path of biblical doctrine and especially Apostolic doctrine: “They continued in the Apostle’s doctrine” (Acts 2:42). A church that departs from the gospel is an apostate church. If there is no continuation in true gospel doctrine, then there is no lasting succession. John Hammett writes in a similar manner:

The gospel sets the boundary of the church’s unity; it gives the church its holiness as part of the gift of salvation; its universal nature gives the church its catholicity; and the gospel is the heart of the apostolic teaching that the church is to preserve. Thus, perhaps it is more accurate to see the gospel as marking the church more than unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity.⁶⁰

Hammett refers to reformer John Calvin’s view of the importance of gospel preaching when he says,

The church is apostolic when it listens to the apostolic teaching, found in the written Word of God. That mark is true of the church in heaven, on but on earth we are struggling to understand and rightly preach the pure Word of God. Here the narrower meaning of the Word as the Gospel as important. Calvin was willing to call a group a true church, even if they did not understand all of God’s Word aright, as long as they preserved and preached the pure gospel message.⁶¹

Mentoring

Another bridge that successfully transfers the work and ministry of one generation to the next or from one church to the next is that of mentoring. Jesus chose twelve that they might be with him: “And he appointed twelve whom he also named

⁵⁸ Taylor, “Presbyterianism,” 96.

⁵⁹ Patterson, “A Single Elder Congregationalist Response,” 106.

⁶⁰ John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 62.

⁶¹ Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*, 63.

apostles so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). Paul asked Timothy to accompany him and his team on their missionary trips: “Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him.” (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy became an effective servant in carrying out the apostolic mission: “But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also” (Phil 2:22-24). This humble service gave each of them the opportunity to know and trust each other. Timothy saw firsthand the honesty, integrity, and endurance of the apostle Paul. Timothy saw how God used Paul and answered his prayers. Paul writes, “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me” (2 Tim 3:10-11). Paul often sent Timothy to fulfill the mission God had given to Paul but was now entrusted to Timothy: “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:1-3).

Bob Russell, who trained and mentored several young pastors at Southeast Christian Church, writes of Paul’s selection of Timothy:

Timothy was a wise selection since he was young, had a heart for the gospel, came from a Godly home, knew Scripture, and had a good reputation. All the brothers at Lystra spoke well of him. Timothy had obvious leadership gifts that could be developed his association with Paul. When Timothy expressed a willingness to accompany Paul, the Apostle had him circumcised to protect him from unnecessary criticism from the more legalistic, Jewish Christians who might object to his leadership. Paul mentored Timothy by taking him with him wherever he went. There is no mention of private lesson or formal lectures. Timothy probably learned

more about evangelism by observing Paul and participating in his world outreach than he would have in a classroom.⁶²

Mentoring provides the opportunity to truly know and then trust the student with the tasks at hand. The mentor will know the strengths and weaknesses of the mentored and the level of readiness he brings to the task. Paul says the church should know and respect those who labor among them and are over them in the Lord (1 Thess 5:12). This relationship and transparency lead to trust. Ideally, next generation pastors should emerge from within the congregation in which they have lived and served.

Joel Gregory describes the experience of going to the First Baptist Church of Dallas in 1991 without this full understanding and transparency from the mentor. He writes of a press conference when he realized his call to the pulpit of that prestigious church was not what he expected. Gregory writes,

Criswell did say, “As time goes on, we will do whatever he would like, maybe rotating it. He would preach and then I would preach.” Turning to me he asked in front of the press, “If that is all right with you.” That was a typically Criswellian touch. What was I supposed to say? “No, Dr. C. I am going to take the whole thing away from you in three months.” This was the first time I sensed that he was already backing off from his specific promise to me made two weeks earlier that it would only be a “few months” before he was off the scene.⁶³

Prolonged and transparent mentoring tends to resolve these kinds of issues before they become the larger problems that hinder the church or damage the name of Christ. The mentor and student must truly know and trust each other. This trust will enable the mentor to then leave the work with the new workers without interference because as time passes, they become convinced that the student is now ready for the assignments given to them. This idea also fulfills Paul’s admonition to “let them first be tested” (1 Tim 3:10). Gregory continues,

Rather than getting off the scene so I could establish my own leadership, Criswell would be present at all public occasions. There would have been nothing wrong with this at all for a few months. It would have been appropriate for many years had I been called as an associate pastor to help the Old Man extend his ministry (which

⁶² Russell and Bucher, *Transition Plan*, 145-46.

⁶³ Joel Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation* (Fort Worth, TX: The Summit Group, 1994), 152.

turned out to be the real agenda.) But I was called to lead the into the twenty-first century and in order to do so desperately needed to capture the momentum of the early leadership and be perceived by Dallas as the leader of the church. He would not let that happen.⁶⁴

In contrast, Bob Russell planned a six-year transition period by mentoring his successor, Dave Stone:

Some preachers have asked if six or seven years is too long for a mentor and successor to work together. It can be, but almost any plan can work if the people involved are ready and willing to sacrifice their egos. Dave and I worked at transitioning for six years and rarely had any tension, although there were times when we both had to swallow our pride. In most cases, one or two years would be a sufficient amount of time for a transition team to work together, especially if the successor comes from within the church and is familiar with its culture.⁶⁵

Ordination

Another familiar event in Baptist life is the ceremony of ordination. When ordination is done properly for the right reasons and includes the right people, it is a wonderful ceremony that passes the baton to the next generation of leaders. Like most things in Baptist life, this ceremony has been the subject of controversy over the centuries. The church can be fairly confident concerning some things about ordination. First is that the roots of this ceremony can be found in Old Testament Scriptures. There was an ordination of Aaron and the Levitical priests (Lev 8:1-36), the instructive commissioning of Joshua (Num 27:16-19), and the careful observer might even consider that Ezekiel, who had just turned the required priestly age of thirty (Ezek 1:1), was ordained by the hand of God. He says,

And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat whatever you find here. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." (Ezek 2:9-3:1)

Some patterns emerge on the topic of ordination from the Old Testament. Except for Ezekiel, ordaining was done before the congregation; it was public. Further,

⁶⁴ Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation*, 153.

⁶⁵ Russell and Bucher, *Transition Plan*, 23.

hands were probably laid upon the shoulder, not the head.⁶⁶ In the Old Testament sacrificial system, when hands are laid on the head, it was a transfer of guilt to the substitutionary victim (Lev 1:4). In laying hands on a successor one is not transferring guilt, but instead task, assignment, and duty. Therefore, the shoulder is more appropriate since, as Isaiah said of Christ, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder” (Isa 9:6). Also, the High Priest in the Old Testament had an ephod with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on two stones which were carried on his shoulders. “And you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for remembrance” (Exod 28:12). It is also interesting that the Greek word *kathistemi*,⁶⁷ which describes the ordaining of the High Priest, is used for the role of Titus in ordaining elders in Crete (Titus 1:5). Even a casual reading of the relevant passages where the High Priest is installed in office leads to the conclusion that it is a very public, very sacred, and holy ceremony meant to convey the gravity and authority of the office. Some measure of pageantry and protocol are required. After reviewing the Old Testament material, Markorie Warkentin writes,

The laying on of hands in induction to office originated in the time of Moses when the congregation of Israel laid hands on the Levites as the representatives of their firstborn (Num.8:10), and when Moses commissioned Joshua by laying his hands on him (Num 27:23; Deut 34:9). In these pericopes, the foundations for understanding the New Testament rite are laid down.⁶⁸

H. E. Dana arrives at a somewhat different conclusion:

The Christian church inherited this custom from its historical forerunner, the Jewish synagogue. The rabbis were given a rather definite form of ordination. There is no doubt that the practice was continued in apostolic Christianity. However, the New Testament word rendered “ordain” by the Authorized Version has been considerably misconstrued in modern Christian minds. It is regarded as denoting an elaborate rite, but as a matter of fact it does not necessarily imply any ceremony at all. The word

⁶⁶ Marjorie Warkentin, *Ordination* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982), 3.

⁶⁷ *Kathistemi* is translated in AV as “ordain” and in the ESV as “appoint.”

⁶⁸ Warkentin, *Ordination*, 103.

as applied to induction into office simply means to install, and may or may not be accompanied by ceremony.⁶⁹

After mentioning several passages of Scripture (Acts 6:6, Acts 13:3, 1 Tim 4:14, 2 Tim 1:6, and 1 Tim 5:22), Dana reaches this conclusion:

When we look into this entire group of passages we are convinced that ordination was a public and formal act employed for the setting apart of those God had called to tasks of Christian leadership. The evidence is sufficient to support a secure conviction that ordination as a ceremony of installation originated in apostolic times. We therefore have a sound scriptural basis for such a procedure.⁷⁰

He also specifies the central feature of ordination in the New Testament: “It is further known from reliable sources that the laying on of hands was a frequent and respected religious ceremony of the times among Jews and Christians. Hence we have here sufficient evidence that the most solemn and significant part of the ordination procedure in the New Testament was the laying on of hands.”⁷¹

One other passage could be consulted for a fuller understanding of ordination and its significance for the local church, especially as it transitions to another generation or extends its ministry to new ministerial candidates. Paul gives a crucial word on this central feature of ordination,

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure. (1 Tim 5:19-22)

In this passage Paul lays out several things that will prove helpful in dealing with elders in a church. One is a public rebuke for sin before other elders rather than the church as a whole. Many Christians might cringe at the idea of a public announcement on Sunday morning of another elder’s sins. Jesus also taught believers to go first to one another in private, especially if one desires to win the brother over and not offend him and everyone

⁶⁹ Dana, *A Manual of Ecclesiology*, 260.

⁷⁰ Dana, *A Manual of Ecclesiology*, 263.

⁷¹ Dana, *A Manual of Ecclesiology*, 262.

who is kin to him (Matt 18:15). David Mappes lists several commentators who believe the rebuke should be before the other elders and the public assembly.⁷² These commentators include Earle, Hanson, Lenski, Lock, and Oosterzee.⁷³ One might also consider, as Peter wrote, that “love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8). Love does not delight in exposing the sins of others. It prefers to hide the sins and cover them. Action still must sometimes be taken against the sinning elder when at least two witnesses can testify that the elder has not only sinned but persists in that sin (1 Tim 5:19, 20). Mappes goes back to Augustine for a bit of summary wisdom: “Augustine advocated that the nature of the rebuke depends on the nature of the sin. He reasoned that if the sin is a public sin then a public rebuke should follow, and if the sin is a private sin then the rebuke should be private.”⁷⁴ The good news is that the whole ugly confrontation with the sinning elder can be avoided. Paul gives to ruling elders the preventive medicine. He says, “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others” (1 Tim 5:21-22). In other words, go slow in ordaining new preachers.

Another issue in the ceremony of ordination is the tension between symbol and reality. Is ordination a means of grace? Is it sacerdotal?⁷⁵ Paul wrote, “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your

⁷² David A. Mappes, “The Discipline of a Sinning Elder,” in *Vital Church Issues, Examining Principles and Practices in Church Leadership*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998), 94.

⁷³ Mappes, “The Discipline of a Sinning Elder,” 215.

⁷⁴ Mappes, “The Discipline of a Sinning Elder,” 95.

⁷⁵ The Roman Catholic Church has a system of seven sacraments which they believe is sacerdotal; that is, they convey the thing that is symbolized. These seven sacraments are baptism, confirmation, eucharist (mass), penance, extreme unction, marriage, and orders (ordination of priests and nuns).

progress “ (1 Tim 4:14-15). What was given to Timothy when they laid hands on him?

Homer Kent explains this verse:

It was through prophecy with the laying on of hands of the presbytery. “Through” (dia) denotes the channel by which the gift was given to Timothy. This means, or channel, was prophecy. . . . This revelation to Timothy through prophecy was accompanied by the imposition of hands by the body of elders. Meta (with) does not denote agency but accompaniment. The imposition of hands was thus a symbolic action accompanying the reception of the gift.⁷⁶

After listing the seven sacraments, Loraine Boettner gives a historical perspective: “Rome holds that in the ordinary course of life five of these, baptism, confirmation, mass, penance, and extreme unction are indispensable to salvation, while marriage and orders are optional. But no church leaders nor any church council has the right to appoint sacraments. The church is Christ’s church and only he, as its Head, has that right.”⁷⁷ Warkentin sees the history of ordination as the norm in the church through the Reformation period. The Reformers did not view it as an ordinance like communion or baptism, but the laying on of hands tended to become sacramental, especially in times of persecution and stress.⁷⁸ Most Baptists would agree that, for ordination to take place, there must be an inner call within the candidate from God to the task, an acknowledgement of this call by the elders, and an accompanying consent by the congregation. Laying on of hands would then take place in a special ceremony reserved for this particular service. Warkentin strikes a note when she concludes, “With the denial that ordination was a sacrament of the church, and that the ordained priest had the power to reenact the sacrifice of Christ at the mass, emphasis shifted from the Eucharist as the central rite of the church to preaching as the central rite. Ordination now set apart the preacher instead

⁷⁶ Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 159.

⁷⁷ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962), 189.

⁷⁸ Warkentin, *Ordination*, 85.

of the priest.”⁷⁹ Thus, the sermon replaced the sacrament, the gospel replaced its symbols, and the pulpit was moved to the center of the worship.

Missions and Evangelism

A final but vital bridge by which the gospel is passed is the vision of the church to reach new people for Christ. If a pastor or church has the right doctrines, a commitment to mentoring, and a public ceremony to transition to new leaders, none will avail without a fresh baptism of the Spirit that drives the believer and the leaders to risk all for the sake of new converts, new church starts, and new classes for new believers. The future ultimately belongs to the mission-minded and gospel-driven congregations. Matthews 28:18-20 says, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (Matt 28:18-20). That verse gives a transition; the apostles were to win converts and baptize them. Then, what Jesus had taught the disciples was to be passed on to new converts. Successful mission effort was behind it all. The church must not be distracted from this goal, no matter how hard it seems, what obstacles they face, or the disappointments they encounter. This mission and vision that creates a new generation is centered in the Word of God and the proclamation of the gospel. Edmund Clowney writes,

The New Testament grounds the church in God’s revealed truth. The apostles established the church by preaching the Scriptures and their fulfilment. The fellowship of the church in the book of Acts exists among those who continue in the apostolic teaching (Acts 2:42). The growth of the church is described by Luke as the growth of the Word (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20). The ministries by which the church is built up are ministries of the Word (Eph. 4:11). The apostolicity of the church, there, means that the church is built on the foundation of the apostolic gospel. All other attributes of the church derive from this.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Warkentin, *Ordination*, 85.

⁸⁰ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Church* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1995), 102.

The church's vision cannot be rooted in the need for racial justice (though it brings racial justice), or the cause of feminism, environmentalism, nor in the varied political and social causes of the modern culture. It must be rooted in the plain and biblical fact that mankind is alienated from God through his sin and sinfulness and that the church of Jesus Christ has the only true solution to these manifold ills that flow from that condition. Clowney also says,

We rightly condemn wanton gang murders and calculated racist genocide, but we pass over the root of our own hatred of God, the God of the love and justice. The first and great commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. The second is like unto it, because it is derived from it: to love our neighbor as ourselves. David—betrayed, adulterer, murderer—can confess his crimes and yet pray, “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.” (Ps 51:4)

New vision must be centered in the gospel and the church's faithfulness to it. God sent his Son (John 3:17, 18), the Son sent his disciples as God had sent him (John 20:31), and the disciples, now apostles, sent others to proclaim this same gospel. Paul says, “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). R. C. Sproul comments, “Here we see the basis for the mission of the church. God sent Christ; Christ sent the church. The biblical basis for missions is the Word of God spoken in divine authority; it is the mandate of Christ.”⁸¹ Pastor and scholar Jon Zens explains, “The general pattern is as follows: direct apostolic influence (as in Corinth; Acts 18:11) or indirect apostolic influence (through men like Timothy and Titus) in the establishment and strengthening of local church; the continuance of order by the setting apart of qualified men in each assembly as elder and deacons. (1 Tim 3:1-10; Titus 1:5)”⁸² These elders and deacons, along with other leadership in the local congregation, must flesh out the vision of God for their locale. In recognition of the great stream of stewardship and privilege that has flowed

⁸¹ R. C. Sproul, *What Is the Great Commission?* (Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015), 40.

⁸² Jon Zens, “The Major Concepts of Eldership in the New Testament,” *Baptist Reformation Review Journal* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 27.

to them from the Old and New Testaments, these men and women must now take up the challenge for their own generation. As Paul puts it,

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!” However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’ So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Rom 10:14-17)

The leaders must now, within their own culture and times, pass the baton to the next generation, the next stage of leadership, and the next missionary effort where they live.

The church that will utilize these four bridges will not only survive but thrive in the twenty-first century.

Finally, what is true for the local church is also true for associations, state conventions, and even whole denominations. James Sullivan describes how denominations are often organized:

Many factors have influenced the development of polity among the various denominations. Some denominations have been organized by individuals, and the founders’ temperaments and abilities have affected those denominations’ methods of operations. It may have been structured so the founder could maintain control of the group. In some cases polity has been shaped to ensure efficiency, even patterned after successful governmental or business operations. Or the method of organization and operation might have chosen to ensure economic or quick results.⁸³

Many of these organizing principles may be good and some even necessary but at the heart there must be a vision for the next generation and a dynamic that comes from the Holy Spirit and from the gospel itself. These bridges take the church into the future.

Conclusion

After surveying the Old Testament patterns and the New Testament practices, the most biblical of the four views considered in this chapter is that of a plurality of elders in a local church. Among these elders will often be a single elder who becomes the spokesman, the primary preacher and teacher, and because of influence, personality, gifts,

⁸³ James L. Sullivan, *Baptist Polity—As I See It* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 45.

experience, or a combination of all of these qualities, he will often be viewed as “the pastor.” He must, however, recognize the authority and importance of the other team members and often submit to their authority in matters of the church’s vision, finances, and direction. These other elders, or team members, are not deacons since that is a distinct office from the elder/bishop.⁸⁴ These elders have been commissioned by the church to act on its behalf in matters large and small and are accountable to the church for their actions.

Further, the research presented shows the importance of an eldership that thinks of the next generation and beyond. They do not think of the next church or next opportunity to advance their ministry or career; they think of the next generation. As the Psalmist said,

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (Ps 78:2-7)

The means or methods by which the gospel is advanced is in the clarity and priority of the gospel. The church must stay true to apostolic doctrine. The kingdom of God is also advanced by the time and emotional investment the elders and others put into training young men and women by teaching and mentoring them in the ways and truths of God and his Word. The kingdom transitions also by the public recognition of new leadership in ordination and commissioning. Finally, the kingdom and the gospel advance to the next generation by evangelism and missions. As Jesus taught, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:46-48).

⁸⁴ See for example 1 Tim 1:1, 8 and Phil 1:1.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A COURSE ON HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The first goal of this project was to evaluate and develop the biblical knowledge of healthy church leadership among the core leaders at New Haven Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan. The next goal was to develop a six-week course for biblical and healthy leadership, which would include the observations of local pastors. A third goal was to increase the biblical knowledge of healthy church leadership by implementing a six-week course, which would cover the main issues of a healthy and Biblically based leadership model.

The context and rationale for this project was the formation of a new church plant across town from the mother church. This transition brought problems that the leaders had experienced before. Stress was amplified when the economy of Flint, Michigan, turned downward. Several key families chose to move to other states or to curb their financial support to the main congregation. Adding to these challenges was the resignation of the mission pastor, which put the burden of leadership on a single individual. Questions arose about the authority of deacons and a discussion about the role of the pastor in finances. Further, the new church grew to be self-supporting and no longer needed the mother church or its leadership. Once again, leadership and eldership questions arose. After resolving the financial crises, a new sense of destiny and calling began to emerge. Since I am at retirement age, there was within the congregation and its leadership in both locations a desire to find a solid and scriptural solution to the issues of local New Testament leadership. With the debt issues assuaged and a glaring need for new leadership,

a rare opportunity presented itself to establish the most effective and most Biblical leadership in both congregations.

After several months of discussion, small group Bible studies, prayer, and consensus building, the pastor and leadership team decided to make this project a priority. The church decided to devote six weeks to the project with further discussions and recommendations possible.

After chapter 1 presented the contextual factors for the project, chapter 2 surveyed the biblical material in both the Old and New Testaments. In studying the Scriptures on the subject, a pattern began to emerge for the church's leadership team. There was a plurality of elders in leadership positions. These elders made decisions for the larger group. A single leader also often emerged as the primary spokesman for the eldership group. In the New Testament, this individual is also called "pastor" or "bishop." This title was then taught to the congregation. Chapter 3 then looked at the forms or models of church government that other denominations now employ. These models were compared to the Southern Baptist forms of government. Finally, this chapter also reviewed the methods by which the leadership of one generation can effectively transition to the next generation. Local pastors were interviewed to discuss the conclusions of the project and their connection and loyalty to the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Six-Week Course

The six-week course began on Wednesday night at 7 p.m., October 14, 2020. The class size was approximately 20-25 for each week. The class lasted for an hour and a half. This six-week course was produced and led primarily by me, the lead pastor of the two congregations. The course comprised the heart of the project. Voluntary leaders as well as paid staff were encouraged to attend the six classes. Youth were also invited to participate. Potential new elders were especially invited and reminded to attend. Most of these possible elders did attend. The aforementioned 20-25 attendees were consistently present each Wednesday night for the duration of the course. It included key people from

both congregations. The classes met at the mother church and usually opened with prayer and singing. Time was also reserved for questions and discussion.

Week 1

In week 1, the first of two tests was given to each person in attendance.¹ This test evaluated knowledge and biblical understanding of church leadership. This test was followed by the first lesson.² The first lesson outlined the four basic forms or models of church government. The primary work the class used to describe these four models was taken from Steven Cowan's *Who Runs the Church? 4 Views on Church Government*.³ Other works present similar models but this book seemed to capture the biblical narrative in a more comprehensible manner.⁴ This lesson also included the importance of church government with special attention given to "the plurality of elders with a lead pastor" position. The church had been moving toward this position for several years. The lesson included a discussion of the uniqueness of the original apostles and the apostle Paul. The class concluded with biblical references to the names or titles of the pastor, with a final conclusion that the pastor is also called an elder or a bishop and that these titles are used interchangeably.⁵

Week 2

In lesson 2, the class reviewed the first lesson and the first week. This review was necessary because of the amount of material presented and the discussion that

¹ See appendix 1.

² See appendix 2.

³ Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Who Runs the Church? 4 Views on Church Government* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

⁴ See, for example, Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman, eds., *Perspectives on Church Government* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2004).

⁵ Note especially Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 5:1-2; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Tim 3:1.

followed. It was also important to define and distinguish between the various forms of government if the attendees were to evaluate them all from a biblical perspective. The class also looked at the titles of the lead pastor and possible reasons for the interchangeable terms. Discussion then turned to the one person in the Old Testament who might have served as a paradigm for New Testament leadership. Moses seemed to be the ideal leader and intercessor who met the qualifications. He was also a mentor to Joshua and prepared for the next generation of leadership. Other suggestions considered David and Samuel.

Finally, in lesson 2, the class was presented with the biblical duties of an elder. Several were listed with scriptural references and the class was asked to select the two most important duties. Those priorities were determined to be prayer and preaching.⁶

The class concluded with a discussion of the role of the deacon and how it differs from that of an elder. This discussion was especially important since all of the deacons of the mother congregation have either moved away, died, or become too frail to assist the church in its ongoing needs for service. A section on succession was deferred to a later class due to propriety and time constraints.

Week 3

In lesson 3, the class once again reviewed the previous lessons along with other relevant material. The class added other possible duties and responsibilities of the elder in addition to prayer and preaching.⁷ Prayer and preaching remained the priority. Ample time

⁶ Special emphasis was given to Acts 6:2-4: “And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’”

⁷ The duties discussed were: preaching (Mark 3:14; John 17:7, 8, Ezra 10:6-8), prayer (Acts 6:4; 1 Tim 2:1), summon (Acts 6:2; Num 10:2; Deut 5:1), provide, or fund raising (Num 18:26; Acts 11:29, 30; 2 Cor 12:15), train leaders (Titus 1:5), cast a vision (Prov 29:18), rule (1 Tim 5:17, 18; Heb 13:17), model the ministry, or, set an example (1 Tim 4:12), discipline and confront the wayward or the unruly (Titus 1:10, 11), study (2 Tim 2:15), and evangelism (2 Tim 4:5).

was given to the financial support of the lead elder. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 was the focus of the arguments given for pastoral support. Paul writes,

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. (1 Cor 9:7-14)

The class noted the arguments of Paul for support came from the army (v. 7), the vine keepers (v. 7), the shepherd (v. 7), the law of Moses (vv. 8-10), the farmer (v. 10), the value of the spiritual over the material (v. 11), the common practice of the secular world (v. 12), the Jewish temple services (v. 13), and the Lord's own command in the Gospels (v. 14).

The class also discussed the advantages of a plural eldership with congregational autonomy in week 3. Those advantages were considered the most aligned with the Bible, the most dignifying and growth producing for the church as the body of Christ, and the most efficient at helping and caring for people. This discussion turned out to be one of the most fruitful of all the classes and generated the most enthusiasm. The members of the new church plant were also eager to learn what a New Testament church is and when a church is actually considered a church. Several leaders of the Reformation of the sixteenth century were quoted as to the definition and parameters of a true New Testament church. A brief introduction to this topic pointed out the three parameters noted from history. First, the gospel had to be proclaimed faithfully (Matt 28:18-20), which would include such teachings as the Scripture being inerrant and infallible, the deity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, the second coming of Christ and the bodily resurrection,

and the final judgment. Second, the Reformers said that, to be a church, the ordinances had to be administered (baptism and holy communion). Finally, to be a church, there must be some degree of discipline by the congregation to apostate or persistently sinning members. This process meant that the officers of the church had to be in place and in operation.

Week 4

The fourth week was again a time of review with additional information and teaching. The task and responsibility to transition to the next generation took up most of the time. The class began with the topic of the very first successful succession in the New Testament. This transition was considered to be when God the Father gave to Jesus the Son his message and mission (John 12:49). Discussion then centered on that commission by the Father to the Son, which was subsequently passed on to Jesus' disciples (John 17:8). Further, this commission and message was picked up by the early church (Acts 2:42). It was the same message but a different generation and population.

Next, the class discussed the component parts of a successful and biblical transition. The ceremony of ordination was introduced as one of the bridges that span the gap between the generations of leadership. Several biblical references were brought to bear on the subject. The class recognized that a public installation of officers was necessary and even a sacred ritual. Further research was needed, and the topic was deferred for another and future class when more time could be given to the topic.

Week 5

This lesson contained the heart of the project teaching. I then surveyed the biblical evidence for a church's view that a congregation should have a plurality of elders with a primary leader among those elders. Evidence was presented from the Old Testament that there was a plurality of elders under Moses (Num 11:24) while Moses was the primary leader. Joshua consulted the elders and officers of Israel while he also

remained their primary leader (Josh 24:1). King David entered a covenant with the elders of Israel but retained the throne. In the New Testament, the same pattern held true. Peter was the primary spokesman with keys to the kingdom (Matt 16:18) and an elder as well (1 Pet 5:1). The other apostles retained parity in power (Luke 10:17). Paul was a member of a missionary team (Acts 13:1-3) but everyone knew that Paul was the spokesman for the group. Also, Paul told Timothy to say what he himself had said and then to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2). Paul also left Titus in Crete to ordain other elders (Titus 1:5). In evaluating these texts, it was determined that, in both the Old and New Testaments, a pattern of leadership existed within a local congregation that consisted of a team of elders with one individual among them (who was one of them) leading the way.

The class also determined that the very nature of a church required such a form of government as described in the preceding paragraph. As a family often consists of adults, youth, and children, so does a church: “I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father” (1 John 2:13). No family permits young children to vote on bedtime or dietary preferences. Further, children often outnumber the adults, but few families are run by majority vote, especially if they have several small children. The church is a family with people in various stages of spiritual maturity. A harmonious family may and should allow participation by all, but the elders should be in authority. As the writer of Hebrews says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb 13:17).

This session also considered the calling and qualifications of the lead pastor. The primary passage considered was written by the apostle Paul. The saying is trustworthy:

If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-

controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (1 Tim 3:1-7)

The class studied the word translated as “desire” in verse 1 and noted that it was a word that indicates passion and longing. Homer Kent comments on the two different Greek words for this yearning:

Two strong verbs depict the yearning for this office commanded by Paul. “*Orego*” means to reach out after, and the middle voice employed here means that the subject is reaching after this for himself. Such a yearning is described by a second verb, “*epi-thumeo*,” to desire, to fix the ardor or passion upon a thing. Here it is used in the good sense of a strong desire. This godly desire for the responsible task of overseership, if controlled by the Spirit of God, may deepen into a sacred conviction.⁸

After some debate (positive) on how the church may know for sure if a man is called to eldership, the class discussed Paul’s qualifications of an elder. Several important observations were made regarding these qualifications. He must have a good reputation. His marriage is a proving ground for leadership. The class decided Paul’s requirements did not require marriage and children (considering Jesus and Paul himself), but if he was married (which seemed preferable), then he should have an exemplary family. The reference to children in verse 4 was considered to be younger children.⁹ If the man is confirmed by an inner conviction, the proving ground of marriage and family, the watching world, and not a new Christian, he may very well consider himself called by God to this position of sacred stewardship (Titus 1:7). It was noted that a man did not have to have an academic degree for the office, but character and temperament were paramount.

Finally, the class looked at what was considered the great motivating and inspiring truth behind such qualifications. After describing the deacon’s qualifications

⁸ Homer Kent, Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles* (Chicago: Moody, 1982), 119.

⁹ This is in keeping with the Greek word *tekna*, which generally means younger children.

(vv. 8-13), Paul gives the grand motive for having proper leadership functioning in a healthy and biblical manner within the local church. Paul concludes the teaching on the bishop's qualifications by writing to Timothy, "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth" (1 Tim 3:14-15). The Living Bible in the same verse says, "If I don't come for a while, you will know what kind of men you should choose as officers for the church of the living God, which contains and holds high the truth of God" (1 Tim 3:15 TLB). It seems to Paul that the whole reason for healthy leadership in the church is the great calling and dignity of the church itself. The church is the very household of God. It is the primary institution of truth. This is to say that if anybody wants to know what is true, then he should reference the church of Jesus Christ. Can anything be more inspiring than this? Where did we come from? Why are we here? What should I do with my life? How can I have immortality? All of these answers can be found in the teaching ministry and truths presented by the local church. In the church itself is credibility and legitimacy. There one can find the very presence of the true God. Class participants were encouraged to read the relevant Scriptures referenced in the notes, and special reading was assigned to potential elders and youth leaders in the congregation.¹⁰

Week 6

Week 6 was the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Therefore, we postponed the class for one week. Postponement allowed the class to attend the Thanksgiving service of the combined churches and to participate in Holy Communion.

¹⁰ For example, James Emery White, *Rethinking the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); and Bill Easum and Bil Cornelius, *Go Big* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006). White's book was selected because it addresses the necessity of maturity of leadership and various forms of Baptist church polity. Easum and Cornelius book was selected because of internal discussions on a possible church plant in the future.

Week 7

The final week and concluding class saw various class members comment on the appreciation they felt for the new information and instruction. Several who were long time members stated they had never heard the material presented in the class and were grateful for it. Further material was presented on the transfer of authority and mission to the next generation. Southeast Christian Church pastor Bob Russell's analogy of the passing of the runner's baton was quoted and discussed.¹¹ Russell writes about the transition of his church to another generation of leadership when he refers to his other leaders:

Many of our elders at the time were talented businessmen and knew that transition was a hot topic in the business world. Jack Welch had been planning for his successor at GE for nine years and Dr. James Dobson announced a ten year succession plan for his ministry, Focus on the Family. It was reasonable and wise for us to have a practical succession plan also.¹²

There were also discussions concerning the First Baptist Church of Dallas during the period of transfer of authority and pastoral responsibility from W. A. Criswell to Joel Gregory. This move took place from 1990 to 1992.¹³ The discussion included the differences between a larger church transition and a smaller church transition. Since most churches are not megachurches, the transition of one generation to another centered on the smaller church.

The class was presented with four solutions to the difficulties associated with a transition. The four solutions presented were doctrine, mentoring, missions, and, finally, a public ordination or commissioning of the new leadership. Ordination seemed to generate the most interest. The transition from Moses to Joshua was the main text studied:

¹¹ Bob Russell and Bryan Bucher, *Transition Plan* (Louisville: Ministers Label, 2010), 46.

¹² Russell and Bucher, *Transition Plan*, 18.

¹³ See Joel Gregory, *Too Great A Temptation* (Fort Worth, TX: The Summit Group, 1994).

So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall charge / commission him in their sight. You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.” (Num 27:18-21)

From this text, the class saw that the successor to Moses was given authority by the laying on of hands (v. 18). This process represented the transfer of the task and mission as well as the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua. The laying on of hands was seen by the class as the central feature of the ordination service.¹⁴ Other key elements of an ordination service were concluded to be a time of fasting and prayer (Acts 13:2-3), a worship service since it is a sacred ceremony, a charge to the candidate (1 Tim 5:21), and other elders, perhaps even from other churches. It was noted that the people did not lay hands on the candidate, but rather, the elders did (1 Tim 4:14).

The discussion concluded with a time of question and answers.

Recommendations were discussed as well as the future vision for the two congregations. The post-test questionnaire was distributed and completed quickly because the class had reviewed the previous material before each teaching session and answered any lingering questions. The tests were also completed accurately with 80-90 percent of the questions answered correctly from each student. An informal group discussion was held the following Sunday after the morning worship service regarding possible strategies going forward.¹⁵

Finally, in the final week of December, a trio of pastors and denominational leaders were scheduled for interviews. These interviews were 20-30 minutes long and, due to the pandemic of 2020, were by telephone. These pastors were: Ed Emmerling from Westside Church in Flushing, Michigan; Jerome Taylor of Eastgate Baptist Church in Burton, Michigan and past President of the Baptist State Convention of Michigan; and Mike Durbin, a former pastor, missionary with the IMB, and presently the Evangelism

¹⁴ H. E. Dana, *A Manual of Ecclesiology* (Kansas City, KS: Central Seminary Press, 1944), 262.

¹⁵ See chap. 5.

Director for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan. Each pastor or leader was given the summary of the research and the conclusions reached in the class and especially the biblical arguments for a plurality of elders with a primary leader among them. These pastors were asked if this primary thesis of the project—that the Bible teaches a plurality of elders with a primary leader (elder led, congregationally ruled)—seemed true to Scripture and in line with the *The Baptist Faith and Message*. One pastor (Emmerling) said he agreed, but that his church still views the deacons as an elder board. All three believed that, though tradition in many churches was strong, the thesis of the project was biblical and in full alignment with *The Baptist Faith and Message* under article VI. This article on “The Church,” states,

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.¹⁶

This article was discussed with each of these pastors in light of the biblical material presented in the classes. Though recognizing the varied forms of church polity and the traditions developed within the family of Southern Baptist Churches, the three pastors or Southern Baptist leaders also agreed that the conclusions of the project were both biblical and in line with the *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Each pastor or leader was sent an e-mail thanking them for participating in the final stages of the project.

Conclusion

The time the church leadership had together in the classes seemed both informative and inspiring. Several weeks later, key people continued to comment to

¹⁶ Southern Baptist Convention, “Article VI: The Church,” in *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2000), 13.

others in the church on how much the class helped them and how much they learned in the process. A sense of calling, destiny, and mission seemed to be revived within the core leadership. Fresh plans were discussed, and new possibilities were considered. New commitments were made, and new leaders emerged. The whole church seemed to sense a new beginning.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

This project was designed to develop and implement a six-week course on healthy church leadership at New Haven Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan.¹ The course evaluated knowledge and equipped the men and women of New Haven Baptist Church for leadership in the church and in the next generation. The course dealt with issues of church government, eldership, the qualifications of eldership, and the basic means of transference of authority to the next generation of leaders.

Evaluation by local pastors will be included in the following chapter. This chapter will also evaluate the effectiveness of the course of instruction over the six-week period. Finally, the chapter will include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the project and conclude with theological and personal observations.

Evaluation of the Purpose

This project was designed to develop and implement a six-week course on healthy church leadership at New Haven Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan. The church has two locations with one of the churches being a new church plant of the mother church. New leadership was needed in both churches because the older church has an aging group of leaders and the new church has very few leaders of its own. There had been little effort to train new leaders due to the sensitivity of the leadership and the mother church and the inexperience and immaturity of the new congregation. Some new Christians in the church plant were mature enough for leadership positions but moved out of state due to an economic recession in the area. Others in each congregation proved

¹ See appendix 2.

unreliable over time. These conditions left both churches in need of new leaders. Even though the course had several difficulties, the primary purpose was accomplished.

Evaluation of the Goals

Goal 1 was to evaluate and develop the biblical knowledge of healthy church leadership among the core leaders. The evaluation was done with a pre-project test on church government and congregational leadership.² This test turned out to be a catalyst for the class and a motivation for the teacher. Most of the class members scored under 50 percent for correct answers showing the great need for such a class. Nothing was done to prepare the class members ahead of time for the questions.

Goal 2 was to develop a six-week course for biblical and healthy leadership.³ This goal was complete when the six weeks of lessons were outlined, and a schedule was set for the classes. The goal was completed and the course was prepared. People who had shown faithfulness or special gifts were specifically encouraged to attend the classes. The course and its conclusions were also evaluated by local Southern Baptist pastors and denominational leaders.⁴ These classes were the heart of the project and continue to be a source of information and discussion to this day.

Goal 3 was to increase the knowledge of healthy church leadership by implementing the six-week course. The classes ran approximately an hour and a half, depending on the number of questions asked and the participation of the class. This goal was considered accomplished when the post-project test was administered. The same questions were asked at the end of the project and ample time was given for the members

² See appendix 1.

³ See appendix 2.

⁴ The pastors and leaders consulted were: Mike Durbin, Director of Evangelism for the Baptist State Convention; Jerome Taylor, Pastor at Eastgate Baptist Church and past President of the Baptist State Convention; and Ed Emmerling, Pastor at Westside Church in Flushing, MI. Questions discussed by the pastors may be seen in appendix 3.

to complete their answers.⁵ All the members scored at least 80 percent or higher on the test the second time around. This level of accuracy in the participant's responses met the requirements needed to reach goal 3.

Several things aided in reaching the higher scores on the post-project test. For one thing, I took the time to thoroughly review the previous lessons before presenting any new material. Further, I encouraged questions and discussion during the teaching time. I did not go further with new material until I felt that the previous information had been understood. Finally, I remained behind after class for any informal questions and to clear up any confusion the participants may have experienced but were afraid to ask about during class time.

Twenty-three people completed the final test. Of these participants, eight were older adults over forty years of age, nine were young adults from twenty to thirty-nine years of age, and six were older teenagers who showed an interest in the project. About half were male and half were female. This was encouraging because it represented a healthy cross section of the congregation.

Strengths of the Project

Several strengths of the project became evident almost immediately. One was the underlying desire for leadership training within both congregations that has now been met. A sense of insecurity regarding the future of the churches had crept into the hearts of several key people. Experiencing the struggles of the pandemic of 2020 added to the fears. When the class saw that the Bible taught, and the early church practiced, a plurality of elders and a smooth transfer to the next generation, many participants were relieved. Peace replaced anxiety, and faith in Christ grew in the whole congregation by the end of the six-week course. Since the completion of the project, several new potential leaders have emerged. Many new people had questions which were duly answered, and a new

⁵ See appendix 1.

vision began to take shape. The interest in the class was palpable. With over twenty class members signing up to take the tests and the course, none of the class members dropped out. They also did extra reading and most members participated in the question and answer time. The need for such training was evident and the benefits to both congregations became obvious almost immediately.

Another strength of the project was the acceptance of and careful use of Scripture in finding the way forward. Paul was not ashamed to say, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Christian finds through Scripture all that is needed for correction and instruction. The next generation of leadership will also find certainty and guidance in the Scripture as well. Benjamin Merkle writes of his experience at Capitol Hill Baptist Church with pastor Mark Dever:

When Mark Dever and I joined up at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. in 1994, we both seen the dark side of church government: power hungry deacons, unqualified elders, immoral pastors, distrusting congregations. It was enough to make anyone doubt the idea that “church” could ever work. But one things we could not do is ignore the Scripture. There it was black and white—words like elders, deacons, above reproach, self-controlled, teach, preach, and phrases like “keeping watch over your soul” (Heb. 13:17) and “entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach” (2 Tim. 2:2).⁶

Merkle continues to describe his own experience with Mark Dever:

Maybe, just maybe, if we gave ourselves to building the church as outlined in Scripture, insisting on the offices and the right people with the right character, we would see a new, deep, faithful, and lasting kind of health restored to Christ’s church. Fifteen years later I’m delighted to say that God has honored His Word as we have labored to obey it.⁷

As Merkle indicates, Scripture, hard work, and persistence is necessary for healthy church leadership. As the leaders of the two participating churches have aged,

⁶ Benjamin L. Merkle, *Why Elders? A Biblical and Practical Guide for Church Members* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 7.

⁷ Merkle, *Why Elders?*, 7.

moved away, or died, the churches have felt an increasing need for a plan of succession and a vision for the future. The six-week course was needed, timely, and effective.

Another strength of the project was the interest of several young people in the Bible as the authority and the reliability of the Bible, especially New Testament manuscripts. Some manuscript discrepancies were noted in the class and, after the classes were over, several came with a whole new set of questions. Some questions regarded the transmission of texts through the centuries and many of these young people suggested they needed another course on the inerrancy and infallibility of the Scripture. An entire youth group Bible study grew out of this very genuine and vital issue of biblical authority. Authors whom the class members had not read were suggested to them, which they happily accepted.⁸ This entire episode of faith building came about from the issues raised in the class and the discussions after the class.

Another strength of the project was a renewed emphasis on succession. Many churches and organizations do not have plan for succession of leadership. As Albert Mohler states,

The succession crisis in contemporary leadership is not limited to Christian ministries. The nation's largest and most influential corporations and institutions face similar challenges. The evidence indicates that most leaders are not very good at managing succession and most organizations do little more than hope for the best. Of course, hoping for the best is one way to ensure that worst will happen. A faithful succession requires a great deal of planning and determination, and no successful model is applicable everywhere.⁹

This quote calls for flexibility and focus. As the leaders of the two participating churches have aged, the churches have felt an increasing need for a plan of succession and a vision for the future. This plan began to take place in a coherent and peaceful manner during the project.

⁸ Among the new books purchased and discussed afterwards were Craig L. Bloomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014), and the brilliant young Roman Catholic scholar, Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2016).

⁹ Albert Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2012), 209.

A further benefit of the project was the unity the core leadership developed once the teaching sessions had concluded and everyone could see from Scripture the leadership positions and duties that were given to each one. As Paul wrote, “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:11-13). There seemed to no discordant notes or disaffected members as the class unified around the lessons.

A further strength of the project was the willingness of the churches and class participants to engage in honest inquiry. Traditions and past practices were put on hold while the Old and New Testaments were studied. This openness provided an atmosphere where the truths of Scripture could be given their full weight. The various models of church government resonated with some in the class who had grown up in one of the models described.¹⁰ Therefore, there was much discussion and interest as the various forms of church governance was put to the biblical test.

A final and somewhat surprising strength was the resultant commitment to the future of the church by those who attended the class and received the information. Some indicated that they felt the calling of God on their lives to full-time Christian service.

Weaknesses of the Project

The project buoyed and encouraged to the congregations. Some weaknesses, however, emerged. For one, the project was implemented during the difficult time of a pandemic. Some front-line workers in the congregation who wanted to attend were not able to do so. Others, not in the medical field but who lived with a vulnerable family member, chose not to attend as well. The pandemic also limited the class to the people

¹⁰ Those models were categorized as The Roman Catholic (a top down government); The Presbyterian (a top down government which originates in the congregation); the traditional Baptist view (a single elder and congregational rule); and finally, a subsection of the traditional Baptist view—a plurality of elders with a primary elder spokesman all under congregational rule.

who were available and willing to risk themselves to attend a public gathering when these gatherings were discouraged by both the state government and other family members. There was no undue pressure brought to bear and many people came anyway. No one was ill affected and safety procedures, such as distancing and disinfecting, were implemented.

A second weakness was the lack of disciplined reading by the class members for the necessary biblical and theological background of the topics and discussion. Some class members were not motivated to purchase the recommended book and, even if purchased for them, they still did not read it all the way through. Also, the one or two Christian bookstores in the area did not carry what was needed for the class. This lack of reading was exacerbated by the fact that many class members had no knowledge of church government or did not understand some terms the Bible uses for church leadership, such as “bishop” or “elder.”

A third weakness was the decision to use the original church building as the class location. This was done initially to encourage several older members who are de facto leaders to attend, but the decision resulted in requiring the newer and younger people to drive further to attend the class. The older building is not considered adaptive to a learning atmosphere and fellowship, where the new location is, with its updated facilities. More people may have attended the course if it had been held in the new facility.

What I Would Do Differently

I would do five things differently if the class was started from the beginning. The church will almost certainly want another six-week course once the pandemic has subsided and people are again free to move about and socialize. Some changes would include, first, a different location. The classes would be held at the New Haven Fieldhouse atrium and café, which is well lighted and spacious. People like its nursery,

flexible seating, the ambience of a fireplace, and large size. It is also accessible to the most people.

Another difference would be the contacting of individuals personally with information about the class. People that are potential elders would be more than encouraged to attend. If people understood how important it was and the increasing needs of the church for a new generation of leadership, then they would probably be more motivated to attend.

The classes also should be live streamed for people who are unable to attend in person and want to catch up. Live streaming would also enable other church members to view it, so that they would know the direction the church is going. Livestreaming would also disperse more information and give opportunity for more participation. All members of the church have an investment in who their next leadership team will be. More exposure to biblical information on leadership would lead to a wider acceptance of the viewpoints taught in the class and a greater unity would be experienced.

Another thing that should be done differently is the required reading. Since preparing for the class and teaching it, I have become more knowledgeable of the precise books that are helpful, interesting, and biblical than previously. This knowledge will guide everyone's reading in the next class. An entire shelf in the church library is now filled with books and commentaries on the subjects of eldership, deacons, transitions, church government, ordination, and pastoral calling and qualifications. This reading is very important. The class needs to know what other churches, pastors, and leaders, are saying and doing on the subject of church leadership.

Finally, another change would be that the six-week course would have an entire session that served as a follow up with all the participants. This would be a time to brainstorm and plan strategies in light of what they learned from Scripture. This follow up meeting would be in an informal setting, perhaps with a meal and fellowship time, to conclude the six-week course. This festive kind of conclusion would unite the church's

core leaders around God's Word and project a vision for the future. This hopeful vision is important to a local church because "where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint" (Prov 29:18).

Theological Reflections

This project was to develop and implement a six-week course on healthy church leadership at New Haven Baptist Church in Burton, Michigan. Several theological reflections are in order.

One theological reflection is the importance of the Bible as the church's primary textbook. This conviction was affirmed and reaffirmed in the classes. As David said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105). Without the Holy Scriptures, the church would be adrift on a sea of human opinion. There are almost as many such opinions as there are humans. In other words, there would be no certainty and no confidence about the way forward without the Bible. Peter also adds concerning the Christian: "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (2 Pet 1:3). Also, Jesus himself said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19-20). Therefore, believers can boldly say that the Scriptures, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the very presence of Jesus will be with leaders as they seek to leave a legacy of leadership to the next generation.

Another theological reflection lies in the subject of the original twelve apostles and their unique role in the New Testament. Extra research was required for this topic

and books were obtained regarding the somewhat contemporary Apostolic movement led at one time by C. Peter Wagner.¹¹ Wagner writes,

Since right now, we find ourselves on earth and not in heaven, only by following certain earthly rules can we implement this social transformation. Human society is regulated by seven supreme molders of culture—namely, religion, family, government, arts and entertainment, media, business, and education. It should be obvious to anyone that for society as a whole to change, each one of these molders of culture needs to be led or “dominated” by persons of goodwill, whether Christians or non-Christians.¹²

These seven molders of culture must be taken (thus, “dominion”) and this dominion was accomplished through those who have an apostolic calling. Numerous churches are led today by what Wagner would call apostles. He calls this movement “The New Apostolic Reformation” because “Apostolic” focuses on outreach and recognizes present day apostolic ministries.¹³ The authority of the twelve apostles to write Scripture and raise the dead is no longer part of the gifts of the Spirit today. The more general sense of missionary certainly remains as part of the gifts today.

Strategies Going Forward

Several possible strategies for the future of the church took shape as the class progressed. One was the interest in mentoring and the sense that it was not only effective as a means of transferring authority and preparing for the next generation but also an actual duty given in the New Testament. Jesus gave the Great Commission to the disciples and the disciples then trained and taught young men in the churches. Paul told Timothy, “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust

¹¹ C. Peter Wagner was a Professor of Missiology at Fuller Seminary and known in his earlier years for his church growth writings. He was mentored by Donald A. McGavran. In his later years, he embraced “Open Theism”; the belief that God has chosen not to know some things. See his book, *Dominion!* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2008), 76.

¹² Wagner, *Dominion!*, 12.

¹³ C. Peter Wagner, *The New Apostolic Churches* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1998), 18.

to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). It became apparent fairly quickly that this kind leadership training was expected in the early church.

Another strategy was the decision that each person in leadership should have a replacement. If a leader is sick, on vacation, or absent for any reason, a replacement should be ready and prepared for the work that needs to be done. This practice will require some mentoring and teaching but would be applied to all staff, worship leaders, band members, teachers, ushers, maintenance, youth workers, hospitality workers, greeters, sound technicians, and of course the pastors and deacons.

A third strategy was the decision to seek closer connections to other churches of like faith and order. This practice was noted in the lives and work of Paul and Barnabas:

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to ask the apostles and the elders about this question. (Acts 15:1-2)

This was no small debate but went to the heart of the gospel. It was important that Paul and Barnabas have a working relationship with the churches in Jerusalem that they may obtain guidance and confirmation from those churches and from the apostles. The local church does not have to revert to a Roman Catholic or Presbyterian model of governance in order to find affirmation from other churches. Autonomy can still be preserved though counsel is received. Proverbs 15:22 says, “Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.”

A fourth strategy was that the church would make a clear demarcation between elders and deacons. This distinction is clearly done by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 but often obscured in practice by Baptist churches today. Further, deacons may not meet the same standards of character and conduct that the bishops are required to meet. Since the distinction between the offices is preferred in Scripture, it should be preferred in practice and in the terminology by the local church, for every word is inspired by the Holy Spirit

(1 Cor 2:13). Christians should therefore use the same words the Holy Spirit uses. In interviews with local pastors and leaders,¹⁴ they acknowledged that elders are not deacons but were not sure how to make the transition to correct terminology without hurting the church.

A fifth strategy will be to put a priority on finding leadership within the local congregation itself rather than go outside the church or community to fill the leadership positions. Looking within enables the church to feel more comfortable with the leaders selected since they already know them and have worked with them over a period of time (see 1 Thess 5:12 AV). Finding leaders within the congregation does not mean a church could never go outside its own membership for leaders. Even Barnabas brought in Paul from outside the church at Antioch (Acts 11:25, 26).

Personal Reflections

I have come to see leadership training as an absolute necessity in the church of Jesus Christ. I always knew that leadership training should be included in a church's ministries, but I often considered it optional. After the six-week project, the leadership team at New Haven Baptist Church agreed that to be obedient to Christ there must be training.

The necessity of leadership training is personally true for two reasons: first, time is fleeting and life is short. To leave a legacy, pastors must train and mentor new leaders. Albert Mohler states, "Faithful leaders know that time has to be protected or it will be lost. Once lost, it can never be regained. This requires hard decisions and maturity."¹⁵

Second, the work of the gospel is too great to simply make it about one person or one generation. Leadership training recognizes that the kingdom of God goes on

¹⁴ See appendix 3.

¹⁵ Mohler, *The Conviction to Lead*, 187.

without present leadership. God will raise up new people, and pastors may have the privilege of participating in the preparation of those people, even now. Delegation of the task brings blessings that pastors may not see. In commenting on the apostles delegating ministry to the seven deacons in Acts 6, Andy Stanley says,

None of the Twelve had any idea what hung in the balance of their decision to give up waiting tables. What they did know was that it would not be right for them to “neglect the ministry of the word.” Imagine what might have happened if these leaders had continued waiting tables and had not delegated the responsibility of disseminating food.¹⁶

One can see by reading the narrative of these original seven deacons that the effect was immediate and powerful. The text says, “These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:6-7). Few could have predicted the success of the simple act of delegation.

Conclusion

Leadership training is front and center of most church growth books. Few people would deny the importance of leadership and the mentoring of new leaders as crucial for the next generation. It is a vital principle of growth, longevity, and health for all New Testament churches. Leadership is vital and is seen in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. There are biblical and effective ways of transferring the task and authority to a new generation. Good leaders should be a pastor’s heart’s desire before God. The effect of good leadership is beyond description. As the great king David saw the need and wonder of good leadership, he prayed, “The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless

¹⁶ Andy Stanley, *Next Generation Leader: Five Essentials for Those Who Will Shape the Future* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003), 32.

morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth” (2 Sam 23:3-4). May God make church leaders to be such men and women, and may God raise up such men and women as David describes.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY QUESTIONS TO EVALUATE THE KNOWLEDGE OF BIBLICAL AND HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP

VARIOUS FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

1. Name and distinguish between at least three forms of church government used by denominations today.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
2. Describe your own church's form of government with strengths and weaknesses.

TITLES AND OFFICES OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

3. Give three criteria for a New Testament apostle
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.
4. Which Old Testament leader do you view as the best pattern for the New Testament pastor and why do you believe he is a pattern for a New Testament pastor?
5. Give at least three names or titles used in the New Testament for a pastor of a local church and why they differ.
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

MINISTRIES OF A CHURCH LEADER

6. Name five priorities or duties of a pastor and then circle the two most important.
 - i.
 - ii.
 - iii.
 - iv.
 - v.
7. What are some different kinds of preaching and which is most Biblical and health producing for a congregation?
8. How would you describe the ministry of the deacon and the process of their selection?
9. What New Testament passage and arguments did Paul give for pastoral support? Can you defend the typical music director's position from the Scripture and give an example of their financial support?

SUCCESSION

10. Name the first example of succession in the New Testament.
11. Can you name at least one passage where the New Testament gives us direction on the succession of pastoral work?
12. Can you give Biblical evidence that the apostles succeeded Christ and that the church of today (with its leadership) succeeds the apostles?

13. How do you define ordination Biblically and what is the significance of laying on of hands?

14. What is the importance and the role of the resurrection and ascension of Christ in the giving and empowering of modern church leadership? Give the Scripture that supports your understanding.

APPENDIX 2

LESSONS ON HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The class began with an introduction of church leadership in history and in modern day practice. Four basic models were described and discussed. Pastoral titles and duties were defined from the New Testament. There was also a discussion on the whether there are modern day apostles in the same sense as in the first century. A section of the lesson was on the definition of a New Testament church. We discussed the essential components in the Bible and in the New Testament. An entire lesson was given to pastoral support and whether it is a biblical concept. The concluding lesson was on transference of authority and the training of leadership for a new generation.

Lesson 1: Church Government Introduction

FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

1. Name and distinguish between four forms of church government used by denominations today.

- A. Roman Catholic – a top down hierarchy
- B. Presbyterian – decision making by elected representatives (session)
- C. Congregational, or Baptist – autonomous and self governing
- D. Congregational with elders – elected elders guide the church except for major decisions

2. Describe your own church's form of government with its strengths and weaknesses.

Type: Congregational with elders

Strengths The form that seems most Biblical / less time spent with organization

Weaknesses A less informed congregation

TITLES OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE

3. Give four criteria for a New Testament apostle

- A. Chosen by Jesus (Luke 6:13)
- B. With Jesus for 3 years (Acts 1:21, 22)
- C. Witness of resurrection (Acts 1:22)
- D. Miraculous signs (2 Cor 12:12)

May New Testament pastors be called “apostolic”? In what way may New Testament officers be called “apostolic”?

Discuss: In the sense that they are sent by the church as Barnabas was sent (Acts 14:14)

Could Paul be called a New Testament “apostle” in the sense of the original twelve?

Yes, because he was:

- A. Chosen by Jesus (Acts 9:15)
- B. With Jesus for 3 years (Gal 1:15-17)
- C. A witness of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:8)
- D. A messenger with miraculous signs of an apostle (2 Cor 12:12)

Conclusion: the bishop / pastor / elder is not an original apostle but may exercise similar authority as one who crosses cultures or begins a new work.

4. Give at least three names or titles used in the New Testament for a pastor of a local church

- A. Pastor (Eph 4:11)
- B. Elder (1 Pe 5:1,2)
- C. Bishop (1 Tim 3:1)

These are used interchangeably in Acts 20:17, 28 (Greek text) and in 1 Peter 5:1, 2

Lesson 2: Church Government—Titles and Succession

REVIEW FORMS OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

1. Name and distinguish between four forms of church government used by denominations today.
2. Describe your own church's form of government.

TITLES OF THE PASTORAL OFFICE

3. Review names or titles used in the New Testament for a pastor of a local church

See Acts 20:17, 28

- One (elder) speaks of the MATURITY of the pastor since he is called an elder
- One (bishop) speaks of the AUTHORITY of the pastor since he an overseer.
- One (pastor) speaks of the PRIORITY of the pastor since he is a shepherd.

Other passages to reference:

1 Peter 5:1-2 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight.

John 21:16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend [Gk: poiemi] my sheep."

*Titus 1:5-7 This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—
6 if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.
7 For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach.*

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops [overseers] and deacons:

4. Which Old Testament leader do you view as the best pattern for the New Testament pastor and why do you believe he is a pattern for a New Testament pastor?

MINISTRIES OF A CHURCH LEADER

5. What are five priorities or duties of a pastor?

- i. Mark 3:14, John 17:7, 8, (Ezra 10:6-8)
- ii. Acts 6:4
- iii. Num 10:2, Deut 5:1, Acts 6:2,
- iv. Acts 11:29, 30 (Num 18:26)
- v. Titus 1:5

6. What New Testament passage and arguments did Paul give for pastoral financial support?

7. Can you defend the typical music director's position from the Scripture and give an example of their financial support?

SCRIPTURES TO DISCUSS:

1 Cor 9:7-14 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same?

9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned?

10 Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

8. How would you describe the ministry of the deacon and the process of their selection?

Read Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3.

SUCCESSION

9. What is succession and what is the first example of succession in the New Testament?

10. Can you name at least one passage where the New Testament gives us direction on the succession of pastoral work?

11. Can you give Biblical evidence that the apostles succeeded Christ and that the church of today (with its leadership) succeeds the apostles?

12. How do you define ordination Biblically and what is the significance of laying on of hands?

13. What is the importance and the role of the resurrection and ascension of Christ in the giving and empowering of modern church leadership? Give the Scripture that supports your understanding.

Lesson 3: Church Government—Duties and Support

REVIEW

Name several priorities or duties of a pastor and then circle the two most important.

Note the added duties as discussed in the class

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| i. Preach | Mark 3:14, John 17:7, 8, (Ezra 10:6-8) |
| ii. Pray | Acts 6:4, 1 Tim 2:1 |
| iii. Summon | Acts 6:2, Num 10:2, Deut 5:1, |
| iv. Provide | Acts 11:29, 30 (Num 18:26)

<i>2 Cor 12:15 So I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.</i> |
| v. Train leaders | Titus 1:5 |
| vi. Cast vision | Prov 29:18 |
| vii. Rule | 1 Tim 5:17, Heb 13:17

<i>1 Tim 5:17-18 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." [See Deut 25:4 and Luke 10:7]</i> |
| viii. Model | 1 Tim 4:12 |
| ix. Discipline | Titus 1:10-11

<i>Titus 1:10, 11 For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. Their mouths must be stopped since they are upsetting whole families ...</i> |
| x. Study | 2 Tim 2:15 |
| xi. Evangelism | 2 Tim 4:5 |

Review of New Testament passage and arguments did Paul give for pastoral support?

1 Cor 9:7-14 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same?

9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? 10 Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. 11-12 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

Paul argues from:

- The Army (vs 7)
- The Vine keepers (vs 7)
- The Shepherd (vs 7)
- The Law of Moses (vs 8-10)
- The Farmer (vs 10)
- The Value of the Spiritual (vs 11)
- The Common Practice (vs 12)
- The Temple (vs 13)
- The Lord's Command (vs 14)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Paul did not take money from the Corinthians. Why not? They were too immature (see 1 Cor 3:1,2)

If not, where did Paul get money to live?

2 Cor 11:7-9 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? 8 I robbed [took offerings from] other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need [Acts 18:5 ESV] . So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.

Can you defend the typical music director's position from the Scripture and give an example of their financial support?

1 Chron 9:33 Now these, the singers, the heads of fathers' houses of the Levites, were in the chambers of the temple free from other service, for they were on duty day and night.

Neh 13:10-12 I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had gone back each to his field.

11 So I confronted the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their stations. 12 Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. [See also Psalm 134:1]

Ps 134:1-2 Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord! 2 Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord!

What defines a church?

When the Reformers broke with Rome (16th century), all kinds of divergent groups arose. They had different creeds, different forms of government, different liturgies, and cultures. Many of them claimed to be a church and some claimed to be the true church. The Roman Catholics taught that, "Wherever the bishop is, there is the church". How do we know? What are the marks of a true church?

The Reformers of the 16th century said there are three non-negotiables:

A. Where the Faithful Gospel is proclaimed faithfully (Matt 28:18-28)

This includes the essentials that undergird the Gospel: The infallibility of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, a final judgment ...

Would a Mormon church be valid? No A Jehovah's Witness? No

B. Where the sacraments are administered (Baptism and Holy Communion)

C. Where church discipline is exercised when needed (1 Cor 5)

This would also require the offices of the church to be in operation

FURTHER REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the ministry of the deacon and the process of their selection?

To serve as needed by the church and as directed by the bishops

2. Name the first example of succession in the New Testament. (God to Jesus)

3. Can you name at least one passage where the New Testament gives us direction on the succession of pastoral work? Acts 20

4. Can you give Biblical evidence that the apostles succeeded Christ and that the church of today (with its leadership) succeeds the apostles?

John 12:49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

John 17:8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching

5. How do you define ordination Biblically and what is the significance of laying on of hands?

To ordain is to “install” into office. The laying on of hands indicates the transfer or delegation of the same purpose or mission.

6. What is the importance and the role of the resurrection and ascension of Christ in the giving and empowering of modern church leadership? Give the Scripture that supports your understanding.

Eph 4:8-12 When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,

12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Lesson 4: Church Government—Plurality of Elders

Review: 4 forms of church government

- Roman Catholic
- Presbyterian (USA)
- Congregational with Single Elder
- Congregational with Plural Elders

James White illust of the church as a family

What are the advantages of a congregational eldership over a denominational hierarchy?

A. Biblical (Acts 11:30, Acts 14:23, 1 Tim 5:17, James 5:14)

B. Elevates the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:11, 12)

Respects her dignity

Develops her maturity

C. Puts people over policy

Martin Luther's "epi-keia" (human sympathy and gentleness)

Illust. of the policeman and the stop sign

Illust. of Mother Theresa in NY City

In the winter of 1988, the "Missionaries of Charity" led by Mother Theresa, wanted to convert a fire gutted building into a homeless shelter. After getting permission from Mayor Ed Koch, they raised enough money for the project. The renovation would provide care for over 60 men. Many people were happy. But there was a law that required a \$100,000 elevator in all renovated buildings. She explained they would not be able to raise the \$100,000 and after two years the project was dropped. One person wrote observes, "*Everyone wanted to feed and house the homeless. Reputable people were ready to do it. All agreed it should be done but rules replaced thinking. Law replaced love.*"

Review what defines a church?

When the Reformers broke with Rome (16th century), all kinds of divergent groups arose. They had different creeds, different forms of government, different liturgies, and cultures. Many of them claimed to be a church and some claimed to be the true church. The Roman Catholics taught that, "Wherever the bishop is, there is the church". How do we know? What are the marks of a true church?

The Reformers said there are three non-negotiables:

A. Where the Faithful Gospel is proclaimed faithfully (Matt 28:18-28)

This includes the essentials that undergird the Gospel: The infallibility of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, a final judgment ...

Would a Mormon church be valid? A Jehovah's Witness?

B. Where the sacraments are administered (Baptism and Holy Communion)

C. Where church discipline is exercised when needed (1 Cor 5)

This would also require the offices of the church to be in operation

1. How would you describe the ministry of the deacon and the process of their selection?

To serve as needed by the church and as directed by the bishops

2. Name the first example of succession in the New Testament.

3. Can you name at least one passage where the New Testament gives us direction on the succession of pastoral work?

4. Can you give Biblical evidence that the apostles succeeded Christ and that the church of today (with its leadership) succeeds the apostles?

John 12:49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

John 17:8 For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching

5. How do you define ordination Biblically and what is the significance of laying on of hands?

To ordain is to "install" into office. The laying on of hands indicates the transfer or delegation of the same purpose or mission.

6. What is the importance and the role of the resurrection and ascension of Christ in the giving and empowering of modern church leadership? Give the Scripture that supports your understanding.

Eph 4:8-12 When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." 9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Lesson 5: “The Pastor: Called, Qualified, Motivated”

I. THE PLURALITY OF ELDERS WITH A PRIMARY LEADER

1. The Old Testament Patterns

Moses and the elders – *Numbers 11:24* *Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.*

Joshua and his elders - *Josh 24:1* *Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel. And they presented themselves before God.*

David and his elders - *2 Sam 5:3* *Then came all the elders of Israel to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord,*

2. The New Testament Practice

- Peter and the other apostles Matt 16:18
- Paul and his missionary team Acts 13:1-3
- Titus and his task of ordination Titus 1:5

3. The Nature of the Church

It is more of a family than organization

It is more conducive to growth and expansion

II. THE PRIMARY PASTOR/TEACHER

A. His Calling

1 Tim 3:1 *The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires [continually longs for – see 6:10] to the office of overseer, he desires [continually with passion – see Matt 5:28, Luke 16:21] a noble task.*

B. His Qualifications

1 Tim 3:2-7 *Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife [known for one woman], sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable [from ‘cosmos’], hospitable [loves strangers], able to teach, not a drunkard [sit long at bars], not violent [one who strikes another] but gentle [epikeia], not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children [tekna – small children] submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage [take care of – see Luke 10:34] his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders [think credit report!], so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil [diabolos].*

Note 1: Sometimes we say, “God qualifies the called ...” which is true but like most colloquialisms, it is not entirely true!

Note 2: Two confirmations are given that the man is ready – the family and the watching world.

Note 3: Education does not seem to be a primary qualifier but rather character, temperament, and integrity, are given the greatest emphasis.

Note 4: The spirit of a man is of utmost importance

Rom 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son,

Ps 106:32-33 They angered him at the waters of Meribah, and it went ill with Moses on their account, 33 for they made his spirit bitter, and he spoke rashly with his lips.

III. THE MOTIVATION FOR A PROPER PASTORAL OFFICE

After describing the Deacon’s qualifications (vs 8-13), Paul gives the Grand Motive for having proper leadership functioning in a healthy manner:

1 Tim 3:14-15 I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.

LIVING BIBLE: *1 Tim 3:15 If I don't come for awhile, you will know what kind of men you should choose as officers for the church of the living God, which contains and holds high the truth of God.*

Lesson 6: Ordination

Illust of relay race

Four runners running a mile each can cover the same distance faster than man. The fastest runner can complete a mile in about four minutes. A relay team a mile in 3.5 minutes. A proper passing of the baton is crucial. United States relay team was by far the most talented in a recent Summer Olympics but lost the race because the baton was dropped.

- Both runners must be on same team and running in same lane
- Both runners should be going full speed at contact
- This means the one receiving must be running before the baton is passed
- The baton must be completely passed to the next runner (the first runner can cheer him on)
- The number one reason for dropping the baton is

Transition Point No. 1	Doctrine
Transition Point No. 2	Mentoring
Transition Point No. 3	Missions
Transition Point No. 4	Ordination

Num 27:18-21 So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. 19 Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall charge / commission him in their sight. 20 You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. 21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation."

WHAT IS ORDINATION?

It is the delegation of authority to a successor or a new leader (it may be partial delegation – Num 27:20)

It's central feature is the laying on of hands

It is a sacred ceremony carried out in front of the congregation

NOTES:

1. Laying on of hands symbolizes transfer of task and authority

2. The hands should be placed on the shoulder of the kneeling candidate (Isa 9:6, Ex 28:12)

He should kneel indicating his submission and surrender to the task

Hands should not be laid on the head – which indicates transfer of guilt (Lev 1:4), but the shoulder

3. The hands should be the hands of the elders, not the congregation (Num 27:18)

1 Tim 4:14-15 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.

Note: Laying on of hands may not be considered ‘sacerdotal’ – that is, a ceremony which actually conveys the thing it represents. Note again, 1 Tim 4:14 in which Timothy’s gift was bestowed in the prophecy, not the laying on of hands.

4. Ordination is a public and sacred ceremony which should probably include these elements:

- Worship (praise songs and special music)
- Introductions
- Scripture readings
- Sermon
- A Charge

Num 27:19 Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall charge / commission him in their sight.

1 Tim 5:21 I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.

- Preceded or accompanied by a time of fasting and prayer

Acts 13:2-3 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

APPENDIX 3

PASTORAL INTERVIEWS

Three interviews were conducted with local pastors and denominational leaders. The questions in this appendix are the basis for those interviews. Out of deference to the pastor's schedules, I tried to keep the interviews under thirty minutes. The primary issues were biblical faithfulness and alignment to the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

PASTORAL INTERVIEWS

I. Topics for the Pastors

- A. An introduction to the 6 classes
- B. The 4 main forms of church government
- C. First, a quick survey of the teaching presented in the 6 classes
- D. The Old and New Testament patterns
- E. Conclusion: Elder (plurality) with a primary leader under Congregational Rule

II. The Pastor / Elder Priorities

III. The 4 Means of Transition

- A. Doctrine
- B. Mentoring
- C. Mission
- D. Ordination

IV. Possible Concerns

- A. Any churches in our state or assoc with plurality of elders?
- B. Why do you think it is so few?

V. Evaluation and Agreement as to Biblical Faithfulness

VI. Evaluation and Agreement as to Alignment with the Baptist Faith and Message (2000)

VII. Final Thoughts

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akin, Daniel L.. ed. *A Theology for the Church*. Rev. ed. Nashville: B & H, 2014.
- Anderson, Leith. *Leadership That Works*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1999.
- Arnold, Clinton E. *Ephesians*. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- Baptist Faith and Message*. Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2000.
- Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson, eds. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- Boettner, Lorraine. *Roman Catholicism*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962.
- Brand, Chad O., and R. Stanton Norman, eds. *Perspectives on Church Government*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2004.
- Bruce, F. F. *Acts*. New International Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988.
- _____. *The Book of Acts*. The New International Commentary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954.
- _____. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984.
- Clowney, Edmund P. *The Church*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1995.
- Cole, G. M. *What Is a Deacon?* Fort Worth, TX: Thomas and Morrow, 1964.
- Cowan, Steven B., ed. *Who Runs the Church? 4 Views on Church Government*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Dana, H. E. *A Manual of Ecclesiology*. Kansas City, KS: Central Seminary Press, 1944.
- Dever, Mark. *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible*. Nashville: B & H, 2012.
- _____. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. 3rd ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013.
- Dumbrell, William G. *Covenant and Creation*. Carlisle, CA: Paternoster, 1984.
- Durham, John I. *Exodus*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3. Dallas: Word, 1987.

- Enns, Peter E. *Exodus*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Fee, Gordon D. *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.
- Finzel, Hans. *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007.
- France, R. T. *Matthew*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Leicester, England: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985.
- Franquiz, Bob. *Zero to Sixty*. Camby, IN: Power Publishing, 2009.
- Gregory, Joel. *Too Great a Temptation*. Fort Worth, TX: The Summit Group, 1994.
- Guthrie, Donald. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957.
- Haile, H. G. *Luther: An Experiment in Biography*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1980.
- Hamilton, Victor P. *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.
- Hammett, John S. *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches. A Contemporary Ecclesiology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005.
- Harvey, H. H. *Commentary on The Pastoral Epistles, First and Second Timothy and Titus and The Epistle to Philemon*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1890.
- Hayes, Doremus Almy. *Paul and His Epistles*. New York: Methodist Concern, 1915.
- Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
- Hughes, Kent, and Bryan Chapell. *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*. Preaching for Today Series. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000.
- Kent, Homer A., Jr. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Chicago: Moody, 1982.
- Kline, Meredith G. *The Structure of Biblical Authority*. Eugene, OR: Wipe and Stock, 1989.
- Knight, George. *The Pastoral Epistles*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992.
- MacArthur, John. *Ephesians. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*. Chicago: Moody, 1986.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.
- Mappes, David A., and Roy B. Zuck, eds. *Vital Church Issues: Examining Principles and Practices in Church Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998.
- McIntosh, Gary L. *Here Today, There Tomorrow*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing, 2010.

- Merkle, Benjamin L. *Why Elders? A Biblical and Practical Guide for Church Members*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009.
- Mohler, Albert Jr. *Acts 1-12 for You*. n.p.: The Good Book Company, 2018.
- _____. *Acts 13-28 for You*. n.p.: The Good Book Company, 2019.
- _____. *The Conviction to Lead*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishing, 2012.
- Montague, George T. *First and Second Timothy, and Titus*. A Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Edited by Peter S. Williamson and Mary Healey. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008.
- O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Peterson, David. *Acts*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009.
- Platt, David, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida. *Christ-Centered Exposition. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Nashville: B & H, 2013.
- Rainer, Thom S. *Breakout Churches*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- Russel, Bob, and Bryan Bucher. *Transition Plan*. Louisville: Ministers Label, 2010.
- Sanders, J. Oswald. *Spiritual Leadership*. Chicago: Moody, 1967.
- Sproul, R. C. *Acts*. Saint Andrews Expository Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010.
- _____. *Mark: An Expository Commentary*. Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011.
- _____. *What Is the Church?* Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2013.
- _____. *What Is the Great Commission?* Sanford, FL: Reformation Trust, 2015.
- Stanley, Andy. *Next Generation Leader, Five Essentials for those Who Will Shape the Future*. Sisters, OR : Multnomah, 2003.
- Stuart, Douglas K. *Exodus*. The New American Commentary, vol. 2. Nashville: B & H, 2006.
- Sullivan, James L. *Baptist Polity-As I See It*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998.
- Theilman, Frank. *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.
- Towner, Phillip H. "1, 2, Timothy and Titus." In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 547-548. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.
- Wagner, C. Peter. *Dominion!* Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2008.
- _____. *The New Apostolic Churches*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1998.

- Warkentin, Marjorie. *Ordination*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1982.
- White, James E. *Rethinking the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.
- Wilkins, Michael J. *Following the Master, Discipleship in the Steps of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Youseff, Michael. *The Leadership Style of Jesus*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2013.
- Zens, Jon. "The Major Concepts of Eldership in the New Testament." *Baptist Reformation Review Journal* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1978): 26.

ABSTRACT

IMPLEMENTING A TRAINING MINISTRY FOR DEVELOPING HEALTHY CHURCH LEADERSHIP AT NEW HAVEN BAPTIST CHURCH, FLINT, MICHIGAN

Larry Edward Rednower, DMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. William D. Henard

Chapter 1 provides the context, rationale, purpose, goals, and research methodology, as well as the definitions, limitations, and delimitations of the project.

Chapter 2 examines the particular texts of the Old and New Testaments which bring light to the purpose of the project. This chapter also focuses on the primary results of examining those texts.

Chapter 3 details the primary results from the standpoint of history and today's culture. This chapter also interacts with the four main approaches to church government.

After chapter 1 presented the contextual factors for the project, chapter 2 surveyed the biblical material in both the Old and New Testaments, and chapter 3 looked at the forms or models of church government, a pattern began to emerge for the church's leadership team. It was concluded that, in the Bible and in history, there was a plurality of elders in leadership positions. Chapter 4 then describes the course based on the conclusion of plurality of eldership with a primary leader, and this theme was taught in six lessons to the leaders and potential leaders of the church.

Finally, chapter 5 evaluates the project's purpose, goals, strengths, weaknesses, and what could have been done differently. Included in this chapter are sundry personal and theological reflections as well as several strategies going forward.

VITA

Larry Edward Rednower

EDUCATION

BA, Asbury University, 1973

MDiv, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Associate Pastor, Alpha Baptist Church, Morristown, Tennessee, 1973

Pastor, Harmony Baptist Church, Weatherford Texas, 1973-1983

Pastor, New Haven Baptist Church, Flint, Michigan, 1983-

Pastor, New Haven Fieldhouse, Swartz Creek, Michigan, 2007-