



Biblical Eldership

Community Bible Church

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A Handbook for the Leaders of CBC

Contents

Elder Qualifications..... 1

- Blameless 1
- A One-Woman Man 1
- Temperate..... 3
- Sober-Minded 4
- Of Good Behavior..... 4
- Hospitable 4
- Able to Teach 5
- Not Given to Wine 5
- Not Violent / Not Quarrelsome 6
- Not Greedy For Money / Not Covetous..... 7
- Gentle..... 8
- One Who Rules His Own House Well..... 8
- Not a Novice..... 9
- He Must Have a Good Testimony Among Those Who Are Outside 10
- Holding Fast the Faithful Word..... 10
- Just and Holy 11

Warnings to and Disciplinary Actions against Elders 11

- Old Testament..... 11
- New Testament..... 12

Appointment of Elders 13

Elder Warning Signs 14

Biblical Elder Leadership Structure for CBC 15

Job Description for the Ministry and Service of the CBC Elder 18

Biblical Eldership at CBC

Elder Qualifications

There are a number of qualifications associated with the office of Elder. Each qualification is absolute and must be upheld in order to obtain and/or sustain one's eldership. These requirements do not necessitate perfection, but an Elder is to exemplify Christian maturity through the example of his life.

Blameless

Blameless - *anepilēptos*, an-ep-eel'-ape-tos

Not arrested, that is, (by implication) *inculpable*: blameless, unrebukeable.

An Elder must be blameless. There should be no area of sin that would allow anyone to bring a valid charge against him. This state of blamelessness is not the realization of perfection, but the result of constant submission to the Word of God. From this first qualification the rest flow. So, the following qualifications define what it is to be blameless.

A One-Woman Man

One-woman man – *mias gunaikos andra*, mee'-ahs goo-nay-kahs' an-drah'

One woman man

From the outset it must be understood that this passage is not speaking of marital status, but of moral character. Some take this as a prohibition against polygamy, but polygamy has never been an accepted practice in the Church, let alone its leadership. Polygamy was even outlawed by the Roman government at this time. The thrust of this passage is that an Elder's moral character be that of a one-woman man, or a one-woman kind of man. If married, he is to have eyes only for his wife. Like each of the other qualifications (excluding "*apt to teach*," which in its own sense is moral, due to the man's ability to undermine his own teaching through hypocrisy and immorality) the man is to exemplify moral character in all areas of life, including his marriage relationship. Husbands are exhorted to:

"Love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

(Ephesians 5:24-29)

“Love your wives and do not be bitter toward them,” (Colossians 3:19)

“Dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”
(1 Peter 3:7)

This is the attitude every man must have toward his wife, and the Elder is to be an example of this.

Does divorce automatically disqualify a man from becoming an Elder in the church? Since this passage is not speaking directly to marital status, but moral character, then a man can serve as an Elder if he has been divorced, but the nature of his divorce as well as other factors, such as time, may cause him to no longer be “above reproach” (i.e. blameless), or a “one-woman man.” In Matthew 5:31-32 we read:

“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

Evidently, the practice at the time (through pharisaical teaching no doubt) was that a man just needed a reason that would allow him to fill out a certificate in order to divorce his wife. But Jesus rejects this by sharply stating, *“But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery.”* Therefore, if a man divorces his wife for any reason other than sexual infidelity, he is in direct violation of Scripture and is subsequently disqualified. Now the question must be asked, is this disqualification permanent? If it is in fact permanent, then we must apply the same standard to all the qualifications. Following this line of reasoning, the man is also permanently disqualified if he has ever been (pre- or post-salvation) inhospitable, drunk, or if he has ever failed to be temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, etc. Obviously, Scripture was not meant to communicate such standards. Consequently, whether in marriage or otherwise, past sinful actions are not permanent grounds for disqualification. Does this mean that a man can commit adultery, say that he is repentant and then be placed back in the office in time for next Sunday’s service? Absolutely not! It may require many years of quiet and pure service before the man is considered to be “blameless.” The church elders must seek the Lord in prayer and exercise discernment before giving such a man the responsibility and honor associated with the office.

But what if a man was married for a number of years and then believed on Christ and is consequently divorced by his unbelieving spouse? Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul speaks clearly about this in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 when he states:

But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the

unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

It must be made clear that when Paul states “*I, not the Lord*” he is referring to the fact that Christ did not openly speak on this issue. Paul is without doubt still writing through inspiration of the Holy Spirit. From this passage, it can be seen—without controversy—that the believing spouse is without sin, despite being party to a divorce. As such, his qualified status would remain intact as it relates to this one particular area.

Must a man be married if he is to become an elder? There is no requirement which states that a man must be married since the qualification “a one-woman man” is based on character, not status. In some cases, just the opposite is encouraged. In Corinthians 7:7 Paul states:

“For I wish that all men were even as I myself (that is “unmarried”). But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.”

Again, in verses 32-33 he writes:

“He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife.”

Paul makes the case for an unmarried life, for the purpose of undivided devotion to the Lord. At the same time, the single man may have difficulty counseling married couples due to his lack of personal experience, but a keen understanding of the Scriptures will combat these issues. The Word of God and not life experience is the key. That said, these are not grounds for qualification or disqualification, but they are worth considering.

Temperate

Temperate - *nēphaleos nēphalios*, nah-fal'-eh-os, nay-fal'-ee-os
Sober, that is, (figuratively) *circumspect*: sober, vigilant.

This is the Greek word *nēphalios*, which literally means *wineless* or *unmixed with wine*. There are two main connotations to be considered here. The first is that the man is not to be a drinker. This does not absolutely prohibit the consumption of alcohol, but the man is to refrain from any sort of drinking that may lead to a dull mind. He is to remain clear-headed and in control at all times. The second connotation is that of being circumspect. He is to be watchful and vigilant as he oversees his family, the Church and his own life. In this sense, alcohol is only one of many dangers. A quick temper can quickly dull the senses and produce a lack of control as well as any other unchecked mental attitude. Metaphorically speaking, his mind is to be like tempered steel, not easily bent or broken by the various blows and pressures of life. He must

maintain a sense of moderation in life, avoiding any sort of excess that may influence and cloud his thinking.

Sober-Minded

Sober-minded - *sōphrōn*, so'-frone

Safe (sound) in mind, that is, *self controlled (moderate)* as to opinion or passion): discreet, sober, temperate.

There are two main points to be made. The first is that the man must have a disciplined mind. Being an Elder is a demanding and diverse calling that comes with a number of pressures and distractions. Therefore, the man must have an orderly and disciplined mind if he is to excel within this calling. Simply put, he must have his priorities in order. The second attitude is that of seriousness about spiritual things. His mind is to be focused on the things of God. Philippians 4:8 gives us a good measuring stick for this way of thinking:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

He is to take his calling seriously, which leads to the next qualification.

Of Good Behavior

Of good behavior – *kosmios*, kos'-mee-os

Orderly, that is, *decorous*: of good behavior, modest.

From a disciplined mind, comes a disciplined life. The opposite of *kosmios* (where we get the term cosmos, meaning system) is chaos. His “system” of life must not lend itself to chaos. The Elder is to conduct his life in a disciplined and orderly manner, able to juggle the unexpected counseling meetings, crises, etc., while at the same time giving adequate attention to his main responsibilities in the home and to study, prayer, and teaching. In a sense, this is the check to the previous qualification, and they are observed by those outside as one in the same. You cannot have *kosmios* apart from sober-mindedness.

Hospitable

Hospitable – *philoxenos*, fil-ox'-en-os

Fond of guests, that is, *hospitable*: given to (lover of, use) hospitality.

This is not the idea of having an open home to family and friends, but it literally means to love strangers (*phileo* – to love and *xenos* – stranger). While being warm and kind to family and friends is most appropriate, the thrust of this is that they are loving towards and willing to welcome unknown individuals into their home. This would have been especially important

during Paul's life, due to the many missionaries who needed places to stay as they traveled from city to city. Housing a missionary then, and even today in some places, could bring great persecution (possible execution) from the government and hostile citizens. This also extends to the unsaved world. The Elder must be open and welcoming to those who are outside the faith. This could bring various persecutions of its own, resulting in monetary losses as well as physical persecution. That said, being hospitable does not mean that one must passively endure such things, but it does open one's self to various dangers.

Able to Teach

Able to teach – *didaktikos*, did-ak-tik-os'
Instructive (“didactic”): apt to teach.

Some Elders will be blessed by God with the gift of teaching, that is, to “rightly divide the Word of God” through a traditional teaching perspective.

When that teaching gift is available in an Elder, the Senior Pastor will be eager to place that Elder into a ministry that can best utilize his gifts. His service might be used in the Sunday School class, AWANA, a small group ministry, or numerous other needs.

All Elders have a teaching ministry. It might be living out an exemplary Christian life that others can see and learn from, or it might be the ability to do life changing counseling with someone who has a spiritual need.

We may not all have the theological training of a great College or Seminary but we all have the ability to be an effective light of learning when we are committed to walk daily with the Holy Spirit as our guide.

A CBC Elder must accept the challenge to be a teacher of the “Word of Life.”

Not Given to Wine

Not given to wine – *paroinos*, par'-oy-nos
Staying near wine, that is, *tippling* (a *toper*): given to wine.

Not given to wine does not mean that the elder is to completely abstain from alcohol, although abstinence is one way to completely avoid this issue. After all, Paul exhorted Timothy to “*no longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.*” (1 Timothy 5:23) Paul understood, as most did, that small amounts of alcohol had a purifying effect on water. This was common practice at the time and in some cases this mixture was as much as eight parts water to one part wine. In contrast, unmixed wine was considered a strong drink. This was the drink of Proverbs 20:1 which states, “*wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.*” The main point is that the Elder is not to be a drunkard or one closely associated with alcohol. Drunkenness can lead to all sorts of sin

and poor judgment, so it is not hard to understand how alcohol can negatively affect one's ministry. One of the last passages that you might think to associate with an Elder is Proverbs 23:29-34:

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 'They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?'

To stress the point, when you think of Elder so-and-so, whiskey, rum and wine should not come to mind.

Not Violent / Not Quarrelsome

Not violent - *plēktēs*, plake'-tace

A smiter, that is, pugnacious (quarrelsome): striker.

Not quarrelsome – *amachos*, am'-akh-os

Peaceable: not a brawler.

These two qualifications are going to be dealt with at the same time due to their close relationship.

The first qualification literally means “not a striker.” The Elder is not to be a fighter or one who resorts to violence. In some cultures it may not be unusual for someone to solve his problems with violence, but the Elder is to be peaceable. He is to live righteously and “*the work of righteousness will be peace and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.*” (Isaiah 32:17) We know that “*to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*” (Rom. 8:6) For some, this may be harder than others, but the requirement does not change. To those people, Isaiah 26:3 is of great importance. Speaking of the Lord, Isaiah says, “*He will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*”

The second qualification is, “not quarrelsome.” While this does deal with the idea of physical confrontation, it is more associated with the idea of not being contentious. A servant of the Lord is not to argue for arguments sake. This is a young man's game that some men never grow out of. In jest, some may say that “the only way he could have said less was if he talked more.” In this sense too, the Elder is to be peaceable. This does not mean that the Elder cannot disagree or debate a certain point. Elders are often tasked with correcting false doctrine and disputes within the congregation. The point is that he does not go looking for a fight. Nor does he stir-up controversy and debate because he enjoys the intellectual exercise. These people

need to be reminded that *“even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.”* (Proverbs 17:28)

Not Greedy For Money / Not Covetous

Not greedy for money - *aischrokerdēs*, ahee-skhrok-er-dace' (*gain*); *sordid*: given to (greedy of) filthy lucre.

Not covetous – *aphilarguros*, af-il-ar'-goo-ros
unavaricious: without covetousness, not greedy of filthy lucre.

These two qualifications are going to be dealt with at the same time due to their close relationship.

In the King James Version, the first of these qualifications is translated as, “not greedy of filthy lucre.” Filthy, meaning “dirty,” and lucre, meaning “gain” or “money.” The Elder is not to cheat or manipulate people out of money. Historically speaking, the Roman Catholic Church has had a reputation for being greedy of filthy lucre. During the time when “indulgences” were for sale, they even made the jingle, “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs.” Shamefully, they led people to believe they could pay their family members out of purgatory (purgatory being a false doctrine in and of itself). It is not uncommon to see televangelists selling sweat rags and “holy” water, promising cures and miracles for those who buy from them. They are all charlatans and for any Elder to act in such a manner, is to bring reproach on Christ, and judgment on his own head. Therefore, a candidate for eldership must be proven to be pure in his financial motives.

Not covetous literally means, not a lover of silver. He should not enter the ministry for money. The Elder should not be the type of man who seeks riches for riches sake. This is especially dangerous, because:

those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:9-10)

He must not enter the ministry with financial gain in mind. For example, a man may choose to serve at one church over another simply because they offered him more money. This sort of man should not be an Elder. An Elder should be one who seeks the work of the ministry, the shepherding of the Lord’s flock, not how he can gain from it. He is to be content with what the Lord has given him, and not in love with money and its trappings.

Gentle

Gentle - *epieikes*, ep-ee-i-kace'

Appropriate, that is, (by implication) *mild*: gentle, moderation, patient.

Patience and gentleness are important traits in an Elder. Whether they find themselves in sensitive counseling scenarios, or correcting some doctrinal error in the church, they must remain patient and gentle. There are few things more unsettling than a leader who, out of frustration, is constantly focusing on everyone's faults in a negative sense. *Epieikes* also has the idea of easily forgiving wrongs. The Elder patiently loves the church and "*keeps no record of wrongs.*" (1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV) This does not mean that he does not deal with sin in the church. Just the opposite, he takes disciplinary actions out of his love for the people and a desire for holiness and true reconciliation.

One Who Rules His Own House Well

Rules - *proistēmi*, pro-is'-tay-meeto

Stand before, that is, (in rank) to *preside*, or (by implication) to *practice*: maintain, be over, rule.

House – *oikos*, oy'-kos

Of uncertain affinity; a *dwelling* (more or less extensive, literally or figuratively); by implication a *family* (more or less related, literally or figuratively): home, house (-hold), temple.

Well - *kalōs*, kal-oc'e'

Well (usually morally): (in a) good (place), honestly, + recover, (full) well. Having his children in submission with all reverence

One must prove to rule his home well before he can serve as an Elder. If a man does not have his house in order, then this is a red flag. "*For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?*" (1 Timothy 3:5) While this is mainly speaking of family members under his authority, this can also be extended to other aspects of the home. For instance, if a man gambles away all his family's money, then he would be terribly irresponsible, lacking self control and therefore disqualified to serve as an Elder.

His children must be submissive to his authority and respectful. The term for "reverence" (*semnotes*) also conveys the idea that they are honest children. Titus 1:6 states that he must have "*faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.*" The ESV translates the term "faithful" (*pistos*) as "believers." This is not an uncommon interpretation of the passage. That is, his children must be believers. However, this may simply mean that they are to be honest in their behavior. In 1 Timothy 3:4, Paul states that an Elder must have "*his children in submission with all reverence.*" The reason for the possible interpretation that they must behave honestly rather than be believers is the terms "faithful" (*pistos*) and "reverence"

(*semnotes*). Both convey characteristics of honesty and trustworthiness. It is also an interpretation based on biblical principal, in that no man can produce saving faith in another. (1 Corinthians 3:7) Some, agreeing that a man cannot cause, or force another to be saved (God alone is the recipient of that honor and glory), state that this is a divine means of eliminating unqualified men. Nevertheless, this is a debated issue, and much prayer and careful study of the text is required.

Not a Novice

Not a novice – *neophutos*, neh-of'-oo-tos

Newly planted, that is, (figuratively) a *young convert* (“neophyte”): novice.

This literally means “newly planted.” The Elder is not to be a new convert or spiritually immature. The reasoning behind this is twofold.

One, he is not to be a “*novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.*” In promoting someone to the office of an Elder prematurely, the man is likely to view himself as being hyper-spiritual. This in turn, promotes a sense of pride that inevitably destroys him and his ministry. Instead of promoting Christ-likeness, he actually follows the same error as Satan!

The second danger is experienced by those under his leadership and teaching. For example, an immature Elder, while studying the issue of salvation, may come across Acts 2:38, where the apostle Peter states, “*repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,*” he then goes to his congregation and begins to speak to them about repentance and baptism. He, considering himself to be exegetically sound, might state that the text plainly teaches baptism as a means to, or necessity for salvation. The church responds to his “reasonable” interpretation and begins a journey down the path of work based salvation. The reason behind his error is not a lack of respect for Scripture, but he lacks a necessary level of understanding, a reservoir of knowledge, and proper hermeneutic needed to properly interpret the Word. In doing so he has shattered the great truth of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone. (Ephesians 2:8)

By analyzing these two issues—which are rather massive in scale—it is obvious that promoting anyone prematurely is a recipe for disaster. Whether it is pride or false doctrine the result is anything but edifying. Therefore, placing an individual into the office in order to prompt spiritual growth will likely produce just the opposite. At the same time, promoting someone prematurely (a novice) just because he is available or because there are no other viable options, may result in horrible errors in doctrine and practice.

He Must Have a Good Testimony Among Those Who Are Outside

Good – *kalos*, kal-os'

Of uncertain affinity; properly *beautiful*, but chiefly (figuratively) *good* (literally or morally), that is, *valuable* or *virtuous*: better, fair, good (-ly), honest, meet, well, worthy.

Testimony – *marturia*, mar-too-ree'-ah

Evidence given (judicially or generally): record, report, testimony, witness.

Those who are outside - *exōthen*, ex'-o-then

External (-ly): out (-side, -ward, -wardly), (from) without.

The Elder must maintain a good testimony among the unsaved world. This does not mean he must be liked by all. Anyone who preaches salvation through Christ alone, or teaches on controversial and difficult doctrines, such as the sinfulness of homosexuality, will invariably come under persecution and disdain from the world. What this requirement actually means is that he maintains his Christian testimony in the church as well as in the world. To fail in this area, is to bring reproach on Christ and His church. The Elder is a high representative of the Lord, and his witness must reflect his calling.

Holding Fast the Faithful Word

Holding fast – *antechomai*, an-tekh'-om-ahee

Adhere to; by extension to *care* for: hold fast, hold to, support.

Faithful – *pistos*, pis-tos'

Objectively *trustworthy*; subjectively *trustful*: believe (-ing, -r), faithful (-ly), sure, true.

Word – *logos*, log'-os

Without giving the very long definition, in context the term is referring the whole of Scripture.

The Elder must be a man of the Book, the trustworthy Word. He must, by extension of who he is, take faith in the Word of God and subject his whole being to its truth. He does not separate himself from the Word, but clings to it. A man who does not view the Bible as the inerrant word of the Living God has no business serving the church in any capacity, let alone as an Elder. As John McArthur puts it:

“...here is the foundation. And it's not just a commitment to the inspiration of Scripture and it's not just a commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture as important as that is, it's

a...commitment to the singularity of Scripture. In other words, it's to hold fast to the faithful Word and nothing else as the source."

He "*hold[s] fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.*" (Titus 1:9) The reason why his view and faithfulness to the Word is so important is simple. He must turn around and teach it. He must be willing to teach the pure Word. He must stand firm *and "exhort and convict those who contradict."* There is nothing else for him to do. He is like Moses who said, "*when they [the children of Israel] have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.*" (Exodus 18:16) Elders do the same thing. They make known the truth of God as displayed in the Word of God.

Just and Holy

Just – *dikaios*, dik'-ah-yos

Equitable (in character or act); by implication *innocent, holy* (absolutely or relatively): just, meet, right (-eous).

Holy - *hosios*, hos'-ee-os

Of uncertain affinity; properly *right* (by intrinsic or divine character)

The Elder is to be just. This is the Greek term "*dikaios.*" He is judicially right before God. He must not only be right before God, through Christ, but literally live in such a way that God views him as a righteous man. This does not mean that he lives without sinning, but he has a righteous character about his life.

In line with this righteousness, he is to be holy. He has a life set apart from sin and set towards God. As was just said, he cannot maintain sinlessness, but his life is above reproach, not stained with sin. This is only possible in and through Christ.

Warnings to and Disciplinary Actions against Elders

The Lord deals firmly with His wayward shepherds. Therefore all Elders must be made aware of God's standard, as well as the means of correction He demands in Scripture. This section will briefly address the warnings to, and disciplinary actions against wayward elders.

Old Testament

While the Old Testament does not address church Elders, it does give the church a clear understanding of God's heart toward abusive shepherds. Examples of this can be found in Ezekiel 34:1-10 and Jeremiah 23:1-4. For the readers understanding and consideration, both passages are presented below.

Ezekiel 34:1-10

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them."

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: "As I live," says the Lord God, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock"— therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them."

Jeremiah 23:1-4

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!" says the Lord. Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings," says the Lord. "But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking," says the Lord.

New Testament

In contrast to the Old Testament, the New Testament gives us a direct protocol for correcting errant Elders. 1 Timothy 5:19-20 states, *"do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear."* The Greek word for "sinning" in 1 Timothy 5:20 is *"hamartanontas,"* which is in the present, active tense (i.e. he is, and continues to sin). Therefore, if an elder has been found guilty of sin and continues to live in that sin after being confronted, he is to be rebuked in the presence of the entire local body. Through this practice, carnal leadership is removed from

authority, and the church is made keenly aware of the consequence of sin. The desired result is to regain spirit-filled leadership and a healthy fear of violating God's commandments.

Appointment of Elders

The Elder board is made up of lay members selected from the membership of CBC plus the Senior Pastor who is a non-voting permanent Chairman of the Elder board.

Paid staff members are non-voting Elders, and will attend the elder board meeting only when called by the Chairman of the board for a special report on their ministry.

The current Elders will serve out the present term of their tenure. When their tenure is completed or should they retire prior to the completion of their tenure they will be replaced by the following procedure.

Step one:

A search committee will be established by the board of Elders. The committee will be made up of two Elder members and three outstanding Christian members of the CBC congregation. The committee will seek out a qualified candidate who will be given the Biblical Eldership Manual to review. He will then report back to the committee member his decision to become a candidate or not. The entire Board of Elders will also seek candidates who they feel might qualify to be an Elder and will also present him with the Biblical Eldership Manual to review and respond.

Step two.

The board of Elders will then review in board session the qualifications of each candidate, and personally talk to each one having them once again to review the Biblical Eldership Manual.

Step three

The board of Elders will select from the pool of candidates the one (or more) who they believe fills the profile given in the Biblical Eldership Manual

Step four

The name (or names) selected by the Elders will be given to the Senior Pastor for final review, interview, or questions. The Pastor will once again go over the Biblical Eldership Manual with the candidate. The candidate must submit their written statement of faith and be prepared to discuss this with the Pastor and the other Elders. The Pastor will then give final approval to the board for selection. The Senior Pastor will have the right to reject a candidate and ask the board of Elders for another name.

Step five

The congregation will be introduced to the new Elder and will cast a vote of confidence for the new Elder.

Step six

The new Elder will be publicly ordained at a regular congregational meeting by being introduced, and having a brief ceremony of “laying on of hands and prayer” by the entire board of Elders and the Senior Pastor.

The tenure of an Elder continues until he decides to permanently retire from the Elder board. Should a retired Elder leave the church for any reason his position of “Elder” will be revoked.

RATIONALE

This six step procedure gives the board of Elders the authority to select the new Elder, It also gives the Senior Pastor the authority to make certain he has an individual that he can join heart and hand to advance his vision for the church.

The procedure also gives the members of the congregation the feeling that they have had a part in the selection of their spiritual leaders.

Elder Warning Signs

These are included to provide additional clarity on what would be signs that a candidate is not called or qualified to be an elder.

1. A contrarian spirit. If you say "black," he'll say "white." An Elder must build unity, not stir up division.
2. A lack of spiritual fruit. If a man is not already shepherding the flock he won't begin to do so just because you give him a title. An Elder should be a man who is already hard at work building up the body.
3. An unsupportive wife. Eldering done well is a demanding task. It takes time to teach and disciple and exercise hospitality. Is the man's wife happy to further her husband's ministry even when that requires a considerable sacrifice on her part? If not, it would be unwise to appoint this man as an Elder.
4. A record of broken relationships behind him.
5. A "me" focus. Every time he opens his mouth, whether in a Sunday school classroom or at a restaurant table, he seems to have his own interest in mind and not everyone else's. An Elder must be a man who's always looking out for the good of the body.
6. An inability to encourage others.
7. An inability to show compassion and tenderness. A man may be rigorously strong and biblical, but if he can't be tender and compassionate he'll make a poor shepherd.

8. A tendency to exaggerate and embellish. An Elder should be a man whose word is utterly trustworthy.
9. A tendency to prize creativity and innovation over biblical faithfulness. This is not to say that creativity and innovation are bad things, but they must always be servants to faithfulness to God's Word.
10. An inability to admit he's wrong.
11. An inability to submit to other leaders.
12. A refusal to be inconvenienced or make sacrifices in order to serve others.
13. A feeling of entitlement to the office.

Biblical Elder Leadership Structure for CBC

In this manual Elder qualifications, leadership and job descriptions are the same for all those ordained as an "Elder." However, CBC recognizes that Elders may "seen" in any of the following three ways but the standards, expectation and ministry requirements are equal for all.

1. Elders who have been selected to serve on the board of Elders.
2. The paid staff who are ministry Elders (pastoral staff)
3. Those who have retired from the CBC board of Elders but still minister to the body practically (just not on the board)

God aims to be the ultimate leader in the world and in His church. Upon careful study of His word it becomes evident that He has always chosen to exercise His leadership through His people—such as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David and the Apostles of the New Testament. The implication of this truth in the church is that people lead in such a way that the ultimate leadership of God is not contradicted but highlighted. The way to ensure this occurs at CBC is to align ourselves with what the Word of God teaches on the subject of leadership and make whatever changes are necessary to better reflect that pattern. Where the scriptures are clear we must stand firm and where there is no direct mandate then we must use wisdom.

The definition of spiritual leadership we will use is: knowing where *God* wants His people to be and taking the initiative to use *God's* methods to get them there in reliance upon *God's* power. The office that the Lord uses to accomplish this end in the New Testament church is the office of an Elder.

Congregational rule, while a long held tradition, is simply not a biblical model. It is based solely upon taking the truth of the "*priesthood of all believers*" (1 Peter 2:9) to a twisted, illogical conclusion. This model suggests that there is no advantage or value in maturity and actually contradicts the basic and literal meaning of the word elder, which means "mature".

While each member of the body is valuable, the reality is that the church is to be led by the mature, not by the novice or by the congregation. Although leadership is ultimately accountable to the congregation, it is not to be led by them. Scripture declares that the congregation is to “obey their leaders and submit to their authority” (Hebrews 13:17). This makes no practical sense if the congregation leads the church.

The ruling leadership of the church is to be made up solely of Elders who are called by God, meet all of the requirements of scripture and have been prayerfully selected by the other Elders. They are to be currently ministering in the body and are not to see serving on a board as their only ministry. The congregation will be allowed to “approve them” but their selection and screening are the ultimate responsibility of the current Elders. They should serve until they decide it is time for them to move on to other ministry opportunities, have new responsibilities that do not allow the time necessary for the role, or biblically disqualify themselves.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that a specific number of Elders should lead a local congregation. Therefore, we should use godly wisdom and prudence to help determine how many men God has called to lead His church here at CBC. Some churches institute a system for how many Elders they will have, whether by setting an exact number of elders or by determining a ratio of Elders to members. However, both of these systems have serious disadvantages. In both, the church runs the risk of putting itself in a situation where it will either need to fill a quota with men who are not qualified, or it can't recognize godly, qualified men who should serve as Elders because their quota is full.

It seems best for us not to decide ahead of time how many Elders we think that CBC should have, but seek humbly to recognize those men whom God has gifted and called to serve as Elders and pray that the Lord would raise up a sufficient number to shepherd His church.

While the titles “elder” and “deacon” are not essential to the church’s ministry, there are several good reasons why we will use these biblical titles:

1. It demonstrates that Scripture is our authority, not human wisdom. Using scriptural titles demonstrates that we are following God’s directions, not taking it upon ourselves to decide what the church’s leadership structure should look like. God has provided the church with a basic organization that we should closely follow. To stray from that pattern, or to decide that we don’t need to call our leaders what the Bible calls them, is to say that we know better than God.
2. It helps the congregation to know what to expect from the leadership. When a church uses the terms “elder” and “deacon” like the Bible does, a church member can easily look to the scripture to see their “job descriptions.” They can look to God’s word and know exactly what to expect from their leaders.
3. It holds leaders to the biblical qualifications. There are no biblical qualifications for trustees, council members, leadership teams, shepherd teams or other titles of our own

devising. There are, however, biblical qualifications for elders and deacons. Using the biblical terms for these offices is necessary in order to ensure that the biblical standards for leadership are being upheld.

The Bible teaches that the people selected the Deacons and the Elders appointed them. The role of Deacons is where it is acceptable to have the congregation suggest candidates. The Elders still approve and appoint, but the regular membership can suggest.

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. (Acts 6:2-5)

Let us now examine how this structure is to function so as to accomplish all the Lord is wishing to do at CBC.

The pastor of preaching and vision (referred to as the Senior Pastor) is to be the first among equals within the group of Elders in the same way the congregation treats the Elders as first among equals. Because he does the majority of the public teaching, he will likely accrue more authority among the congregation and the Elders. In other words, he possesses the same formal authority as the other Elders, but his opinion will generally carry more weight. This position is to cast the vision and determine the direction for the church, to which all ministries must adhere. He is to lead the Elder meetings and set the agenda items. If he is not doing this then he is simply not fulfilling his responsibility.

The Elder meetings are to function by consensus. All Elders vote and also have the power to veto. The Elders must seek unanimity, but on the rare occasion when that may not happen they should defer such matters to the pastor of preaching and vision.

The Elders are to support the vision and direction of the church. This means they are not to simply agree with the vision or direction but to personally participate in it. For example, if the church is called to week of prayer then the Elders should be the first people on the list to attend. They are to lead the way in example and practice. They are to be involved in the weekend services not just in the making of announcements but also in praying for the sick, praying over the elements at communion, giving oversight on the campus and generally caring for the flock.

Job Description for the Ministry and Service of the CBC Elder

Theme verse for the CBC Elder:

“Above all love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:8-10

The CBC Elder will be given the opportunity to serve God in several meaningful ways. He will be able to use his God-given gifts to “serve others faithfully.”

Elders are biblically called to

Shepherd the flock (1 Peter 5:2) Elders serve the flock with spiritual oversight. Elders feed, lead, protect, and nurture church members like shepherds do with sheep.

Settle disputes within the church (Acts 15:1-2)

Pray for the sick (James 5:14)

Watch over the spiritual life of the flock (Hebrews 13:17)

Spend time in prayer for the flock and teach the word (Acts 6:1-2)

Model the faith (1 Peter 5:3) the mandate to model maturity carries two critical implications. First, modeling means you must guard your godliness: “Pay close attention to your life and your teaching” (1 Tim. 4:16) Secondly, modeling requires elders to *be among* the people. It only works if people see you up close and know you.

Equip the saints (Matthew 22:37-40, Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Peter 5:1-4)

- Communicate vision to the congregation of how God is leading us
- Oversee the various ministries of the church
- Disciple and develop leaders
- Equip others to share their faith
- Encourage people spiritually
- Show care and compassion to those in need
- Give wisdom
- Guard others from false teaching/teachers
- Perform church discipline

Settle doctrinal disputes (2 Timothy 4:2)

Minister to the community (Matthew 9:35-38, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8)

- Build relationships to advance the cause of Christ
- Look for ways for our church to serve others and share Christ with others

Participate in the business and ministry of CBC through regularly scheduled business meetings

Give oversight in establishing the church budget, and the receiving and dissemination of the church funds.

Be a faithful eyes and ears of the concerns and needs of the congregation and report your findings to the pastor for his input and resolution.

Simply put, the elders should be peacemakers, prayer warriors, teachers, leaders by example, and decision makers. They are the preaching and teaching leaders of the church. It is a position to be sought, when divinely inspired, but is not to be taken on flippantly —read this warning: "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). The role of elder is not a position to be taken lightly.

Welcome to the ranks of those “who must give an account”