

## Elders and Deacons in the New Testament

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Almost all of the discussion regarding elders in the 21st century church can be categorized into two central considerations:

expectation and responsibility.

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Given what we have observed over the past few weeks in scripture about the role of Elders and Deacons in the New Testament church, to what extent do we acknowledge the following tension:

Although the governance style we currently work under may not be clearly condemned by scripture or explicitly wrong, it is suffering the lack of a biblical foundation.

# Elders and Deacons

in the **New Testament**

## Scripture clearly defines Elders as:

- leaders of the church community  
(Acts 20:28, 1 Pet 5:2-3, Heb 13, 1 Tim 3, Titus 1)
- being identified by certain qualities  
(1 Tim 3, Titus 1)
- serving with character and attitude of Christ  
(Phil 2, 1 Pet 5)

## Scripture does NOT clearly define

- **How** Elders will function (technically) in each church setting

## a proposal for: Elders and Deacons

### if Elder were to:

- Focus on seeking God's desire for the church (big picture), provide the congregation with honest and open communications about what they are learning (Acts 20, 1 Pet 5)
- Train, teach and encourage others in faith (Eph 4, 1 Tim 3, Heb 13)
- Spend significant parts their meeting time in prayer and study of scripture (Acts 20)
- Be aware of the ongoing challenges (interpersonal or ministry related) and humble themselves in prayer to bring about resolution, healing and unity of spirit (Acts 15)
- Be trusted to lead (Heb 13), propose, move...

### ...then the congregation should:

- Be willing and cooperative to work within the "big picture" understanding the Elders have provided (sandbox analogy)
- Pray that the Elders are being continually challenged, grown and matured in their own walk of faith by the word of God - and then expect to learn from them
- Not expect the Elders meeting agendas to make much room for logistic, management or technical concerns of church operations
- Speak openly and honestly with Elders about concerns or tensions - as well as moments of celebration. God is ALWAYS at work.
- Seek the counsel of the elders, consider their instruction with honour and respect



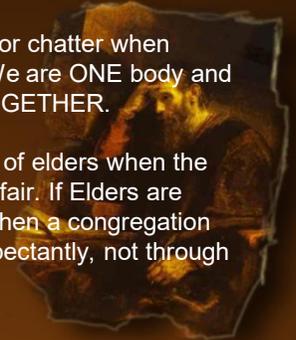
a proposal for: **Elders** and **Deacons**

**ELDERS should not:**

- Micromanage. Their input is to provide guidance, overview and understanding for ministry purposes.
- Require permission before anything can happen in the life of the church
- Allow themselves to “separate” from the congregation. They are not an elite independent body, they are a specific part of it.
- Be immediately called into question when what is on their hearts is not yet fully understood by the rest of the congregation

**...so the church body should not:**

- Work independent or in opposition to Elders input. Elders point to the target, and the church body builds the vehicle to get us there.
- Hesitate to make decisions, take chances, try new ideas and take ownership of ministry
- Promote “us vs them” thinking or chatter when concerns or difficulties arise. We are ONE body and the body rejoices or suffers TOGETHER.
- Immediately assume the worst of elders when the “sandbox” they build seems unfair. If Elders are prayerfully submitting to God, then a congregation should be listening to them expectantly, not through a filter of suspicion



a proposal for: **Elders** and **Deacons**

Whatever governance structure a church establishes, the relationship between elders and the congregation **MUST** be one that is dominated by mutual trust and respect.



# QUESTIONS and DISCUSSION

