

Eldership at Faith Community Church

Biblically, church leadership is primarily defined in the office of the elder. An elder is one of a plurality of biblically qualified men who jointly shepherd and oversee a local body of believers. This is the pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Nowhere in scripture does one find a local assembly ruled by majority opinion or by a single pastor.

As numerous passages in the New Testament indicate, the words “elder” (presbuteros), “overseer” (episkopos) and “pastor” (poimén) all refer to the same office. In other words, overseers and pastors are not distinct from elders; the terms are simply different ways of identifying the same people. All pastors should be qualified to serve in the office of elder (whether actually serving in that office or not). Similarly, all elders should be qualified to serve in the pastoral role to the body of believers (whether serving as staff in the church or not). The different terms indicate various features of ministry, not necessarily different levels of authority or separate offices.

Elder Qualifications

The character and effectiveness of any church is directly related to the quality of its leadership. Hence, scripture stresses the importance of qualified church leadership and identifies specific standards to evaluate those who serve in that position.

The qualifications for elders are found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-9. According to these passages, an elder must be a man who is above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious but gentle and peaceable, not accused of incorrigibility, free from the love of money, not fond of sordid gain, a good manager of his household, one who has his children under control with dignity, not a new convert, one who has a good reputation outside the church, self-controlled, sensible, able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict, above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, loving what is good, sensible, just, and devout.

The first overarching qualification, supported by all the others, is that an elder is to be “above reproach.” That is, he must be a leader who has a sustained reputation for blamelessness. An elder is to be above reproach in his family life, his social life, his business life, and his spiritual life. In this way, he is to be a model of godliness so he can legitimately call on the congregation to follow his example (Phil. 3:17). All the other qualifications amplify this idea.

Elder Expectations

General responsibilities as spiritual leaders of the church, under the authority of Jesus Christ:

- 1) Providing spiritual oversight – maintaining doctrinal purity (refuting false doctrine), and in discipline of church members who have gone astray
- 2) Shepherding the flock (and each other) – “equipping the saints”, through teaching, prayer, discipleship, counseling, visiting the sick, practicing hospitality
- 3) Managing the local church – through regular elder meetings or committees, defining vision and direction for the church, oversight of financial matters, oversight of various ministries
- 4) Modeling the character of Christ – in servant leadership, developing relationships, maintaining accountability, setting an example for the body

Elder Tasks/Duties

Elders will generally spend at least 10 hrs/week on specific tasks, duties or responsibilities (see below) related to their role as an overseer. Certain tasks may be emphasized more by certain elders depending on personal giftedness or calling (e.g. staff), but all should be able to perform any of the duties.

- Regular meetings/discussions/prayer with entire board and/or individual elders (including prep)
- Regular family gatherings
- Annual retreat with church leadership; defining strategic vision and policies
- High degree of honesty, humility and trust with other elders (requiring intentional investment of time in each other's lives), honoring one another by:
 - exhibiting mature, friendly and reasonable demeanor in elder meetings
 - quickly resolving conflict with one another, welcoming correction
 - graciously submitting, without complaint, when in disagreement with rest of board
 - completing tasks in timely manner (or asking for help if delays occur)
 - being forthright about personal spiritual struggles and temptations
- Leadership development (individually, and with prospective elders/deacons)
- Committee duties
- Consistent time in the Word each day
- Consistent time in prayer each day
- Managing your own family well (spiritual leadership and discipleship at the home, ministering to the needs of your spouse/children)
- Good stewardship of resources (e.g., budgeting and planning for church, tithing individually)
- Teaching the Word (e.g., ABS, new attenders class, pulpit, small groups, children's ministry, counseling, etc)
- Regular worship (participation) at Sunday morning services (e.g., prayer, missions minute, announcements, etc)
- Consistent engagement in ministry (e.g., Men's Fraternity; CE, including adult, youth, children's or nursery ministries; music; Care and Concern; missions; worship; etc)
- Regular participation in Ordinances, i.e., Baptism or Communion (either officiating or serving)
- Pastoral roles, such as discipleship and counseling (or discipline) of the flock, Shepherd's List, hospitality, visiting the sick, performing weddings/funerals, welcoming attitude toward visitors
- Personal and corporate commitment to evangelism and missions
- Commitment to church-wide events or priorities (if well-planned in advance)