A Model for Identifying, Developing, and Installing Elders in the Church: The Path Family Church has Taken

Submitted to the faculty
In fulfillment of the requirements for the completion of
the Doctor of Ministry Degree

Department of Christian Leadership and Church Ministries

by

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January 2022
The problem is that Family Church does not identify, develop, and install their potential elders well. This intervention research project addressed this problem by establishing prerequisites for elder identification, a seven-week elder training workbook, and guidelines for installation after the research project. Current elders at Family Church completed a questionnaire, participated in case studies, and evaluated their intervention project in a focus group to establish an effective method of identifying, developing, and installing potential elders. This intervention research project produced a list of prerequisites for identifying potential elders, a seven-week elder training manual, and clear guidelines for ordaining elders at Family Church. This intervention also created a plan for one-on-one discipling relationships between current elders and potential elders for potential elder training, brought unity to the current elders, and reinforced the current elder's understanding of eldership.
## Contents

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction ............................................................................................................................. 11
Ministry Context ..................................................................................................................... 11
Problem Presented .................................................................................................................. 18
Purpose Statement .................................................................................................................. 21
Basic Assumptions ................................................................................................................... 22
Definitions ................................................................................................................................ 23
Limitations .............................................................................................................................. 25
Delimitations ........................................................................................................................... 25
Thesis Statement ..................................................................................................................... 26

### CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**Literature Review** .............................................................................................................. 27
- The Necessity and Biblical Basis for Church Elders ....................................................... 27
- The Plurality and Polity of Eldership ............................................................................. 29
- The Consideration of Aspiring Elders ............................................................................ 32
- Prerequisites for Eldership ............................................................................................. 34
- Qualifications of Elders ................................................................................................. 36
- An Elder's Marriage and Family .................................................................................... 38
- Disqualifications of Elders ............................................................................................. 40
- The Influence of Elders .................................................................................................. 42
- The Responsibilities of Elders ........................................................................................ 44
- An Elder's Relationships Within the Church ............................................................... 47
- Appointment of Elders ................................................................................................. 48
- Conclusion ..................................................................................................................... 49

**Theological Foundations** ................................................................................................. 49
- Acts 20:13-38 ................................................................................................................ 49
- 1 Timothy 3:1-7 ............................................................................................................. 51
- Titus 1:5-9 ..................................................................................................................... 57
- 1 Peter 5:1-4 .................................................................................................................. 60
- Hebrews 13:17 ............................................................................................................... 63
- James 5:14-15 ................................................................................................................ 64

**Theoretical Foundations** ................................................................................................. 65

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

**Intervention Design** ....................................................................................................... 73
- Stage One ...................................................................................................................... 73
- Stage Two ..................................................................................................................... 75
- Stage Three .................................................................................................................. 76
- Current Elder Involvement ............................................................................................ 76
- Evaluating the Intervention Process ............................................................................. 77
- Resignation or Declination of the Project ....................................................................... 78
Implementation of the Intervention Design ................................................................. 79
  Stage One ...................................................................................................................... 79
  Stage Two ..................................................................................................................... 81
  Stage Three ................................................................................................................... 78

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS ........................................................................................................ 83
Stage One Results .................................................................................................................... 83
  Initial Elder Meeting ...................................................................................................... 84
  Questionnaire ................................................................................................................ 88
Stage Two Results ................................................................................................................... 94
  Elder Training Workbook Introduction Meeting ............................................................ 94
  Elder Training Workbook Process ................................................................................. 96
    Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week One ............................................................. 97
    Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Two ........................................................... 100
    Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Three ....................................................... 102
    Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Four ......................................................... 105
    Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Five .......................................................... 107
    Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Six ............................................................ 109
    Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Seven ...................................................... 111
Stage Three Results ............................................................................................................... 114
  Elder Focus Group ....................................................................................................... 114
    Why are elders important to the local church? ......................................................... 115
    What are the essential qualifications from Scriptures for elders? ......................... 116
    Are there prerequisites aside from Scripture necessary for eldership? ................. 116
    What was beneficial in the elder identification and training workbook process? .... 116
    What are some improvements in the elder identification and workbook training process? .......................................................... 116
    What disqualifies elders from being nominated or trained in eldership? .......... 117
    What are some potential chapters for the elder training workbook? ................. 117

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION ............................................................................................. 120
Achievements ......................................................................................................................... 120
Challenges .............................................................................................................................. 125
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 128
  Continued Research ................................................................................................. 130

IRB Approval ......................................................................................................................... 131
Bibliography ......................................................................................................................... 132
Appendix A: Recruitment Email for Current Elders .......................................................... 139
Appendix B: Recruitment Email Follow Up for Current Elders .......................................... 140
Appendix C: Recruitment Email for Potential Elders ........................................................ 141
Appendix D: Recruitment Email Follow Up for Potential Elders ....................................... 142
Appendix E: Consent ......................................................................................................... 143
Appendix F: Permission Request................................................................. 146
Appendix G: Permission Response............................................................. 147
Appendix H: Project Explanation ............................................................... 148
Appendix I: Questionnaire for Current and Potential Elders ...................... 149
Appendix J: Focus Group Questions ......................................................... 153
Appendix K: Potential List of Prerequisites for Eldership at Family Church .... 154
Appendix L: List of Potential Elder Training Manual Topics......................... 155
Appendix M: Elder Workbook Lesson Evaluation Form ................................ 156
Appendix N: Family Church Elder Training Workbook .............................. 157
Tables

1.1 Elder Prerequisites Found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 ................................................................. 57
1.2 Prerequisite Qualifications for Potential Elders at Family Church .......................... 80-81
1.3 Implementation of Research Design Stages and Steps .................................................... 82
1.4 Questionnaire Results Section One ........................................................................... 90-91
1.5 Questionnaire Results Section Two ............................................................................ 94
1.6 Church Leadership in the New Testament .................................................................... 112
1.7 Overall Results of Research Project ............................................................................. 119
## Illustrations

**Figures**

1. Stephen Harrison, "Investigative Methods of Research," ...................................................... 84
4. Stephen Harrison, "Cooperative View of Elder Training Workbook Goals," ....................... 95
7. Stephen Harrison, "Flow of Elder Training Process," ......................................................... 100
8. Stephen Harrison, "Interconnectedness of Elder Qualifications Matrix," ............................ 104
11. Stephen Harrison, "Yearly Elder Awareness Plan," ............................................................. 113
12. Stephen Harrison, "Before and After Workbook Results," ............................................... 114
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AR</td>
<td>Arkansas</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td>DMIN</td>
<td>Doctor of Ministry</td>
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<td>FL</td>
<td>Florida</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Internal Review Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>LUSOD</td>
<td>Liberty University School of Divinity</td>
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<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Nebraska</td>
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<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Primary Investigator</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The elder ministry at Family Church is vital to leading and overseeing the spiritual health and mission of the church. While Family Church has a plurality of elders that lead and oversee these well, the identification, development, and installation of future elders should be a significant concern of the current elders. There is no straightforward process for identifying, developing, and installing new elders at Family Church. The production of a detailed elder recruitment and training process is beneficial in helping future elders discover and walk in their calling. It is also helpful to the current elders to continue to lead and oversee the spiritual health and mission of the church presently and for future generations. Family Church needs a consistent path for recognizing men with desire and qualifications for eldership in the local church. The church also needs a reliable process by which these potential elders receive training, expectations, and responsibilities. This chapter will discuss the ministry context in which the elders exist and function, introduce the problem, present the purpose statement, address basic assumptions, definitions, limitations, delimitations, and conclude with the thesis statement.

Ministry Context

Family Church, established in 1991, is in White Hall, Arkansas. The church started in the home of the founding pastor, and it has based its discipleship and outreach methods on small groups that meet in the homes of its members. When the church outgrew the founding pastor's house, it moved to White Hall City Hall for a few months. The church's next meeting location was the White Hall Moody Elementary School cafeteria, followed by the White Hall Junior High
band room. During the church's early years, the church met for Sunday evening services in a fish restaurant. The youth ministry met in various places, including a pizza restaurant and a rental home of a church member. On Sunday mornings, the children's ministry met in rented storefronts near the church's sanctuary location. When the church reached approximately one hundred people in attendance, they met in Cranford's Funeral Home for about three years before purchasing land and building a permanent facility.

On Easter 1997, Family Church moved into their new facility, and the church grew to approximately three hundred in attendance in the next two years. In 2000, the church added new children, youth, and office facilities which doubled the church's building size. The church continued in growth, reaching approximately five hundred in regular attendance in the next few years. In 2011, Family Church remodeled and expanded its church foyer and added 7,000 square feet of meeting space. By 2013, the church had reached approximately six hundred in regular attendance. Pre-covid, Family Church averaged almost eight hundred in Sunday morning attendance. Currently, Family Church averages six hundred in Sunday morning attendance post-covid. In the last seven years, Family Church has baptized almost four hundred people.

Family Church's mission is to "glorify God as we win souls with the gospel of Christ and make disciples of Him."1 This mission drives their ministries, messages, and missions. The church's goal is to help new believers go from saved to serving as they discover their spiritual gifts, passions, and callings in the body of Christ. The two discipleship-making platforms of the church are Sunday services and Life Groups. The church also has a ministry to help people overcome hurts, habits, and hang-ups called Celebrate Recovery. The church encourages people to be members that connect, grow, serve, give, and pray.

1 Family Church, www.familychurch.ws/about
Family Church is in central Jefferson County, AR, a predominantly blue-collar, rural, and economically depressed county with a declining population of approximately 66,000 in 2019 compared to 77,000 in 2010 and 84,000 in 2000. The decline of people is mainly due to a lack of job opportunities and people moving to find a lower crime area, better schools, and a more conducive family environment. Family Church has found that most high school graduates who attend college do not return to Jefferson County once they have graduated. In 2019, the people of Jefferson County consisted of 40% Caucasian, 58% African American, and 2% Hispanic. This demographic has shifted from 48% Caucasian, 50% African American, and 2% Hispanic in 2000. The demographics of each of our three campuses mostly match the city in which they reside. The Redfield campus and the city of Redfield are 99% Caucasian. The White Hall Campus and the city of White Hall are 85% Caucasian and 15% African American. The Pine Bluff Campus and the city of Pine Bluff are 60% African American and 40% Caucasian. The median household income in Jefferson County in 2019 was $40,726. A majority of people drive out of the county, specifically into the capital city of Little Rock, for employment.

Family Church’s discipleship depends mainly upon the weekend services and the small groups that meet in the home of the church members. These small groups, called Life Groups, consist of eight to fifteen members who meet bi-monthly for fellowship, prayer, Bible study, and encouragement. Life Groups direct the outreach, service, discipleship, and fellowship opportunities in the church. Life Groups train interns to become leaders and launch a new group. Establishing a new group happens when a core group of members has a vision for starting a new

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
group to reach new people. While pastors and elders spiritually care for the church body, much of the spiritual care, such as hospital visits, counseling, and bereavement services, are primarily provided for members through the Life Group ministry. The vision is to equip church members to serve and love one another, expanding the ministry effectiveness of the whole church. Currently, Family Church has sixty-seven adult Life Groups consisting of approximately six to eight people in each group. Life Group leaders contact those not in a group that fits their demographics. These demographics include criteria such as single, married, age, and gender. People are encouraged to join a Life Group in New Member's classes three or four times a year. There is also an emphasis on Life Groups approximately twice a year in the spring and fall. Typically, two to six new groups form each year, while similar numbers dissolve or fuse into other groups. There is also training for those who desire to become Life Group leaders.

In 2015, Family Church decided to plant new church campuses to better connect the current membership to the vision of reaching people with the gospel in their community. Family Church White Hall, the original campus, is in the most prosperous community in Jefferson County. It is a racially diverse city but primarily Caucasian. The city has seen growth as people have moved from Pine Bluff for better schools, jobs, and homes. Many from the Redfield community attended church at the Family Church White Hall campus but were not fully engaged in reaching their community for Christ. With approximately ninety people from the Redfield community, Family Church planted its first church in January 2016. Family Church purchased land and built facilities as there were no adequate-sized buildings available to rent. Redfield is a small bedroom community that predominantly works in the Little Rock area. The community is mainly Caucasian and more affluent than other parts of Jefferson County. The new church campus, Family Church Redfield, ministers to approximately three hundred in their ministries.
In January 2017, a struggling church in inner-city Pine Bluff, Southside Baptist Church, contacted Family Church and asked them to revitalize their church. After several meetings, Family Church inherited Southside's 60,000 square foot facility and remaining monetary funds. They began to develop a revitalization team. In September 2017, Family Church launched its third campus with approximately seventy church members and ten remaining Southside Baptist Church members. The church did not merge with Southside Baptist Church. Southside dissolved, and Family Church started a brand-new church using its current leadership team and structure. Homes in every direction surround Family Church Pine Bluff. Abandoned homes are numerous while single moms and older adults inhabit others. It has become a real neighborhood church, serving the poor and marginalized. Family Church Pine Bluff ministers to approximately two hundred in their ministries. Family Church White Hall ministers to approximately four hundred fifty in their ministries.

Family Church views its three campuses as one church in three locations. Their leadership consists of elders, deacons, staff pastors, ministry leaders, and Life Group leaders. In the church's beginning, the senior pastor was the only elder. As the church grew to approximately two hundred in membership, the senior pastor approached three deacons and asked them to pray about being elders. These elders accepted the position approximately a year later. Two are still elders, and one died in 2020. The church does not view deaconship as a stepping-stone to eldership but looks for faithful men who hold biblical qualifications and commitment to the church for deacon eligibility.

In 2011, the founding senior pastor planned his retirement process over two years of co-leading with the future senior pastor. Family Church looked inside and outside the church body and almost unanimously voted the associate pastor to be the next senior pastor. The associate
pastor and one other deacon had been installed as elders two years prior. The process for
becoming an elder was not well defined, as their installation occurred within a couple of months
of being chosen by the current eldership. The associate pastor and deacon had one conversation
with the eldership without intentional training or communication for expectations or
responsibilities. The plan for presenting new elders to the church body gave no time for the
church body to ask questions or provide input to the elder’s character or qualifications. Both new
elders were Life Group leaders, deacons, and long-term church members. The church body
overwhelmingly accepted them as new elders.

As the senior pastor and associate pastor began their two-year co-pastoring and
succession plan, the senior pastor developed brain cancer six months later. The associate pastor
began leading the church in January 2013 and became the senior pastor in January 2014 as the
founding senior pastor retired for health concerns. He later died in October of that year. In the
first month of the succession plan, the senior and associate pastor discussed adding four new
elders with the six current elders. Current elders observed the potential elders for several
months. They were not ordained until the new senior pastor had been in place. In a new
installation step, the new senior pastor presented the potential elders to the church body and gave
six months for the church to provide feedback before installation. These potential elders met
privately with the new senior pastor and publicly with the current elders to discuss calling. The
current elders somewhat discussed responsibilities and expectations, but a formal training
process was still absent. The current elders ordained the potential elders without any objections
or concerns from the church body as trusted men of integrity. With church planting in mind, the
current elders discussed ordaining additional elders in the next three years. These potential
elders were observed for several months, presented to the church body for feedback, and
ordained a year later. They also had no intentional training process to convey expectations and responsibilities.

The elders each attend and are committed to leading at a specific campus with varying responsibilities such as preaching, teaching Life Groups, counseling, and other ministries. Of the fourteen elders, one died, one moved, and one resigned in 2020. There are no plans to replace these elders, but the remaining elders are open to the idea of seeking who God has called to be elders at Family Church. The elders function as one body over all the campuses, meeting once a month. They also function by serving at their campus pastor's discretion. Elders at Family Church may serve for a lifetime or as long as they desire without an intentional sabbatical or rotation unless disqualified morally or spiritually. Elders meet monthly to grow in relationship, responsibility and to discuss the health of the church's vision and mission. There is no consistent or formal potential elder identification or training process.

Deacons function as lead servants in the church body in its ministries and do not make decisions concerning vision or direction as they rely on the elders to lead. They serve at the pleasure of the elders. The church has only taken a congregational vote on two occasions in its history to purchase land and install the new senior pastor. The senior pastor who leads the church staff is the senior elder. He gives vision and direction recommendations to the elders. They proceed forward with vision and direction unanimously before presenting them to the church body. While the elders generally oversee the church finances, they take recommendations from the finance committee, which the senior pastor leads. The senior pastor administers a budget set by the finance committee.

The absence of a proper process for identifying, developing, and installing potential elders at Family Church may not appear to affect the church in a significant way at first glance.
The current elders are faithful, long-term men of character. Some have felt confused about their responsibilities, and others have overstepped their boundaries at times. While the results of not having a proper process may not be instant, the lack of leadership development can cause the church's vision to diminish and keep qualified church members from walking in their calling and helping the church grow. This is true for any church. Those who God may be calling to be elders could become frustrated and pursue other avenues of leadership within the church or another church altogether. Not having an onboarding process for elder leadership also communicates there is no room for more potential elders within the church's leadership structure. This appearance could portray a false closed leadership structure, potentially causing frustrations in the church's membership. If Family Church is to plant new churches and continue to grow at their current campuses, they will need to produce a leadership pipeline to prepare for needs such as preaching, ministry leadership, and spiritual direction. The ongoing identification, training, and placement of new elders in churches will allow for future church growth, harmony, and the discipling of new leadership.

**Problem Presented**

Family Church has several elders that oversee their three church campuses, ministries, and mission. The church has done a respectable job of identifying their potential elders but has struggled to be consistent and thorough in their development of potential elders. Some potential elders have been identified and ordained in months, whereas others have had to wait for months and sometimes years without explanation. The current elders have required some potential elders to read and research books and topics that coincide with eldership without requiring others to do the same. The current elders have proposed some potential elders to the church body for
character review while not requiring others to do the same. Overall, the current elders have not consistently conveyed expectations, qualifications, and responsibilities to the potential elders.

While the elders are trained monthly after installment, there is no proper training process, clear expectations, placement towards strengths, or mentoring process. The identification of potential elders at Family Church rests upon the whole of the current eldership. However, the development of potential elders has rested solely upon the senior elder/pastor of the church. One goal in this project is for current elders to share in the development of potential elders. The installation of elders has also not been consistent at Family Church. Some elders have been presented to the church to ask questions concerning their character and qualifications in a review of their lifestyle. In contrast, others have been announced and prayed for in a single weekend without giving the congregation any prior notice or opinion.

Another goal of an elder training process is the allowance of the congregation to observe the process of identifying through installation, which would build more confidence and followability toward current elders and the selection process. Having several intentional engagements with potential elders and the church body, such as fellowship dinners, question and answer forums, and testimonials, provided opportunities to build trust and relationships among potential elders and the church body.

The identification of potential elders has not taken place with the greatest intentionality at Family Church. The need for additional elders has increased as the church has grown in numbers and campuses. In the last four years, the current elders have not discussed potential elders in the church body. This lack of discussion has indirectly communicated to the church body that the eldership is a closed group with no opportunity for expansion. Most of the current elders have been in the church body for over twenty years. While this has been beneficial for the
church to have tenured trusted elders, it has created in the current elders an underlying impression that potential elders must be as tenured as current elders.

The communication of expectations for elders is lacking before installation, and most elders must learn these after installation. Expectations such as hospital visitation, praying for sick church members, counseling, teaching, promoting the church vision, protecting the church unity, and encouraging the church body are expected but not communicated well. The new elders have not been trained well in performing these duties either. Most communication about responsibilities and expectations occurs after installation during the monthly elder meeting. Foundational training in how Family Church desires these responsibilities for the eldership to function in more unity and fulfillment is needed.

The installation of elders has been inconsistent at Family Church. While the elders may sense that some potential elders are more ready than others, communication to the church body about the determination process is lacking. Attempts at setting an observational period have been done but could be improved to develop more transparency and trust. The installation day of new elders should be a more communicated and celebrated event. While they have accepted the church's decision to ordain new elders, some church members have been surprised on installation day as it has not been announced thoroughly in advance.

Communication of Family Church's process of identification, training, and installation of potential elders should be performed more effectively in the entire church body to include them in the process better. This communication leaves less room for confusion and disunity. It also allows for more transparency, trust, unity, and followability by the congregation. As this congregation learns how the eldership functions, they will also function better as church members. This process should also cause the church to be more effective in its gospel mission.
This project could assist other churches in understanding the basic biblical foundations for eldership and be used as a resource for forming their own process for identifying, training, and installing elders. The problem is that Family Church does not identify, develop, and install their potential elders well.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this DMin action research thesis is to institute an elder identification and training program at Family Church. This program could be useful to other churches in their search and development of new elders or even beginning an elder-led church leadership structure. This program helped the current elders of Family Church understand and utilize a consistent process for identifying and training potential elders. As current elders recognize potential elders, they are to be matched with current elders as mentors to be discipled through a training program using materials created in this research project. The training program should consist of some individual and group discipleship meetings over several weeks. Potential elders should also be involved in the monthly elder meetings for ongoing training.

The training material includes a theological basis as seen in Scripture for the plurality of male elders in the local church. It also draws from a compilation of training materials derived from current works by other authors on elder training. These training materials also include basic expectations, responsibilities, and instructions on how best to fulfill the role of an elder at Family Church. These responsibilities include oversight of church health, doctrine, teaching abilities and positions, counseling, prayer, bereavement ministry, pastoral care, discipleship, and leading the mission through vision. Other vital topics include guarding against false doctrine, false teachers, and “spiritual wolves”. A goal of the training process and material is to help mature biblical men discover if they have a calling to be an elder and help the elders determine
when to ordain potential elders at Family Church. The training helps identify the strengths of potential elders to bolster the effectiveness of Family Church's mission. It also identifies the weaknesses of potential elders so they can be disqualified or strengthened over the proper amount of time before being ordained.

The training program is seven weeks long and covers agreed-upon material. This, however, should not be the length a potential elder must wait until they become an elder as maturation will take more time. Pairing potential elders with current elders is necessary to discuss responsibilities in a teacher-apprentice style role. Duties such as hospital visitation, teaching, praying for the sick, and guarding against false doctrine must be practiced and not just learned about in theory. As current elders took time to disciple potential elders, discussing their progress occurred among the other elders, especially with the lead pastor/elder. This process helped the Family Church eldership, and could potentially help other churches, discern if they should present the potential elders before the church body for installation.

**Basic Assumptions**

There are some basic assumptions deemed acceptable and plausible in this research. One such assumption is that the current eldership desires to better, if possible, the current process of identifying, training, and installing potential elders. One also assumes the church body wants a formal elder training program to be developed at Family Church. Another assumption is the current eldership desires to be fully transparent and honest in their participation in this research. This may require anonymity in some of the responses to specific questions so elders feel comfortable giving their most accurate replies. Another basic assumption is that those who have been elders for over twenty years will be able to recall the process by which they were identified, trained, and deemed ready to ordain. Another assumption is that the current eldership desires
new elders and will see them as equals when ordained. An assumption worth noting is that current elders helped develop and implement this research to identify and train future elders.

**Definitions**

This research project chiefly investigates the elder identification, training, and installation process at Family Church. A few definitions of terms used throughout this project are necessary to ensure proper understanding upon which the research depends. The inclusion of definitions is to identify how Family Church uses these terms in their elder ministry and local church function. Some of the critical terms deemed necessary to define in this project include elders, Family Church, ordain, and shepherds.

_Elders._ Following Jeremy Rinne's interpretation of elders in the local church body, Family Church uses elders to refer to men in a local church who are entrusted and ordained by Jesus to tend His flock as undershepherds. Elder is a biblical term found in the leadership and oversight of the New Testament church. The elders oversee the church's spiritual health, teach the Scriptures in various roles, guard against false doctrine and teachers, care for the church members, pray for the sick, perform hospital visits, and help ensure the church stays in step with its mission and vision. Family Church prefers to call its elders by this term instead of other words such as presbyter, overseer, and bishop. When Family Church uses the word pastor, it is about its paid male staff members who care for, equip, and lead the body as shepherds in function. Some of Family Church's pastors are also elders, while some are not. Family Church's

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7 Acts 14:23; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 5:17.
elders consist of paid and lay pastoral staff who serve as elders. The mix of paid and non-paid elders is to help ensure proper accountability, but no quota has been officially set.

*Family Church.* The local church body in White Hall, Redfield, and Pine Bluff, AR, represent the term Family Church when used in this project. It represents the church as an organization and primarily a people who have been saved, baptized, and are being discipled when they gather in large and small gatherings. The term represents the organization that started in 1991 but primarily refers to the present-day mission, ministries, members, and leadership.8

*Ordain.* The basic meaning of "appoint" is either "visit" or "establish or set in authority." Visit carries the idea of appointment, meaning to set in place (as a time, place, or event). The theological importance focuses on the appointing, consecrating, or commissioning of persons for unique service to the Lord and His people. It can also carry implications for God's providence or the establishment of laws or principles.9 Family Church uses this word when referring to installing elders and pastors but uses the word commission when installing or sending out missionaries, deacons, and ministry leaders. Family Church ordains their elders by laying hands and prayer in front of the congregation after carefully examining and instructing them of their role and duties. The process of leading up to the installation of elders is the subject matter of this research project to strengthen the effectiveness of the Family Church eldership.

*Shepherds.* Getz describes the word shepherd as another term for an overseer of a church that is sometimes used interchangeably with pastor, bishop, and elder.10 When Family Church uses the word shepherd as a noun, it refers to its elders and pastors. Usage of this word as a verb

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8 www.familychurch.ws


describes the function that its pastors and elders perform in response to their calling by God to care for the local church body. Shepherds care for, pray for, encourage, teach, correct, equip, lead, and disciple the church body to fulfill the mandates and instructions of Scripture.

**Limitations**

There are three main limitations of this research project. The main limitation is that it cannot interview the church's former pastor concerning his thought process behind how he identified, trained, and ordained elders as he is deceased. The documentation used to identify and train current elders may not be readily available as some were in the former deceased pastor's possession. It can, however, interview those who were ordained elders under his leadership. A second limitation is the length to which the current elder participants contribute. Some may not be inclined to thoroughly discuss or admit weakness in the current elder identification and developmental process. Participants may view the research process as devaluing how the former pastor and elders chose and trained elders. A final limitation may be the accessibility of the current elders during the writing and research timeframe.

**Delimitations**

There are six main delimitations of this research project. First, it is exclusive to the elders and eldership process at Family Church. While many elder bodies and local churches exist, the research project only investigated how Family Church identifies, trains, and ordains potential elders. Second, steps may need to be taken in the future to modify this process as the church grows. Third, this research used biblical material for qualifications and compared any extra-biblical material against Scripture to help avoid contradiction or undue requirements. Fourth, Family Church is an evangelical, gospel-centered church, and the processes for fulfilling
the thesis followed those inclinations. Fifth, the research included current elders at Family Church as participants and excluded any former or outside elders. Finally, this process of developing criteria for identifying, training, and installing elders, Family Church plans to confine research to existing elders and not install new elders for the duration of the study.

**Thesis Statement**

The proper functioning of the eldership at Family Church, and other churches, determines the success and growth of the church and churches at large in accomplishing their intended mission. The communication of expectations Family Church and other churches have for their eldership is essential in their elders' proper function and fulfillment. Laying the theological and ecclesiastical framework for the eldership helps ensure they oversee the local church's mission and ministries. As Family Church's elders learn to identify, equip, and install new elders, they strengthen the church's effectiveness in the mission of glorifying God, winning souls with the gospel of Christ, and making disciples of Him. Leading potential elders through training material promotes consistency of discipleship in the eldership and allows the elders to function more in unity and effectiveness in the church's kingdom mission. If Family Church develops potential elder training material, they will better identify, train, and install fully qualified men to lead the church.
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Identifying, training, and installing elders in the local church can be challenging to accomplish well. While there are specified qualifications and functions outlined in Scripture for elders, there are numerous ways to identify, train, and install elders to fulfill the local church's mission. The literature review covers identifying, training, and installing elders in the local church from a biblical and practical perspective.

Literature Review

The Necessity of and Biblical Basis for Church Elders

Elders are an essential element for leadership, oversight, and mentorship in the local church. However, some churches have wandered away from biblical eldership. Phil Newton, noted senior pastor at South Woods Baptist Church in Memphis and adjunct professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, explains how biblical texts concerning elders abound in the New Testament and how many Baptist churches in the eighteenth and nineteenth century used to practice elder leadership.11 Almost all the New Testament authors address the role of the elder in the church as central figures for shepherding God's church.12 Elders should oversee the church according to biblical qualifications and responsibilities. Rinne suggests that elders tend to revert to what they know from their careers and experiences without a clear and

12 Jeramie Rinne, Church Elders: How to Shepherd God’s People Like Jesus (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 17.
biblical job description to lead the church.\textsuperscript{13} Larry Nelson, writer and pastor of Kootenai Community Bible Church in Indiana, suggests that elders who do not think biblically have caused the church to develop unbiblical forms of church polity, altering it for selfish motives that can and have led to the demise of the local church.\textsuperscript{14} Churches must identify, train, and install elders while remaining biblical in their approach. Today, many elders are installed in the church with legitimate scriptural authority while lacking the leadership skills and biblical focus needed to shepherd their flocks.\textsuperscript{15} Concerning this notion, Tremper Longman III, a distinguished scholar of biblical studies at Westmont College, explains how the Apostle Paul expressed his concern about how an unprepared nominee could become trapped by the devil.\textsuperscript{16} Outside the church, the potential elder must have a good and holy reputation with unbelievers, careful not to fall into disgrace through scandalous actions.\textsuperscript{17} Rinne suggests that burnout will occur without the Spirit-driven ambition and training as an elder, causing disgrace to both the elder and the church.\textsuperscript{18}

The New Testament mentions elders in several verses, giving precedent to their necessity in the local church. The word \textit{episkopoi}, meaning bishop or overseer, gives the idea of a guardian, superintendent, or leader.\textsuperscript{19} John H. Elliott, Professor Emeritus of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of San Francisco, describes the terms elders (\textit{presbyteroi}), overseers (\textit{episkopoi, episkopein}), and shepherds (\textit{poimanes, poimainein}) as synonymous

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Rinne, \textit{Church Elders}, 14.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Larry Nelson, \textit{Elders: The Biblical Qualifications and Disqualifications of Church Elders} (Sumas: Christian Family Services, 2020), 7.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Mike Roberts, \textit{Eldership Oversight in the 21st Century: Factors Contributing to Decline} (Montgomery: Amridge University Press, 2018), 23.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds. \textit{The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians - Philemon} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 526.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Rinne, \textit{Church Elders}, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{19} F.F. Bruce ed. \textit{The International Bible Commentary} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1478.
\end{itemize}
designations for Christian shepherds in the church. First Timothy, Titus, and 1 Peter display these terms.

Spiritual leaders of local churches in the initial years of Christianity were called elders. Scriptures such as Acts 11:29-30 and James 5:14 confirm this. The church's expansion into more Gentile regions by missionaries such as the Apostle Paul tended to identify spiritual leaders in the church as overseers or bishops. The word *presbyteros* is the most common title used for the office of the elder. Acts 11:30 and 1 Timothy 5:17 display this title. These references clearly show the presence and authority of elders in the local churches of the New Testament era. The word *episkipos* suggests that the elder is a watchman, guardian, and public officer dispatched by an authority to oversee his dealings. The word *poimen* describes the shepherding nature of the elder over a local church body as a shepherd cares for his flock of sheep. The necessity and basis for elders in the local church today is established by their clear presence in the churches of the New Testament.

The Plurality and Polity of Eldership

Churches have varying views concerning the role of elders. Some churches perceive their elders as administrators, shepherds, or as a varied combination of the two. Newton suggests elders should come alongside the pastor and give overall leadership to the church, help as fellow servants, fill in the pastor's weakness gaps, support the preaching ministry, and share the burden.

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
of pastoral needs in the local church.\textsuperscript{26} Most agree that the biblical nature of elders is that of shepherds who care for their congregation.\textsuperscript{27} Churches tend to hold their elders in a place of honor and authority because of ministry requirements and mandates observed in Scripture.\textsuperscript{28} Several Scriptures show how elders were appointed, recognized, respected, and obeyed (1 Tim 5:17, 1 Thess 5:12-13, Heb 13:17, and Acts 20:17).\textsuperscript{29} Elders were viewed with prestige for their leadership in Greco-Roman and Israelite households and established in local church leadership by the writing of 1 Peter.\textsuperscript{30} Elders are also present and appointed to the local church in Jerusalem by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:23.\textsuperscript{31}

The polity of elders in the local church can vary among churches. P.J. Smyth, author and pastor of Monument Church in Washington D.C., describes how the Bible represents elders in a local church having authority within their specific congregation but not any outside their congregation or group.\textsuperscript{32} He believes the Bible portrays elders who welcome their local congregation's input, eager for spiritual contributors.\textsuperscript{33} One can describe elder polity as plural congregationalism functioning in the local church that works to avoid the radical democratic tendencies of many evangelical churches today.\textsuperscript{34} Smyth believes churches sometimes function wrongly like a modern day body of American legislators. They can also allow those who are

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Phil Newton, \textit{Elders in the Life of the Church}, 53.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Mike Roberts, \textit{Eldership Oversight in the 21st Century: Factors Contributing to Decline} (Montgomery: Amridge University Press, 2018), 77.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Nelson, \textit{Elders}, 105.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Bruce, \textit{The International Bible Commentary}, 1478.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Elliott, "Elders as Leaders," 687.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{32} P.J. Smyth, \textit{Elders: Developing Elders and Revitalizing Teams} (London: Advance, 2020), 36.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Paul E. Engle and Steven B. Cowan eds., \textit{Who Runs the Church?: Four Views on Church Government} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 187.
\end{itemize}
biblically unqualified and uncommitted to the church’s mission to have input in the church’s oversight and function. The Scriptures also describe the office of the elder as a plurality of leaders. Dave Harvey, author and president of Great Commission Collective, believes the Bible teaches pluralities of elders and deacons.\textsuperscript{35} Those who aspire to be elders should count the cost of serving, give their best efforts, and rest in knowing shepherding is possible and sustainable because it is a team effort.\textsuperscript{36} In Scripture, elders acted collectively, not unilaterally. Elders who worked with their fellow elders fulfilled Paul’s instructions to Titus.\textsuperscript{37} Shared leadership predates the New Testament writings of Paul, finding its roots in the Old Testament elders of Israel and Jesus’ call of the apostles.\textsuperscript{38}

Gene Getz, director of the Center for Church Renewal in Dallas, TX, believes the New Testament clearly illustrates the local church to be led and shepherded by a plurality of godly men (Acts 11:30, Jas 5:14, Acts 14:23, 1 Thess 5:12-13, Acts 20:28, and 1 Tim 5:17).\textsuperscript{39} Getz suggests that while the individual churches in the New Testament worshipped at different locations throughout a city, they shared one group of elders and were considered one church.\textsuperscript{40} The size of the plurality of elder leadership in the local church varies according to need and function. There is some agreement that fewer qualified elders are better than a larger number of unqualified ones.\textsuperscript{41} Some churches set the number of elders in their constitution and bylaws,

\textsuperscript{35} Dave Harvey, \textit{The Plurality Principle: How to Build and Maintain a Thriving Church Leadership Team} (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021), 29.

\textsuperscript{36} Rinne, \textit{Church Elders}, 86.


\textsuperscript{38} Alexander Strauch, \textit{Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership} (Littleton: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 36.

\textsuperscript{39} Gene A. Getz, \textit{Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church} (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 209.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 211.

while others set a ratio in proportion to the size of the church.\textsuperscript{42} Getz believes the Scriptures do not determine the exact size of an eldership or the length of their service. He argues the cultural dynamic of the church impacts the number and tenure of elders in a local church. \textsuperscript{43} He explains while a rotating system would allow new elders to serve, it would also lessen the effectiveness of the eldership in terms of the experience and philosophy of governance.\textsuperscript{44} Phil Taylor, Executive Pastor at Mosaic Church in Winter Garden, FL, does not have a cap on the number in his elder team as they practice eldership for life. He believes there must be a careful evaluation of the quantity, tenure, and timing of installing new elders, especially as existing elders exit the team.\textsuperscript{45}

Family Church believes in the plurality of elders. While some churches may have a singular elder, typically the senior pastor, Family Church sees the plurality of elders in Scriptures such as Acts 14:23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; Titus 1:5; and James 5:14. A plurality of elders helps share the weight of responsibility of shepherding and oversight. The number of elders Family Church chooses depends upon the size of the congregation and the number of ministries that need oversight. Many elders can also help think through tough decisions together, potentially avoiding “blind spots”. A plurality of elders ensures there is always leadership in place if an elder resigns, moves, dies, or is removed.

The Consideration of Aspiring Elders

The potential elder should exhibit and communicate his desire to be an elder. One who desires to serve in the noble task of eldership must know that it is highly fulfilling and satisfying,\textsuperscript{42} Bridges, \textit{Eldership}, 181.\textsuperscript{43} Getz, \textit{Elders and Leaders}, 301.\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.\textsuperscript{45} Phil Taylor, \textit{Eldership Development: From Application to Affirmation} (Orlando: Floodlight, 2017), 56.
although it can be difficult. One's aspiration to become an elder does not necessarily validate their calling, but it is worth considering as the Apostle Paul mentioned noble pursuit as a prerequisite for service. The aspiration of a potential elder should be pure, displaying a personal willingness and eagerness to serve from a divine call versus internal or external compulsion. The desire to be an elder should not derive from selfish ambition for prestige and power but should involve the admirable longing to care for and nurture the people of God. Thabiti Anyabwile, author and pastor of Anacostia River Church in Washington D.C., notes churches want men to serve as elders who have a heart to do so without pride, rudeness, and ungodly ambition. He suggests that while some qualified men may be in the local church, they may lack the desire or have a wrong view of eldership, including an unhealthy lust for power. Rinne recommends to have successful leadership in the church, elders must be men who embody the characteristics that resemble Jesus.

Just because a man in the church desires eldership does not mean they should be an elder. When considering elder candidates, one must examine them thoroughly through the oversight of impartial biblically qualified elders to determine if they meet the minimum standards. Taylor argues churches must discover a few men in their congregations that have

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46 Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*, 1478.
51 Ibid.
52 Rinne, *Church Elders*, 30.
54 Ibid.
potential and begin training them to be elders.\textsuperscript{55} He says these men must desire to be elders and not just serve because of pressure or duty as much is at stake.\textsuperscript{56} The selection of these elders must not be reduced to mere elections to fill vacancies on a board. Authors and founders of Kairos Partnerships, J.R. Briggs and Bob Hyatt, believe elections rarely provide the best candidate and sometimes lead to divisions with new personalities and agendas thrust onto the elder team.\textsuperscript{57} To this point, Christoph Stenschke, professor of biblical studies at the University of South Africa, believes Paul's references to the lifestyle and character of a potential elder are more critical than an elder's competence and achievement.\textsuperscript{58} Elders should give prayerful consideration to biblically qualified men who possess aspiration and Christ-like character for eldership in the local church is necessary.\textsuperscript{59}

Prerequisites for Eldership

As part of their elder training process, churches should use Scripture to determine what prerequisites will be established and communicated to potential elders.\textsuperscript{60} Elders should consider more than the giftedness and call of potential elders before installation. Elders are given to the church by the Holy Spirit to shepherd the body.\textsuperscript{61} The elder board must decide and agree if any extra steps are needed and be careful not to set up processes that may be legalistic or

\textsuperscript{55} Taylor, \textit{Eldership Development}, 9.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Briggs and Hyatt, \textit{Eldership and the Mission of God}, 83.
\textsuperscript{58} Christoph Stenschke, "Lifestyle and leadership according to Paul’s statement of account before the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17–35" HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies [Online], Volume 76 Number 2 (11 June 2020).
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Taylor, \textit{Eldership Development}, 17.
\textsuperscript{61} J.R. Miller, \textit{Elders Lead a Healthy Family: Shared Leadership for a Vibrant Church} (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 53.
Taylor holds elders must meet specific prerequisites such as reading the Bible in its entirety within the last five years and faithfully giving financially to their local church as they are to be men who can be an example to the congregation. John R.W. Stott, renowned author and former pastor of All Souls Church in London, England, lays out essential prerequisites for elder candidates believing they must not be recent converts and display maturity in the faith. He argues humility is a critical factor in the elder's life. Rinne also emphasizes humility as one of the essential qualities needed when choosing an elder and throughout the process of investigating an elder's lifestyle.

Some churches may contend with the appropriate age range of elders. The age of an elder to the Apostle Paul is not *sine qua non* (an essential condition) of church leadership since leaders of all ages should be examples of Christian living. This understanding helps to clarify that elders can vary in age and not just be older men appointed to leadership positions. Another prerequisite of biblical eldership is male leadership. Alexander Strauch, gifted Bible teacher and elder at Littleton Bible Chapel near Denver, CO, advocates male eldership as the position of Scripture. He says Paul directed Titus to organize churches on the island of Crete by appointing only morally and spiritually qualified male candidates. The common mistake made

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64 Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today*, 98.
65 Ibid.
66 Rinne, *Church Elders*, 79.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
by churches eager to implement eldership is selecting biblically unqualified men in a rush instead of following biblical qualifications and hearing from the Lord.\footnote{Strauch, \textit{Biblical Eldership}, 69.}

\section*{Qualifications of Elders}

The character of an elder is of utmost importance. It is highly expected of elders to be irreproachable, having no grounds of impropriety against them.\footnote{Schnabel, "Overseers as Stewards", 89.} While no perfect elders exist, one must note the biblical qualifications for church elders almost exclusively pertain to godly character.\footnote{Nelson, \textit{Elders}, 17.} Instead of focusing more closely on an elder candidate's character, churches tend to elevate one's education, experience, and preaching.\footnote{Ibid.} A clear rhetorical interconnection between doctrine and morality reveals solid doctrine produces solid character and weak doctrine produces weak character.\footnote{J.R. Miller, \textit{Elders Lead a Healthy Family: Shared Leadership for a Vibrant Church} (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 56.} The man who has a calling for eldership displays it in his lifestyle, not just in his board appointment or scheduled service.\footnote{Ibid.} Being above reproach is one of the essential qualities an elder must possess as their character determines their actions and leadership direction.\footnote{Rinne, \textit{Church Elders}, 85.}

The current elders must observe an elder candidate in specific scriptural qualifications for eldership before consideration and implementation. These qualifications are mandatory and non-negotiable. The Lord did not abandon church government to man's opinion. He established biblical standards by which to measure potential and existing elders for leadership fitness.\footnote{Nelson, \textit{Elders}, 11.}
Since it is Jesus' church, He has the right to determine the qualifications for who leads it. A deficiency in the conduct or character standards set forth by Scripture and the church elder board should disqualify or delay the installation of an elder.\textsuperscript{79} The quality of a potential elder's personal life, including relationships with his spouse and family, those in his workplace, and those in any other place outside the church, must be considered and found to be holy, disciplined, and free from sin.\textsuperscript{80} The qualifications for church leadership listed in Scripture, while somewhat general, would have been considered noteworthy of a virtuous person by those in the pagan Greco-Roman world in the Apostle Paul's day.\textsuperscript{81}

Scripture emphasizes some of the most important qualifications that must be present in potential elders. Concerning an elder's finances, Anyabwile reminds church leaders about the necessity of financial integrity. He describes how the Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to discover men who did not love money or have hearts attached to the fleeting riches of this world.\textsuperscript{82} Elders should be free from non-ethical financial situations.\textsuperscript{83} Stott reiterates these sentiments, highlighting biblical examples of those who idolized money in ministry. He gave examples such as the judges in Micah who took bribes, the pastors Peter warned not to be greedy for money, and the Apostle Paul, who was clear from coveting the valuables of others because he worked for what he needed.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{79} Bruce, \textit{The International Bible Commentary}, 1478.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Anyabwile, \textit{Faithful Elders}, 88.
\textsuperscript{83} Schnable, “Overseers as Stewards,” 90.
\textsuperscript{84} Stott, \textit{The Bible Speaks Today}, 97.
Humility is another character trait that must be present in the life of an elder, as one can never entirely eliminate the danger of being overbearing in leadership. Each elder must crucify their ego and pride daily with the help of the Holy Spirit's power in a way that displays servanthood towards those they oversee. Overall, church elders must be free from accusation and blame concerning lousy character. There is no one free of fault, as none are perfect, but to be an elder, the church and those outside it must highly regard these men. Churches should seek Elders who possess spiritual maturity as spiritual immaturity present in church leadership can prove to be dangerous. Those who are immature could become arrogant and full of pride. Christ-like character is formed over time and is essential to leading as an elder. The word character derives from a word that signifies an engraving tool's mark. An elder marked with Christ-like character will display their true identity. The Apostle Paul is an example of a dependent follower of Jesus who served those entrusted to him.

An Elder's Marriage and Family

An elder's marriage and family are his first shepherding responsibility. An elder's relationship with his family will reflect his true character long before the church he serves sees it. Paul's discussion of marital integrity excluded all forms of infidelity and sinful behaviors. An elder's obligation to fidelity in his marriage is imperative. The call of eldership heightens the

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85 Rinne, *Church Elders*, 76.
86 Ibid.
90 Stenschke, *Lifestyle and Leadership*.
91 Stott, *The Bible Speaks Today*, 92.
need for faithfulness to one's spouse as an elder is to be a model in morality, marriage, monogamy, and sexual discipline. The expressed fidelity of an elder's marriage was also essential to silence those who condemned marriage altogether. The matter of being previously married should concern elder boards as the notion of fidelity is at stake. The phrase 'husband of but one wife' in Scripture may refer to the exclusion of polygamy. However, people did not widely practice polygamy in the first-century Greco-Roman world. While polygamy conflicted with the morality of Scripture, so did adultery, and most likely, the phrase is best rendered 'faithful husband' to display fidelity in marriage.

The elder's family should also express integrity and faithfulness in following the Lord through discipleship. The Apostle Paul addresses the elder's ability to lead the church by comparing it to the elder's ability to lead their family. Scripture necessitates a potential elder be able to lead his home spiritually. If a man cannot pastor the smaller flock of his family, he will not pastor the bigger flock of the church adequately. Getz suggests that if a man has wounds in his marriage and family, they should be healed or in the healing process to help other families heal and provide an excellent example to the church body.

A man does not have to be married to be an elder just as a man does not have to have children to be an elder. The spiritual condition and health of the man’s marriage is what Paul is

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95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
referring to in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. If a man is married and if he has children, they should be growing spiritually, and he should possess increasing Christ-like character as a husband and father. A single man could be an elder if he meets the other qualifications set forth in Scripture for eldership. Other marital conditions that do not automatically disqualify a man from being an elder must also be addressed. A man who divorces before they are a believer in Christ should not be overlooked if they are presently living a solid Christian life and have sought forgiveness if the divorce was sinful on their part. Sometimes divorce happens because the wife has been unfaithful or abandons the relationship. While these are delicate issues that do not automatically disqualify a man from being an elder, they should be thoroughly investigated on a case-by-case basis. The elder candidate should have completed a thorough healing process if they have experienced abandonment or adultery from their previous spouse. It should be clear to the current elders and potentially the congregation that the man has repented if necessary, forgiven his former spouse, been through restorative efforts to their wife if possible, and has a healthy record of restoration and spiritual maturity after divorce and remarriage if applicable.

Disqualifications of Potential Elders

As a church observes the lifestyle of a potential elder and begins to assess if they are qualified to be an elder, they should look for specific and automatic disqualifications. A church's process for evaluating potential elders, while not foolproof, should be lengthy and thorough. An elder candidate could possibly hide sin, or not, if a church's elder qualification process is lacking.\textsuperscript{100} Taylor suggests one's character is harder to disguise as one goes through a long training process.\textsuperscript{101} He believes a lengthy eldership development process is a magnifying glass

\textsuperscript{100} Taylor, \textit{Elder Development}. 55.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
on the elder's soul.\textsuperscript{102} The Apostle Paul's prerequisites for eldership include five negative disqualifications of drunkenness, violence, quarrelsome, greed, and a new convert.\textsuperscript{103} The characteristics seen in the elder qualification lists of Scripture are general instructions and apply to every believer, not just church leaders.\textsuperscript{104} Any lack in these would disqualify a man from serving as an overseer as a drunk, violent, combative, greedy, and spiritually immature man is contrary to the lifestyle of biblical eldership.\textsuperscript{105}

Greed is one dishonorable disqualification for the potential elder. Jesus had no recurring income and trusted God for his basic needs (Matt 6:11, 25-34; 8:20).\textsuperscript{106} Thus, an elder should not serve to gain a financial profit.\textsuperscript{107} An elder should not lord over those entrusted to them as this would lead to the elder's downfall and damage to the local church. God's will for the elder is not to dominate the flock but to serve it and provide an example to those they lead.\textsuperscript{108} Heavy drinkers and sluggards should also not be considered for eldership as they should always be sober and hard-working.\textsuperscript{109} An elder can also bring danger to the church through entitlement. One can irrationally believe their history or tenure of service to their local church should give them the right to be an elder.\textsuperscript{110} Another caution would be elders who have a comfortable church budget and predictable schedule. Elders in these situations can stop sacrificing for their local

\textsuperscript{102} Taylor, \textit{Elder Development}, 55.
\textsuperscript{103} Longman and Garland, \textit{The Expositor's Bible Commentary}, 526.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 525-526.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} McKnight, \textit{NIV Application Commentary}, 261.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Elliott, "Elders as Leaders," 685.
\textsuperscript{109} Schnable, \textit{Overseers as Stewards}, 91.
\textsuperscript{110} Thune, \textit{Gospel Eldership}, 110.
church. Elders should also rest well and find sufficiency in their relationship and calling in the Lord because they can be prone to seek fulfillment in sex, food, gambling, alcohol, entertainment, and other fleeting pleasures. Other reasons for disqualification or removal can include lack of spiritual growth, spiritual slothfulness, adultery, impropriety, arrest, imprisonment, vulgarity, sexual sin, anger, pride, arrogance, and a host of other sins.

While the disqualification of an elder candidate may seem harsh, asking an elder to step down for a period to overcome sin or removing one from office altogether can be more detrimental to a church body. Removing an elder is one of the most challenging tasks and should not be done lightly, but with much prayer and conversation among the elder team. The tough call to remove an elder must be done in complete agreement by the eldership.

The Influence of Elders

A church has the responsibility to develop their elder candidates and current elders well as they are influential in the church's spiritual development and kingdom impact. A rigorous developmental process must take place to identify suitable candidates and eliminate bad ones. Taylor suggests the first year of a potential elder's growth should be free from giving the potential elders formal titles to allow time to mature and earn it in the eyes of the elders and congregation they serve. In his experience, he has found that twenty percent do not make it through the process because of hidden sin exposed in the first year.

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111 Thune, Gospel Eldership, 110.
112 Ibid.
113 Briggs and Hyatt, Eldership and the Mission of God, 110.
114 Ibid.
115 Taylor, Eldership Development, 45.
116 Ibid.
Elders have spiritual influence over those they serve in the local church body. Elders must recognize this as they walk humbly in their efforts to be examples for their church. Jesus washed the disciples’ feet and displayed a desire to work together and serve one another, thus avoiding the abuse of privilege and authority.117 Elders should shepherd and give spiritual guidance to the congregation to avoid coming across as a corporate board of a religious institution.118 Eldership programs that are grounded spiritually will help to lead a congregation towards righteousness.119 While elders set an example for all believers and the unbelieving world, their primary audience for spiritual mentorship is their local body.120 Getz suggests elders should follow the example Jesus sets for believers to their church body and illustrate the life of Christ.121

An elder is a leader that governs the church well as a Christ-like example to them as mature followers of Jesus.122 The kind of men one places in eldership is crucial to the spiritual development of the church. If the elders are desirous of title, position, or prestige, they are not the sort of men who will serve well, nor those others will want to emulate as they display and act in ungodly selfishness.123 Just as Paul lived among the Jewish and Gentile Christians he served, elders should share life with those they serve so those who see them can hear and witness their gospel lifestyle.124

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119 Roberts, Eldership Oversight, 23.
120 Anyabwile, Finding Faithful Elders, 135.
121 Getz, Church Elders, 150.
122 Engle, Who Runs the Church, 219.
123 Thune, Gospel Eldership, 69.
The Responsibilities of Elders

While elders are responsible for being examples in character, they also have duties of overseeing other essential affairs of the church, keeping it on mission in God's expressed will in Scripture. One of the most important roles an elder has in the local church is to teach the Word of God. Like deacons, elders should be set apart in Christ-like character, but only the elder must demonstrate the ability to teach Scripture. The setting for teaching may be large in a preaching context to the congregation, or small in a classroom setting such as a Sunday School class. Correct teaching of Scripture must accompany elders in all areas of their lives. Elders are to have a teaching gift and should not be ordained if they do not display one. Elders are called pastor-teachers in Scripture, and their authority only comes from God's Word. Teaching is a primary responsibility of elders in the local church, as evidenced in Scripture.

An elder has the responsibility of shepherding smaller groups but also the entirety of the church. They are to lead their flock closer to God through their example and the teaching of God's Word. An elder must have a good reputation with those outside the church to not disgrace the office of the elder, the church, or the name of Christ. Since God sets the spiritual and moral standards for elders, they should display them in their service to the local church. An elder must know his flock well and be attentive to the condition of their spiritual lives.

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125 Rinne, *Church Elders*, 45.
129 Getz, *Church Elders*, 117.
130 Swartley, *Eldership in Action*, 76.
131 Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*, 1478.
132 Ibid.
Anyabwile believes an elder knows what kind of teaching and teachers his congregation listens to and should encourage them toward genuinely godly and theologically sound ones. Elders must give proper doctrinal instruction and rebuke contradicting teaching as they are a gift to the church to correct, instruct, and train the church in spotting wolves in the elder's absence.

Elders are faithful shepherds of God's flock. They are involved in the pastoral ministry of caring, guiding, instructing, disciplining, and helping God's people grow into spiritually mature people who emulate Christlikeness. The agrarian communities of Israel illustrate the shepherd and sheep relationship in regards to pastoring the local church. As shepherds, elders care for their flocks as seen in Scripture in places such as Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:11, Jeremiah 23:1-4, Ezekiel 34:1-10, Zechariah 11:4-18, Matthew 9:35-38, John 10:1-18, and John 21:15-17. Robert Thune, author, and pastor of Coram Deo Church in Omaha, NE, likens being an elder to a spiritual doctor who loves, cares for the flock, diagnoses their illnesses, and treats their sicknesses. The elder gives attention to the health and wellness of their flock and applies the spiritual medicine of God's Word to their soul.

There are other responsibilities of church elders that are critical to carrying out the mission of God. Elders are to help make the big decisions a local church faces. Elders sometimes oversee the finances of the church. Strauch explains how the Jewish Christian elders

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133 Anyabwile, *Finding Faithful Elders*, 111.
134 Ibid.
136 McKnight, *NIV Life Application Commentary*, 260.
137 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
effectively use the contributions given by the church in Antioch for ministry.\textsuperscript{140} Some interpret Scripture to mean deacons administer finances on behalf of the elders.\textsuperscript{141} The elders' decisions must be made with the will of God in full view, as the temptation in church leadership is to conceive a solution to a problem and convince one's congregation before asking or hearing from the Lord.\textsuperscript{142}

Elders should also address the variances of material culture as it impacts the local church. Sinful culture has caused some churches that once connected people to the mission of God to lose their impact.\textsuperscript{143} The elder's task is to strive towards teaching the mission of God so a congregation can respond appropriately and biblically.\textsuperscript{144} Elders must lead the church in unity towards the agreed-upon biblical mission of the local church by pushing their personal opinions down while uplifting the Word of God.\textsuperscript{145} Elders are prayer warriors in the local church as well. The prayer life of elders should reflect that of Jesus in their communion with the Father as they view the demanding nature of shepherding the local church.\textsuperscript{146} As elders pray for the sick in the church, they are not to promote themselves but only provide care and concern and point people to trusting Jesus and His Word.\textsuperscript{147} A key responsibility of elders is to encourage the body through difficulties by pointing to the Scriptures. Examples include Peter's witness and experience of suffering and persecution as an example to his flock.\textsuperscript{148} Elders are also to be

\textsuperscript{140} Strauch, \textit{Biblical Eldership}, 124.
\textsuperscript{141} Engle and Cowan, \textit{Who Runs the Church}, 220.
\textsuperscript{142} Briggs and Hyatt, \textit{Eldership and the Mission of God}, 110.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Rinne, \textit{Church Elders}, 109.
\textsuperscript{147} Getz, \textit{Elders and Leaders}, 34.
\textsuperscript{148} McKnight, \textit{NIV Application Commentary}, 260.
servant leaders of those entrusted to them. Thune believes elder leadership is to be serving in nature and should thrust believers back to the gospel.149 Elders are servant leaders who display selfless humility in assisting others while avoiding seeking their agenda or advantages.150 They resemble the Apostle Paul, who modeled the same exemplary values and principles he expected of those he led.151

An Elder's Relationships Within the Church

Elders have a responsibility to be committed to the other elders, deacons, and church members. They are to serve God and the local church together, laboring affectionately and faithfully to uphold the Word and the church's mission.152 They are held to a higher moral and spiritual standard than others in the church body as being an elder is a high calling that cannot be ventured into lightly and can lead many astray.153 People in the church should look at their elders and desire to be like them because they genuinely model Jesus.154 This commitment of the elder to the local church is one of lovingly protecting those they lead. The job of a shepherd can be dangerous in safeguarding people from “spiritual wolves”, praying for those who have possibly contagious diseases, and facing persecution from the world.155 Elders are committed to the other elders in their church body as they share calling, mission, vision, belief, values, gifts, and friendship.156 An elder's relationship with the deacons is also of great importance. As

151 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
156 Ibid., 59.
scriptural offices, elders and deacons must clarify responsibilities to avoid confusion and harmonize to promote oneness.\textsuperscript{157}

Appointment of Elders

A church should carefully identify and train its potential elders before installing them for service in the local church. This process should carefully evaluate God's Word concerning eldership, potential elder character, current elder oversight, congregational approval, and outsider opinion.\textsuperscript{158} The installation council must be heavily involved in the appointment of elders. A seasoned and godly installation council can help recognize and examine potential elder candidates by studying their doctrine, personal life, ministry background, and other practical issues.\textsuperscript{159} Elders are to be appointed leaders in the local church based on New Testament instructions.\textsuperscript{160}

The role of the Holy Spirit in the appointment of elders is also vitally important. Churches must realize they cannot create elders apart from the work of the Holy Spirit who draws, calls, develops, and directs men to the office of elder and elders to men fit for the office.\textsuperscript{161} The New Testament reveals several specific qualifications for elders to obey. How one carries out the process of appointing elders must include the obedience of Scripture's directives. Appointing elders also appears to be a matter of local church preference as the New Testament is not specific on every step in the process.\textsuperscript{162} Getz believes there is no particular methodology laid out in the Scriptures for ordaining elders. The Apostle Paul gave Timothy

\begin{footnotes}
\item Smyth, Developing Elders, 143.
\item Ibid., 257.
\item Nelson, Elders, 49.
\item Rinne, Church Elders, 87.
\item Swartley, Eldership in Action, 49.
\item Getz, Elders and Leaders, 201.
\end{footnotes}
qualifications, guidelines, and principles in belief that those who read it would develop approaches full of integrity. Elder succession should always be at the forefront of the eldership. The eldership should constantly be growing and evaluating those who aspire to be elders because the future of that local church's ministry is at stake. Procrastination, avoiding the process, or ignoring the mandate to equip the saints and develop leaders could be disastrous as the ongoing fruit of the ministry depends on the plans for succession in church leadership and the implementation of elders in the church.

Conclusion

Elders should carefully consider and apply the various aspects of character and function in these resources while selecting and affirming elder candidates. This section offers multiple solutions and insights for recognizing, preparing, and choosing elders in the local church body. The intent is to do this in the elders at Family Church and other churches.

Theological Foundations

Certain foundational Scriptures describe both the essential qualifications and responsibilities of elders. This section will discuss the biblical underpinning of Acts 20:13-38, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, Hebrews 13:17, James 5:14-15, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

Acts 20:13-38

Readers can observe a few characteristics and responsibilities of elders in the Apostle Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:13-18. As Paul bid the Ephesian elders

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163 Getz, Elders and Leaders, 201.
164 Ibid., 324.
165 Ibid.
farewell, he charged them to shepherd the church in their care.\textsuperscript{166} Paul's example of humble servanthood during severe trials gives a clear standard for the Ephesian elders to follow as they lead the church.\textsuperscript{167} He uncompromisingly and boldly preached the truth of the fullness of the Scriptures both publicly and from house to house, something his contemporary elders should have also done.\textsuperscript{168} Paul preached repentance to both Jews and Greeks for salvation, a necessary responsibility for elders.\textsuperscript{169} He instructed the Ephesian elders to keep watch over themselves and the church that God had entrusted to them.\textsuperscript{170} While Paul had likely chosen and trained the Ephesian elders, the Holy Spirit had made them elders.\textsuperscript{171} He also described those who would come into the church with the intent to destroy it as savage wolves.\textsuperscript{172} These false teachers must not be allowed to infiltrate the church. The elders must be theologically sound to defend the Word and protect the church from those who would corrupt truth.\textsuperscript{173} The elders were to be on their guard as shepherds who would protect the flock of God theologically and practically.\textsuperscript{174} While some would come from outside the church in Ephesus, others would arise and attempt to lead others away for possibly their following or self-interests.\textsuperscript{175}

This passage also reflects some qualities Paul expressed that the Ephesian and present-day elders alike should demonstrate. In Acts 20:33-34, Paul mentioned he coveted no one's

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[166] Bruce B. Barton and Grant R. Osborne, \textit{Life Application Commentary: Acts} (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1999), 345.
\item[167] Ibid., 346.
\item[169] Ibid., 534.
\item[170] Barton, \textit{Acts}, 348.
\item[171] Ibid., 349.
\item[172] Ibid.
\item[173] Fernando, \textit{Acts}, 534.
\item[174] Ibid.
\item[175] Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
silver, gold, or clothing to display his contentment and self-restraint. He also worked hard with his own hands to support himself and his ministry companions, indicating he was not in the ministry for selfish gain, a quality found in 1 Timothy 3:8 and Titus 1:7. This diligence and hard work were something to be desired and displayed by the Ephesian elders. Paul also listed helping the weak as a responsibility that derives from the inner quality of selflessness. Paul and Ephesian elders prayed together as Paul was about to leave for Jerusalem. Elders should pray for the church body, but also one another. Their weeping in prayer conveyed their care, fellowship, and compassionate hearts for one another. Elders must shepherd, oversee, and care for other elders as well as the church body.

First Timothy 3:1-7

The pastoral epistles list several qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Both passages provide several characteristics an elder must possess as they shepherd their flock. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul listed character qualities required for the office of an elder (see Table 1.1). In them, Paul emphasized character over responsibilities. These essential qualities are rooted in character and imply the elder must not associate with any behavior that reflects a poor judgment or impairs self-control, such as a bad temper, violence, greed, or addiction. The desire or aspiration for the office of an elder was one of zeal for the church and not sought with ambitious rivalry with others in the church as the Apostle Paul would have rebuked this

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176 Acts 20:35.
177 Barton, Acts, 354.
179 Ibid.
behavior. This Scripture contains a long list of qualifications focused on daily life and not just the higher gifts of Spirit and faith that should not be absent or lacking in any Christian least of all in an elder.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Qualifications</th>
<th>Spiritual Qualifications</th>
<th>Moral Qualifications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manage his family well</td>
<td>Aspire to be an overseer</td>
<td>Above reproach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See that his children obey him in a matter worthy of full respect</td>
<td>Desire to be an overseer</td>
<td>Not given to drunkenness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faithful to his wife</td>
<td>Able to teach</td>
<td>Not violent but gentle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not be a recent convert</td>
<td>Not quarrelsome</td>
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<td>Temperate</td>
<td>Not a lover of money</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-Controlled</td>
<td>Good reputation with outsiders</td>
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<td>Hospitable</td>
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Table 1.1 Elder Qualifications Found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7

As Paul discussed the role of overseer in this passage, he was not requiring Timothy to start a brand-new office in the church as men were already operating as elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28). Paul's emphasis was that those appointed to the office of elders were to be men that possessed spiritual integrity and commitment. Elders were to be men of integrity in observable behavior (1 Timothy 3:2–3). Those inside and outside the church should be able to see their character and integrity in their lifestyle. Elders were also to lead their family well (3:4–5).

Familial integrity was important as a vital proving ground for leadership in the local church.

The elder also should have a seasoned Christian journey (3:6) as a new believer in leadership could have their judgment clouded by pride. The elder also needed respect from those outside

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181 Ibid., 37.
182 Ibid., 38.
183 Ibid.
the church (3:7). While these outsiders may not agree or practice the elder's scriptural beliefs, they should be able to see and admire the elder's convictions and integrity.\textsuperscript{184}

The qualities Paul lists in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are necessary for church leaders (see Table 1:1). They also stand in stark contrast with the character of the false teachers (1 Tim 1:6–7; 6:3–10; 2 Tim 3:1–4; Titus 1:10–16). The word "overseer" in 1 Timothy 3:1 is singular, but leadership in the church was plural (e.g., 1 Tim 5:17). Elders probably presided individually over a local congregation that resembled a house-church, and those house-church leaders together formed the eldership of the churches in that city.\textsuperscript{185} The leadership position of an elder seen in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 is most similar to the pastor in today's churches as they lead the church, teach the Scriptures, and serve the congregation.\textsuperscript{186} These qualifications were mainly of an outward and observable type as a model for the congregation to follow in lifestyle and those whereby they could test the spiritual condition of their leadership's sincerity.

Like the qualifications found in Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7 describes an elder to be blameless or above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, self-controlled, temperate, hospitable, and able to teach. Elders must not be given to drunkenness, must be gentle, must not be quarrelsome, and must not be a lover of money. The elder should manage his marriage and children well and not be a recent convert to the faith. The qualification of being faithful to one's spouse implies that Paul was doing more than prohibiting polygamy, as that would have already been highly unacceptable among Christians.\textsuperscript{187} Paul was not advocating exclusively for married men to be elders as his singleness as demonstrated in 1


\textsuperscript{185} Lea, \textit{1 & 2 Timothy, Titus}, 106.

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., 108.
Corinthians 7:7-8 would have allowed single men to serve as elders. It seems Paul was simply saying that the elder must be faithful to his wife as the Greek describes the elder as a “one-woman man.”  

MacArthur suggests that one should not hold an elder's sins before salvation against him nor is Paul prohibiting divorced men from being elders.  

Paul also advised that an elder be temperate, self-controlled, and free from irrational decisions and actions. The elder was to be someone who lived a balanced, stable, trustworthy, and sober life.  A respectable elder is one whose inward character affects their outward actions. The hospitable elder was to be one who helped the traveling disciples like that of 3 John 1:5-8 who were desperately dependent upon the benevolence of Christians they encountered while sharing the gospel through mission work.  

Christians who understood the nature of the missionary and were joyfully willing to care for them were prime candidates for overseeing God’s church. While most of the qualifications had to do with character, the elder should teach with particular competency and aptitude when conveying God’s Word. Not only must they know God’s Word and doctrine, but they must also be able to refute those who teach otherwise to lead the church body towards the proper interpretation of the Scriptures and build up the church.  

First Timothy 3:3 requires elders to control their desire for alcohol. While this does not prohibit medicinal usage, as seen in 1 Timothy 5:23, an elder should not allow the swaying of their oversight of the church by anything that would impair them from making sound decisions.

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188 Lea, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, 108.
189 MacArthur, 1 Timothy, 113.
190 Ibid., 114.
191 Ibid.
192 Lange, 1 and 2 Timothy, 39.
julgamentos. An elder must also not be violent and quick-tempered and deemed a bully or forceful but gentle, patient, and kind. First Timothy 3:3 also prescribes that an elder must not be quarrelsome, mean, rude, contentious, or quick-tongued. They should be peaceful and free from anything that resembles combative and hostile. The elder should not love money as it would hinder them from overseeing the congregational finances and potentially cause them to operate out of greed and jealousy.

The elder’s behavior with their spouse and children directly affected their ability to lead the church well. Paul used the word “manage” when describing the elder’s family leadership, and it conveys a sense of governing in the proper direction. While these qualifications imply an elder be married with kids, they do not demand them. They merely point out that if an elder is married and has children, they should lead them well in the things of the Lord. Managing one’s home life, as 1 Timothy 3:5 suggests, is a prerequisite for managing the church's affairs. Verse six demands an elder be mature in their walk with Christ as they must avoid pride and becoming conceited as the devil can trap an unprepared elder in these sins. Elders should also have the respect of those outside the faith according to 1 Timothy 3:7. The elder must have a good reputation, name, and standing in the community at large. They should be known for following the Scriptures even if those who observe them in the world do not. This unhypocritical life does not harm the church of those outside of it from believing and receiving the gospel.

The qualifications seen in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are rooted in the Christ-like character required to be present in the elder's lifestyle. These criteria are both positive and negative, and both begin with elders needing to be men who are above reproach, so there is no

193 Lange, *1 and 2 Timothy*, 39.
loophole for criticism.\textsuperscript{194} The elder is to be a husband of one wife, meaning married only once or most likely faithful in his commitment to his wife.\textsuperscript{195} The elder’s children should not live loosely or be insubordinate as a man who cannot correctly rear his children in the Lord will have trouble doing the same with the church body.\textsuperscript{196}

Paul reminded the elder of stewardship, a caution the title of elder nor the congregation belongs to the elder but the Lord.\textsuperscript{197} A steward cared for another’s property. Paul used this word to describe the elder as one God has entrusted to take care of His office of eldership in a respectable and honorable way.\textsuperscript{198} This passage also addresses the importance of the elder’s character not being obstinate or arrogant, quick-tempered, given to drunkenness, violent, or greedy. The reference to greed is most likely one that includes a task of elders that handled the church’s offerings as a temptation for greed or theft can open them up to temptation and accusation of misappropriation. These verses contend the elder must be above reproach and give no cause of alarm in his congregation.\textsuperscript{199} Positive virtues are added to the vices reiterating the necessity of impeccable character in the elder's lifestyle. Hospitality, right-mindedness, temperate, just, and self-control are the elder's critical and non-negotiable character traits.\textsuperscript{200}

One duty of the elder listed in this Scripture is that of refuting false doctrine. This duty is rooted

\textsuperscript{194} Kelly, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 231–233.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 231.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 232.
\textsuperscript{197} Kelly, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 233.
\textsuperscript{198} Towner, \textit{Titus}, 320.
\textsuperscript{199} Kelly, \textit{The Pastoral Epistles}, 231–233.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 233.
in the sound doctrine held fast in the trustworthy Word of God. The elder must be devoted to the Word and convinced of the truth of the apostolic message.201

Titus 1:5-9

The appointment of elders in the local church today is based on scriptural commands in the New Testament. In Titus 1:5, the Apostle Paul directed the appointment of elders in every town to bring order to the local church. Lea and Griffin propose that Paul intended for Titus to take care of several unfinished tasks in the church like organizing the churches, refuting false teachers, and instructing in doctrine and conduct for the church family.202 These tasks also included the work of appointing elders in every Cretan town that had a church.203 Paul directed Titus to submit to the apostolic authority and establish the elder leadership body in the local churches.204 Paul's strategy for planting churches included identifying leaders from among the churches to oversee the spiritual growth and ministries in that community.205 Acts 14:23 echoes this notion of identifying and selecting elders among the local churches to oversee their spiritual health. This verse demonstrates the necessity of eldership that Paul and Barnabas emphasized and used in their teaching, governance, the exercise of discipline, and oversight as they helped the church grow and propel forward in the next generation of its life.206 This type of leadership allowed the missionaries to move on freely and expand God’s work in unreached areas as the

203 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
206 Larkin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 276.
elders stayed behind and grew the church.207 Among the Apostles’ final ministry tasks was establishing new leadership in the congregations, confirming elders as the top leadership in the local church.208 Philippians 1:1 addresses overseers and deacons that were present in the audience of the letter to the Philippians, an indication that they were identified, trained, and installed in the Philippian churches.

Paul describes the purpose of his appointment of Titus for the ministry work in Crete in Titus 1:5. This work was done in two phases. The first phase consisted of correcting and the second in completing the ministry Paul began.209 Titus was to combat false teaching (vv. 10-16), but Paul’s phrase of completing “what was lacking” was the appointment of elders to lead in combat.210 The second phase of Paul’s ministry list for Titus was the unfinished appointment of elders, which would take care of the first phase.211 Paul’s instructions to appoint elders do not come with exact steps, but the qualifications suggest proper evaluation of character played a vital role in selecting the right leaders. In Crete, Elders were chosen differently from Ephesus as an eldership already existed in a more established church.212 Perhaps Titus did all the evaluation by himself instead of the actions found in Acts 14:23 where multiple people laid hands on the new elders. Titus 1 does not provide the exact number of elders in the house church or in the town, only that there was a plurality of leaders overseeing the church.213 As in 1 Timothy 3:10, Titus 1:6 says the elder must be found blameless. This characteristic indicates the elder must exhibit

207 Larkin, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, 276.
208 Towner, 1–2 Timothy & Titus, 329.
209 Ibid., 329.
210 Ibid., 320.
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid., 321.
213 Larkin, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, 277.
the highest moral character in life because the reputations of Christ and His church are at stake.  

Titus 1:7 highlights the blameless lifestyle an elder must have in marriage and family. The proper examination must begin in the home, starting in the marriage if an elder is able to lead God’s church.  

Titus 1:6 continues and describes the importance of the faith of the elder’s children. In this verse, the Greek word *pista* can mean “having family members who all believe” or, more generally, “faithful and trustworthy.”  

One must also consider 1 Timothy 3:4 while reading Titus 1:6, seeking parallel qualifications from the same writer. Paul likely means an elder’s children are to be faithful and obedient to the elder as God’s authority figure in the home.  

An elder should be accountable for those who live in their household, but even if the elder leads their young children well while living in their home, it does not guarantee they will follow the Lord later in adulthood.  

Titus 1:7 says an elder should not be overbearing, quick-tempered, violent, drunk, and greedy. These prohibitions of an overbearing, angry, drunken, dishonest man have no place in the office of the elder. Elders should be the opposite of these qualities to lead the church well. They should be gentle, peaceable, sober, and trustworthy to lead God’s church. Titus 1:8 describes hospitality as another attribute in the life of the elder.

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215 Ibid.
216 Larkin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 278.
217 Ibid.
Hospitality among Christians in that day was urgent, risky, and sacrificial, often extending one’s home and financial resources as the homes and jobs and Christians were sometimes in jeopardy.\textsuperscript{219} This type of hospitality was more than entertainment and included deep concern and provision for fellow Christians. The elder must love what is good, as Titus 1:8 suggests it is a devotion to God’s holiness and character.\textsuperscript{220} An elder must also be self-controlled as it is readily observable by those inside and outside the church and a reflection of the inner workings of Jesus in one’s life.\textsuperscript{221} As Titus 1:8 continues, Paul used blameless to describe an upright, holy, and disciplined elder. These are also observable outer works that should reflect a changed personal life in Christ. The inner qualities of Titus 1:6-8 should be the platform by which elders carry out their ministry calling. Verse nine describes some of the foundational responsibilities of elders in obeying the Word, teaching it to faithful believers, and refuting it with harmful unbelievers.\textsuperscript{222} Towner suggests that the blamelessness of an elder’s life is more about wholeness than perfection.\textsuperscript{223} These men who are whole in their character and lifestyles are most suited for leading the church.

\textit{Hebrews 13:17}

Hebrews 13:17 describes how the elder is an overseer of souls and should be an example to their congregation. This verse is but one sentence in Greek. The author’s use of the double appeal to obey your leaders and submit suggests that one is to yield their preference to the leader

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{219}MacArthur, \textit{Titus}, 34-35.
\item \textsuperscript{220}Ibid., 35.
\item \textsuperscript{221}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{222}Towner, \textit{Titus}, 320.
\item \textsuperscript{223}Ibid., 323.
\end{itemize}
when disagreement occurs. Leaders watch over the souls as those who must give an account. An elder’s joy is found in his calling from the Lord foremost and the spiritual condition in which those he oversees and how they follow. The amount of pleasure an elder has in serving the church body can be affected by the member’s obedience and submission. The church member can be adversely affected and grieved when the elder’s attitude is not Christlike. Hebrews 13:17 charges the congregation to follow the leadership of the overseer. In this passage of Scripture, the author of Hebrew’s desire is to instruct the reader in how spiritual overseers should do their pastoral duty with joy and not with unwillingness. The implication is that overseers, namely elders, watch over souls. Watching over the souls of the church gives eternal weight and framework to the responsibility of the elder’s tasks and calling. It also emphasizes the quality of response of those who follow their leadership as it is more than begrudging submission. The responsibility of elders is out of a high calling of overseeing the eternal souls of precious saints. Godly leaders strive diligently and tirelessly as elders are to watch over the lives of those in their care, particularly those who are prone to spiritual laziness and fail to recognize the importance of fellowship with other followers of Jesus.

James 5:14-15

James 5:14 describes how elders should pray for and anoint with oil those who are sick. Since the sick person mobilizes the elders, an elder should consider the sickness of the church member as severe when they ask for prayer. Similarly, James’ use of the word “over” may

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224 Towner, Titus, 323.
225 Ibid., 626.
226 Ibid.
227 Allen, Hebrews, 529.
228 Ibid.
illustrate the posture in which the elder prays standing over the sick person.\textsuperscript{229} These are serious prayers and are a primary responsibility of the church elder. James also commands the elder to anoint the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord. It seems that praying and anointing with oil are done simultaneously for the sick person.\textsuperscript{230} These actions indicate a specific function of elders. The use of oil in healing was not uncommon in the ancient world, but the emphasis of Peter is the internal prayer offered to the Lord, not the external oil placed by the elder.\textsuperscript{231} Peter’s focus in this text is God's power that heals and not that of the elder.\textsuperscript{232}

The prominent role of the elders in the Scriptures and the description of the office suggests that they were spiritually mature men who guided the spiritual development of local church bodies.\textsuperscript{233} Elders are spiritual overseers who, mature in their faith, should be called upon to pray for those in their congregations, specifically in healing with discernment of God’s will.\textsuperscript{234} Praying for others emphasizes the importance of prayer in a Christian’s life. It also establishes and models prayer as one of the main foundations of the local church’s mission. As elders pray for their congregation in the toughest of circumstances, it increases their spiritual growth and urges them to seek God in troubled times.


\textsuperscript{230} Moo, \textit{James}, 237.

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{233} Moo, \textit{James}, 237.

\textsuperscript{234} Ibid., 238.
First Peter 5:1-4 addresses some of the more pastoral responsibilities required of elders. While the Greek word translated elder in 1 Peter 5:1 refers to an older man, it was appropriate for more senior and spiritually mature men to serve as leaders.\(^{235}\) The leaders in Old and New Testament era Jewish communities were elders, causing the synonymous usage of the words elder and leader.\(^{236}\) Although their age has little to do with their leadership, Peter refers to spiritual leaders when using the word elders.\(^{237}\) Not all older men should have been or were leaders. Peter refers to himself as an elder and original leader in the church of Jerusalem, a true first elder among equals.\(^{238}\) Peter also refers to himself as one who has witnessed Christ’s sufferings. Peter understands firsthand what it means to perform the responsibility of elders. Peter describes the elder’s role as a shepherd caring for a flock in 1 Peter 5:2-3, identifying elders as God’s undershepherds appointed by Him.\(^{239}\) A shepherd keeps the flock from wandering, protects them from dangerous animals and thieves, feeds them, seeks them at personal risk when they become lost, prevents one sheep from taking advantage of another, and provides personal care.\(^{240}\) These roles parallel that of elders within the church as they oversee the flock. Peter uses the word overseer to describe those who serve as elders in 1 Peter 5:2. These shepherds are to do their responsibilities in an eager and willing demeanor to serve those assigned to them.\(^{241}\) Peter taught those who lead the church should not use the flock entrusted to

\(^{235}\) MacArthur, *1 Peter*, 264.  
^{236}\) Ibid.  
^{238}\) Ibid.  
^{239}\) Ibid.  
^{240}\) Ibid.  
^{241}\) MacArthur, *1 Peter*, 267.
them for their benefit in finances, prestige, or power.\textsuperscript{242} Those who desire to be elders should not lord it over them but show their congregation the proper respect they deserve as brothers and sisters in Christ.\textsuperscript{243}

A local church may have several gifted individuals with spiritual gifts of teaching and service, but it will still need overseers responsible to make decisions, bring encouragement, and keep the church on the right path through teaching the Scriptures. Elders will also have to utilize the Scriptures to resolve conflict.\textsuperscript{244} The word shepherd when referring to elders is a descriptive and biblical picture illustrating their watch over the body. The sheep need an overseer to protect them from wandering, dangerous animals and thieves, provision of food, guidance, prevention from abuse and those who wish to take advantage of them, maintenance of personal care, and protection of unity among the whole.\textsuperscript{245} Again, elders should serve willingly, not because of appointment but from a genuine desire to serve the body of Christ.\textsuperscript{246} Peter emphasized the stewardship of elders in those entrusted to them in this Scripture. This stewardship implies elders will at some point need to instruct people in how to live and exercise discipline over them. This role of an elder should be done in humility and not in domineering abuse or selfishness. Christ modeled leadership in service to those He led, and elders should also be examples to those they serve by demonstrating through their conduct the same qualities they desire in their congregation. There must be a mutual desire for Christlike behavior between the leaders and the rest of the congregation.\textsuperscript{247}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{242} MacArthur, \textit{1 Peter}, 267.
\item \textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 268.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Marshall, \textit{1 Peter}, 162.
\item \textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 163.
\item \textsuperscript{246} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{247} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Peter makes it clear in 1 Peter 5:4 that those who have the honor of serving the flock of God must do so with Christ’s future return in mind as the Chief Shepherd Jesus will one day return and reward elders with eternal glory. This reward the elders share with Christ is pictured metaphorically with the flowers that do not fade, representing a heavenly return compared to other common branches of garland that are temporarily green and represent an earthly return.

**Theoretical Foundations**

Other research projects exist that provide elder training at the local church level. One such research project is by retired pastor, Bible teacher, and Christian author Carey Green. Green’s research and training plan helps church leaders identify men within their local church who are mature in Christ and train them to serve in the church. Green’s program helps church leaders assess these and other men in the church to determine if they are ready to be a candidate for church eldership by looking at their theology and character. Those identified to serve as elders received tools for spiritual growth to fulfill the role of an elder. Green’s elder training handbook contains nine lessons on the calling, biblical roles, qualifications, and essential foundations and practices for eldership in the local church.

Green guides churches on how to use the training from giving no guarantees upon completion to becoming an elder to suggesting current elders take a one-on-one approach over regularly scheduled meetings with elder candidates. This promotion of training through a

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249 Ibid.

relationship with another elder seems both healthy and productive. Green offers over two hundred and seventy questions throughout the book to help elders process candidates. These questions help to engage the elder candidate in the identification and training process. He also provides appendices to help discover a potential elder’s theology. Self, spousal, and pastoral evaluation forms help evaluate the elder as well. The pastoral and spousal evaluation forms are helpful for this research project.

One strength of Green’s work is that he encourages the process of identifying, training, and installing elders to be meticulous and unhurried.251 Another strength is Green’s use of clarifying questions at the end of each chapter, Scripture memorization appropriate to each lesson, and written quizzes to help the potential elder discover how they are processing the information. Green goes to great lengths to teach the potential elder the importance of knowing and guarding Scripture.252 There is also a chapter on shepherding oneself that helps the elder stay spiritually healthy.253 Offering a lesson on the continued spiritual health of the elder is essential as an elder’s walk with the Lord is as or more critical after the installation as it is before it. Green’s chapter on an elder sharing the gospel is also foundational to leading the church body.254 The project developed in this research utilizes several questions to help identify and train elders. It also has more emphasis on sharing the gospel than Green’s work.

Pastor, speaker, and author PJ Smyth’s elder training material focuses on building healthy eldership teams that help grow both the leader and the team. He directs those who use this

251 Green, The Elder Training Handbook, 55.
252 Ibid.
253 Ibid., 96.
254 Ibid., 55.
Potential elders can meet one-on-one with existing elders, existing elders can meet together to strengthen one another before identifying potential elders, or some other helpful combination. Family Church utilized the one-on-one discipling method as it gives consistency and clarifies expectations for elders and potential elders. Smyth concentrates most of his resources towards building the elder’s relationships with God, one another, those they lead in the church. Smyth’s section on the elder’s relationship with the congregation includes the average member, deacons, pastoral staff, and elder’s wives.

While Smyth includes a section on teaching and equipping the local church in the Word of God, it does not seem extensive enough to handle items such as false doctrine, false teachers, the inerrancy of Scripture, and personal biblical knowledge and understanding. Smyth offers a helpful section in his training on the elder’s roles as a shepherd, teacher, equipper, and leader. While beneficial, the elder’s roles in the local church should also include the spiritual direction and health of the church as a whole and not just to individuals in it. Smyth’s material contains discussion questions that help to advance the retention and application of the elder training information. Smyth’s training material includes material on assisting the elder in becoming spiritually mature to teach others about the office of an elder. His apprenticeship program helps identify, train, and install elders for their local church’s current and future generation and sends them out to other churches they plant or strengthen. Smyth also provides

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255 Smyth, Elders, 3.
256 Ibid.
257 Ibid., 135-156.
258 Ibid., 181-196.
259 Ibid., 163-197.
260 Smyth, Elders, 247.
an appendix on how the installation and appointment process should occur in their local church setting.  

Jeramie Rinne offers elder training material that gives new elders and church members practical guidance to grow in their calling and relationship in the local church. This material is for personal use by the potential elder. The encouragement of elders to meet and learn the material with a maturing male disciple in the local church appears to be beneficial. Rinne allows for self-examination of the potential elder by asking them to analyze their life to see if it matches the desire and qualifications outlined in Scripture for elders before committing to continuing with the training. Family Church’s elder training program includes a similar section in the training material directed at self-examination by the potential elder. It also includes prequalifying material for existing elders to review before choosing a maturing male leader in the church to disciple through the training material.

Rinne’s work continually focuses on the shepherding nature of the elder throughout the material. This common theme helps to emphasize the role of elders to be more than board members or decision-makers. The role of the shepherd is a continual theme woven into the material of an elder training program. Rinne limits his material on an elder’s character and family to very few pages. Family Church’s material contains more detailed information on the elder’s character and family as they believe this is the most important qualifying qualities of eldership. While Rinne emphasizes these as flourishing and foundational to elder qualification, his material needs more material on character and family. Rinne also ensures the reader knows

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261 Ibid., 255.
262 Rinne, *Church Elders*, 11.
263 Ibid., 17-30.
264 Ibid., 19-26.
that elders are exclusively male, and this research material reflects the same biblical prerequisite. Family Church also believes eldership is a male-exclusive role and emphasizes that in its training material.

Larry Kreider, Ron Myer, Steve Prokopchak, and Brian Sauder are pastors and overseers of Dove International's network of churches. Their elder training material discusses the need for biblical eldership, the qualifications of elders, and the responsibilities of elders. It also gives insight into how elders grow personally and as a team. One strength of this material is that it is offered as a live seminar or video format to train elders as it encourages group discussion and interaction during the training. The material covers many qualifications for elders, emphasizing the importance of biblical character, a needed emphasis in any elder training program. While Kreider’s material allows for female eldership, the Family Church material does not as there is no explicit allowance for female eldership in Scripture given the masculine pronouns used in the qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These Scriptures also describe elders as husbands, a masculine term. It also seems eldership is an exclusively masculine role in the church as women are not listed as examples where men are listed. The Apostle Paul did not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man. They list decision-making as a role of the elder in their material and add biblical guidance to ensure biblical accuracy. Family Church’s training material should also address these areas.

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265 Rinne, Church Elders, 28.
267 Ibid., 2.
268 Ibid., 10.
269 1 Peter 5:1
270 1 Timothy 1:12
271 Kreider, Training Elders, 19.
An area of strength of Kreider’s material is its section on resolving conflict, discipline, and restoration among church members and are vital topics in Family Church’s training material.272

Phil Taylor offers a practical sequence for identifying elders. His intentionality in surveying the church congregation for men who could be elders helps to vet potential candidates.273 Taylor recommends face-to-face meetings with aspiring elders on more than one occasion, especially during the application phase.274 The use of an application in the vetting process is intriguing should be considered in Family Church’s elder training process. His thorough prerequisite list for entering the elder development process outlines the non-negotiables agreed upon by his church leadership.275 Taylor suggests a two-year apprenticeship of elder development before public affirmation while Family Church does not have a timeframe for an apprenticeship.276 He gives examples of his first and second-year schedules of the church elder training process.277 Throughout the eldership development process manual, Taylor offers notes for the implementor to guide them through the process and provide consistency in elders’ training.278 One suggestion Taylor recommends is the use of personal recommendation forms from others outside the church and background checks to inquire about the criminal record and character of the candidate.279 Taylor also requires elders and church members to sign a covenant agreement with the church that outlines the primary responsibilities of pastors and elders to the

272 Rinne, Church Elders, 53-58.
273 Taylor, Eldership Development, 11.
274 Ibid.
275 Ibid.
276 Ibid., 55.
277 Ibid., 57.
278 Ibid., 22.
279 Ibid.
congregation. Family Church’s plan will require a one-on-one discipling relationship between a current elder and potential elder over the course of a year at minimum. This discipling relationship will clarify the responsibilities and qualifications of eldership to the candidate. It will also require potential elders to sign a doctrinal statement of belief.

Thabiti Anyabwile provides a concise manual for identifying church leadership that includes elders and deacons. In his manual, Anyabwile outlines the biblical prerequisites and godly character needed to identify reliable elders. Most of Anyabwile’s book focuses on the character of elders and discusses the character topics found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Anyabwile spends a chapter on each qualification found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 with extra emphasis given to the shepherding nature of elders. He provides some biblical advice on the responsibilities of younger and older elders, encouraging the mingling of generations in church eldership but does not broaden the responsibility expectations as much as this project would hope to do. Anyabwile also provides sample elder installation vows used in the installation of new elders. Family Church’s project will spend more time focusing on thoroughly identifying and training potential elders, which hopefully will give direction and assurance to when a church should ordain them.

Overall, these other training manuals provide good examples of identifying, training, and installation practices for developing elders in other local churches that Family Church used to develop their training procedures. These resources can be gleaned and proven helpful as references for this research project. While all different in approach, all the mentioned programs

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282 Ibid., 132.
283 Ibid., 163.
contained sections on the elder’s character, scriptural requirements of elders, and explanations of elder’s biblical responsibilities. Each program varied in the amount of time and steps in identifying and teaching potential elders and provided good examples in forming an elder workbook and the proper vetting of church elders. Family Church believes its training program should be at minimum seven weeks and potentially twelve weeks to ensure thorough vetting and instruction of biblical eldership.

The formation of this new research manual draws from the models investigated in content and adds features non-existent in them such as a lesson on prayer, developing the elder’s personal evangelism, and a review of the lessons to assess further potential discipleship. The manual produced in this research project is a resource for one-on-one discipleship with an existing elder and a potential elder over the course of seven weeks. This manual provides a more exhaustive look at the biblical qualifications of elders by focusing on the major Scriptures associated with elders in the New Testament. From the biblical qualifications, this manual concentrates on investigating and developing the character of the potential elder through a one-on-one discipling relationship with a current elder. This workbook is the major assessment tool utilized by current elders to confirm if the calling of potential elders should be pursued further in more one-on-one meetings. By utilizing this manual, churches should be able to better clearly identify men with biblical character and qualifications for eldership and thereby take them through a strategic training process to help the church ordain capable and equipped elders to lead, shepherd, oversee, and further the mission and vision of the church.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this research project will allow Family Church to identify, develop, and install called and qualified men to lead the church body. Effective elders need to function according to scriptural commands. The existing elders of Family Church, and other churches, will have vital roles in developing and implementing a program that will ultimately develop men to lead the church and help ensure church leadership stays biblically strong for future generations.

**Intervention Design**

The problem is that Family Church does not have an adequate way to identify, develop, and install their potential elders as effectively as they can. Family Church needs to develop a process to solve this problem. This intervention plan will develop guidelines for identifying potential elders and a training manual to cultivate elders through a discipling relationship with a current elder that Family Church and other churches can use. This intervention plan will guide the elders in discovering potential elders and developing materials to disciple them. This project will help the current elders at Family Church utilize a user-friendly resource for identifying and training new elders. Because of the limited time frame of the intervention research and the importance of installing the right qualified elders that will affect the current and future mission and vision of Family Church, the current elders will install no potential elders during the research project time frame.

Stage One
This intervention plan will consist of three stages. The first stage of the intervention plan will inform the elders of Family Church of the need for a new elder training program and present an overview of the intervention research plan. During this first step, the current elders of Family Church will form this elder training process (see Appendix B). As elders become aware of the intervention research plan, they will be allowed to ask questions concerning the plan’s goals, process, and development.

Elders will pray about participation in the entire intervention research plan. After the elder meeting, the PI will select three current elders and ask them to be part of a case study where they will teach the elder training manual over seven weeks to three potential elders. These potential elders will meet the prerequisites agreed upon by the current eldership (see Appendix K). There is no promise of eldership to the potential elders during or upon completion of the training process before training begins. The goal is to disciple these potential elders in the biblical foundations, prerequisites, responsibilities, and Family Church’s expectations of elders. The current elders will not install potential elders during this project. These potential elders will be evaluated later after the research project to determine if they are candidates.

The potential elders and current elders receive an email with a questionnaire and instructions concerning completion and submission. The questionnaire will include questions regarding their scriptural knowledge of eldership, character qualifications and disqualifications, and expectations of elders. The elders will receive a written outline and timeline for the questionnaire, case study, and focus group.

The elders selected for the case study will complete the questionnaire within one week of acceptance, commit to completing a seven-week case study with a potential elder using the elder training workbook, and participate in a focus group within ten weeks. This first stage in the
process will utilize elements from the literature review and theological foundation sections of the prospectus to review the current elder's understanding of the biblical foundation of eldership, how elders function within the local church, and the need to identify developing new elders. The Family Church congregation will know about this intervention plan and its anticipated outcome during this stage.

The senior pastor/elder will meet with the current elders at Family Church, and together they will discuss the biblical prerequisites for eldership. They will study theology, character, spiritual life, biblical qualifications, and the responsibilities related to eldership. The elders will be given a list of potential prerequisites for elder candidates at Family Church to review and pray through before establishing them in stage two (see Appendix K). During this first stage, the current and potential elders will submit the completed questionnaire.

Stage Two

The second step of the intervention plan will consist of completing the necessary prerequisites list for finding potential men for elder candidacy at Family Church. The current elders will agree upon a set of prequalification guidelines for selecting potential elders. Because Family Church does not currently have a written policy on identifying potential elders, this intervention step would give clear written steps and qualifications to identify men who may have elder potential. This process would help Family Church ensure all potential elders, elders, and church members know strategically, clearly, and consistently how to identify potential elders. Once the prerequisite list is established and agreed upon by the entire eldership, the elders will discuss and select three potential elders to be paired with three current elders as they perform a case study over seven weeks using the elder training workbook.
The seven-week case study will use the elder training workbook developed during this research project. During these seven weeks, three current elders will meet for approximately one hour each week with their potential elder and discuss the necessity for elders in the local church, qualifications for eldership, the elder’s doctrine, and the elder’s spiritual example. (See Appendix L for a complete list of topics in the elder training workbook). The training material is designed to be interactive and utilizes Scripture, questions, discussion, and prayer to help the current elder discover and analyze the potential elder’s calling, desire, qualifications, and readiness. Completion of the elder training workbook does not guarantee a potential elder will become an elder. The progress and results of the training will be reported to the entire eldership during their monthly elder meeting and evaluated for this research project during the focus group in stage three.

Stage Three

The final step of this intervention will include a focus group of the six participants in the case study and the finalization of a training manual for potential elders at Family Church. During the focus group, a set of questions will be asked (see Appendix J), and the results will be recorded and analyzed in the results section of this thesis. Using questionnaires, case studies, focus groups, and elder meetings, the current elders of Family Church will work together to determine the foundational elements necessary in an elder training manual that will reflect biblical eldership and promote the church's mission.

Current Elder Involvement

This project will inform and involve the current elders at Family Church as they will be responsible for the identification, training, and installment of potential elders. Current elders will
give input through questionnaires, case studies, focus groups, and elder meetings to help form the new elder training material. This project research will require the approval of Family Church elders as they determine the processes by which elders are identified, trained, and installed. The deacons, pastoral staff, and members of Family Church will not need to approve as they do not vote on these types of changes but entrust them to the elders. The elders will need to give their written individual permission to use their responses from questionnaires, case studies, and focus groups for this project's research. After the research project is complete, the elders will give their final approval to begin using new elder training material for processing the next potential elders.

Evaluating the Intervention Process

This process will use several criteria for the evaluation of success in this intervention. First, the cooperation of elders in formulating the research material should increase unity in relationship and mission. As the elders work together to increase the effectiveness of the elder ministry at Family Church, their collaboration of heart and mind should result in a closer bond in the entire elder group. Second, as the elders work together to identify potential elders, a harmonious understanding of prequalifying marks should emerge and give confidence to our eldership in the selection process of future elders within the church. This process should allow for future unified consensus in selecting potential elders and eliminating unqualified candidates. It should also build confidence in the potential elders. Third, as elders develop and experience the elder training material, a more consistent and systematic understanding of the preparation process for potential elders should arise. Current elders should learn to identify the main components needed to help elder candidates understand the biblical foundations and church expectations of men in the eldership ministry at Family Church. Fourth, elders should strengthen
their calling and understanding of biblical foundations and Family Church’s expectations of elders. While the primary intended outcome is to produce training material for the selection and preparation of future elders, the immediate results should include more unification and equipment in the current elders at Family Church.

Some elders are paid pastors on staff while others are not. The paid pastors spend more time with the lead elder as they work together daily. The lead elder is also the boss of some of the current elders as they are staff pastors. This may cause an opportunity for further discussion of the research the non-staff elders are not privileged to experience. Some of the elders are closer to the lead elder, and a non-biased approach to the interviews and focus groups will help to consider all elder input equally. A proper balance of paid and non-paid elders is important to function with the intended plurality and equality among the elders necessary to lead the church.

Resignation or Declination of the Project

Although rare, one or more of Family Church’s current elders may hesitate, decline to participate or drop out of the project. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and declining involvement will not harm an elder’s role in the office at Family Church, an elder’s job if on staff, or the view of the elder by the PI and lead elder. If an elder indicates their intent to decline participation in the project, the PI will ask several questions to discover how they came to this conclusion. Elders will explain their reluctance to participate. An elder’s hesitancy may be due to misunderstanding expectations in their project role, feelings of inadequacy to provide solutions, or unwillingness to change the existing elder program.

Efforts to help those struggling towards participation will include creating more flexible meeting opportunities, introducing a virtual option for interviews and forums, and providing less exhaustive research response methods. Some rare and extreme situations and emergencies may
not be avoidable. The PI will consider accommodating emergencies by delaying or rescheduling focus group meetings.

Implementation of the Intervention Design

The research project intervention design addresses the problem that Family Church does not identify, develop, and install their potential elders as effectively as they can. Each stage hopes to build unity among the current elders, strengthen their understanding of eldership, and begin a plan to identify, develop, and install potential elders.

Stage One

In the first stage, the elders of Family Church were informed of the need for a new elder training program and presented an overview of the entire intervention research plan. During this first stage, the current elders of Family Church participated in forming this elder training process (see Appendix B). As the elders understood the intervention research plan, they had opportunities to ask questions concerning the plan’s goals, process, and development. The steps of Stage One can be seen in Table 1.2.

Elders prayed about participation in the entire intervention research plan. After the elder meeting, six current elders responded to the PI’s proposal and were selected to be part of a case study where three of them as current elders taught the elder training manual over seven weeks to the other three as potential elders. The PI communicated the goal of discipling potential elders in the biblical foundations, prerequisites, responsibilities, and Family Church’s expectations of elders. The PI communicated waiting on the installation of potential elders during this project.

The potential elders and current elders received questionnaires through email with instructions concerning completion and submission. The questionnaire included questions
regarding their scriptural knowledge of eldership, character qualifications and disqualifications, 
and expectations of elders. The elders received a written outline and timeline for the 
questionnaire, case study, and focus group.

The elders selected for the case study completed the questionnaire within one week of 
acceptance, committed to completing a seven-week case study with a potential elder using the 
elder training workbook, and participated in a focus group within ten weeks. The PI informed 
Family Church’s congregation of this intervention plan and its anticipated outcome.

The PI met with the current elders at Family Church and discussed prequalifications for 
eldership. They chose qualifications in biblical, ministry, character, and personal categories for 
identifying potential elders (see Table 1.2). The elders received a list of potential prerequisites 
for elder candidates at Family Church to review, pray through, and establish (see Appendix K). 
During this first stage, the current and potential elders submitted the questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prerequisite Qualifications for Potential Elders at Family Church</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biblical Qualifications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Church and Ministry Qualifications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Character Qualifications</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.2 Prerequisite Qualifications for Potential Elders at Family Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Qualifications</th>
<th>Does not have accusations or examples of bad character in or outside the church body</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is committed and content and not looking to move for at least the next five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is not overly committed to other leadership roles that may bring about a conflict of interest and schedule such as coaching travel sports, school board, governmental appointments, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has read through the Bible in the last three years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has read Jeramie Rinne’s book on Church Elders</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Stage Two**

The second step of the intervention plan consisted of reviewing the prequalification guidelines for selecting potential elders and giving clear written steps and prerequisites for identifying men who may have elder potential. Once the current elders reviewed the prerequisite list, the six elders who agreed to participate in the research project met to discuss the elder training workbook case study. The seven-week case study used the elder training workbook developed by the PI for the research project. During this seven-week study, the three current elders met for approximately one hour each week with the potential elders and discussed topics such as the necessity for elders in the local church, qualifications for eldership, the elder’s doctrine, and the elder’s spiritual example. (See Appendix L for a complete list of topics in the elder training workbook). The PI reported the progress and results of the training to the entire eldership during their monthly elder meeting. The steps of Stage Two can be seen in Table 1.3.

**Stage Three**

During stage three, the elder participants met in a focus group with the PI to discuss their one-on-one discipleship process and offer suggestions for improving the training workbook. During the focus group, a set of questions was asked (see Appendix J), and the results were
recorded and analyzed in the Results section of this thesis. The intervention plan used questionnaires, case studies, focus groups, and elder meetings to determine the foundational elements necessary in an elder training manual to reflect biblical eldership and promote the church's mission. The steps of Stage Three can be seen in Table 1.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE ONE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Initial Elder Meeting with Entire Eldership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Questionnaire Completed by Participating Elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prequalifications Discussed for Identifying Potential Elders</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STAGE TWO</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prequalifications Finalized for Potential Elders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Seven-week Case Study Completed Using the Elder Training Workbook</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STAGE THREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Focus Group with Elders from Case Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Final Elder Meeting with Entire Eldership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.3 Implementation of Research Design Stages and Steps
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Family Church does not have adequate guidelines and training materials to biblically identify, train, and install potential elders. The anticipated outcome of this training would be to see the current elders working together to build a system of identification and instruction for potential elders of Family Church. By using investigative methods of questionnaires, case studies, and focus groups (see Figure 1), the elders of Family Church agreed upon the prequalification requirements necessary for potential men at Family Church to be considered to become elders. The current elders also agreed upon the foundational materials needed to train elder candidates to accomplish the local church's mission. This project also built unity and teamwork among the elders of Family Church to grow the church in the present and the future. This project also helped the current elders understand the biblical role of elders and their function in Family Church.

When the elders implement the prequalification requirements and training material, Family Church should see competent and confident men who understand their calling and responsibilities. Church members should also understand more of how their elders function in the church. This process should afford current and future elders the exposure necessary to operate well within Family Church. The current elders should be able to agree on the requirements and expectations of future elders fully. The current elders should also be able to identify the significant Scriptures necessary to judge the calling of future elders in the church. While no elders were selected and trained during this research project, the implementation of this
project should produce better functioning elders and a flourishing church body. See Appendix G for an anticipated chart of results after implementing this research project.

Stage One Results

Initial Elder Meeting

Stage one of the development and implementation of the elder training project at Family Church began with informing the entire body of current elders of the need for a consistent and thorough elder identification and training process to install new elders. The PI introduced this project in a regularly scheduled monthly elder meeting. The PI explained this research project's need, intent, and process and allowed time for questions. All the elders agreed the church had done well in identifying and training elders in the past, but there was a justified need to develop a consistent elder training process. The PI presented a plan that included establishing prerequisites for elder identification, an example lesson for a seven-week elder training workbook, the concept
of one-on-one discipleship with a current and potential elder through the workbook, and continued evaluation through a one-on-one discipleship relationship. The one-on-one relationship will continue until the body of elders reaches a unanimous agreement for the installation of the potential elder.

The PI discussed the anticipated goals of the research project. The research project hoped to help the current elders understand eldership and build unity among themselves. It also wished the present elders would formulate prerequisites for potential elders and develop a training workbook. The research project also hoped to build a foundation for elders' future installation, although none would occur during this project. Ultimately, the research project anticipated increased church health and mission fulfillment as elders would function better, and their example would lead the church in ministry. See Figure 2 for expected goals.

Figure 2: Anticipated Outcome of Elder Training Development Process
The PI described the needed involvement of all the elders to establish a list of prerequisites for identifying potential elders. The PI distributed a list of prerequisites (see Appendix K) to the elders. They agreed it was sufficient for determining if a man could be considered a candidate for eldership at Family Church. The PI also described the needed involvement of three elders for the one-on-one discipleship workbook training by creating three case studies consisting of three current elders paired with three potential elders from the existing elders. Every elder said they would be willing to participate in the project. The PI discussed the commitment needed for this research project. The PI distributed four documents to help the elders understand the commitment level and scope of the research project. The documents included a permission form (see Appendix G), an explanation of the research project (see Appendix H), a list of potential workbook topics (see Appendix L), and a flowchart of the identification, training, and installation plan (see figure 3).

Apart from the research project, the remaining elders asked if they could pair and participate in the 7-week elder training workbook. The PI agreed that all the elders could participate in the workbook training but clarified that he would only need three couples for the actual case studies for the research project.
The PI asked the elders to pray about men in the church who met the list of prerequisites that could be considered for the elder training workbook process and bring suggestions to the next monthly elder’s meeting. The entire eldership agreed that the potential elders would not be promised an elder position at any point in the initial meeting or workbook training process. They also decided that no potential elders would be installed during the research project as the installation of new elders would take significantly more time to process.

As the meeting continued, the elders asked several questions about the readiness of potential elders for this research project. The elders agreed although there were many spiritually mature men in the church and even a few possible candidates for eldership, there were no potential elders ready at that present time to be approached to begin the elder training process. The elders wanted to review the training materials thoroughly before asking potential elders to participate in them. The PI and the elders agreed six of them would participate in the elder
training workbook case studies and focus group for the research project. Three of those elders would serve as current elders, and three of them would serve as potential elders, hoping to gain insight from both perspectives through a simulation process of training potential elders. If desired, the remaining elders not participating in the case studies would also disciple one another in the elder training workbook without including their results in the research project. The elders were asked to email the PI within a week to participate in the research project. Those who emailed would then receive a questionnaire to complete phase one of the research project.

Questionnaire

Within a week of the initial elder meeting, the PI identified six elders to participate in the case studies for the research project. The PI emailed each of these elders a questionnaire (see Appendix I) containing twenty questions about elder qualifications, responsibilities, theology, and training. The questionnaire helped the elders understand some fundamental beliefs on eldership they possessed before a more in-depth elder training workbook. These elders submitted their responses to the PI within one week. The results of the first part of the questionnaire are viewable in Table 1.4.

The first part of the questionnaire asked eight multiple-choice questions. In contrast, the second part asked elders to select a response of disagreement or agreement concerning beliefs on various issues concerning eldership. In the first question, the PI asked the elders to identify a biblical text relating to elders, which listed four choices of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Peter 4:1-5, Titus 3:5-9, and Matthew 5:3-12. All the elders selected the correct answer of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, indicating they knew a core Scripture that contained the qualifications for elders. The second question asked which response was not a biblical qualification for elders: hospitable, husband of one wife, blameless, not quick-tempered, and none of the above. All the participants answered
correctly by selecting none of the above. This question helped the PI understand the elder’s basic understanding of character qualities found in Scripture for eldership. The third question asked each elder which answer should be an automatic disqualification when choosing a potential elder: anger, adultery, lack of church attendance, and accusation of stealing. Every elder selected multiple answers to this question, and they all varied in their responses. Three of the elders chose anger as a response, six chose adultery, two chose lack of church attendance, and five chose accusation of stealing. Their responses were interesting as the degree or frequency of anger was not provided. The PI did not offer reasons for the elder’s lack of church attendance. The PI also worded the stealing as an accusation. The PI provided this question to help understand the elder’s opinion of what they believed would potentially disqualify an elder from serving in their role.

Question four asked which of the following were biblical responsibilities of elders: teaching, shepherding, praying for the sick, overseeing spiritual health, and all the above. Every elder selected all the above. This question helped the PI discover if the elders understood the fundamental responsibilities of eldership. Question five asked elders to respond on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being highly dissatisfied and 10 being highly satisfied) to the importance of prerequisites for identifying the potential elder before beginning training. All of the elders provided an answer of 10 to this question. This question helped the PI know each elder’s understanding of the seriousness of identifying the suitable candidates for eldership. Question six asked elders approximately how long a potential elder training process should generally last: 1-3 months, 3-6 months, 6-9 months, 9-12 months, or longer than 12 months. Four of the elders selected 9-12 months, and two chose longer than 12 months. This question helped the PI understand that the
elders desired a lengthy training process for potential elders. The elder training must be longer and more extensive than the seven-week elder training workbook.

Question seven asked the elders which of the following was not listed in 1 Peter 5:1-5 as a qualification or responsibility for elders: shepherding, not pursuing dishonest gain, tithing, or eagerness to serve. Every elder chose tithing, which helped the PI understand they understood the responsibilities of the given Scripture. However, three of the elders wrote a note beside the tithing option in the multiple choices that while tithing was not chosen among the requirements in 1 Peter 5:1-5, it should be a requirement of eldership. Question eight asked the elders to rank (1-4) the elder training categories in their opinion of importance: Biblical doctrine, church responsibilities, character, and qualifications. Three of the elders ordered their responses with character, biblical doctrine, qualifications, and responsibilities. Two of the elders ordered their responses with character, qualifications, biblical doctrine, and responsibilities. One elder ordered their response with biblical doctrine, character, qualifications, and responsibilities. This question helped the PI understand the elder's rationalization of the importance of training for eldership. All the elders believe that character is in the top two training areas. Four of the elders believe biblical doctrine is in the top two training areas. All the elders thought responsibilities were the least essential training areas. It appears they believe the other training areas are needed before an elder understands his responsibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question for Elders</th>
<th>Elder’s Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which is a biblical text concerning elders?</td>
<td>All answered 1 Timothy 3:1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which is not a biblical qualification for elders?</td>
<td>All answered “None of the Above”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Which should be an automatic disqualification when choosing a potential elder? | Anger – 2 agreed  
Adultery – 6 agreed  
Lack of church attendance – 2 agreed  
Accusation of stealing – 6 agreed |
| Which are the biblical responsibilities of elders? | All answered “All of the Above” |
| On a scale of 1-10 (1 being highly dissatisfied and 10 being highly satisfied), how important are prerequisites | All answered with a 10 |
for identifying the potential elder before beginning training?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approximately how long should a potential elder training process generally last?</td>
<td>Four answered 9-12 months, and two answered more than 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In 1 Peter 5:1-5, which of the following is not listed as a qualification or responsibility for elders?</td>
<td>All answered tither</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank (1-4) the following elder training categories in your opinion of order of importance.</td>
<td>Character, biblical doctrine, qualifications, and responsibilities – 3 answered in this order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Character, qualifications, biblical doctrine, and responsibilities – 2 answered in this order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biblical doctrine, character, qualifications, and responsibilities – 1 answered in this order</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.4 Questionnaire Results Section One

In the second section of the questionnaire, the elders selected the box that best described their agreement or disagreement with the “I believe” statement. The responses ranged from strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree (see results in Table 1.5).

Question one in section two asked if the elder believed a man must be married to be an elder. Five elders strongly disagreed, and one disagreed. These responses communicated to the PI these elders thought a single man could be an elder. Question two asked the elders if they believed it was permissible for an elder to drink alcohol. The question did not ask about drunkenness. The question implies drinking alcohol up to the point of drunkenness. One elder disagreed, one somewhat disagreed, one somewhat agreed, and three agreed. The PI understood these various responses to reflect the diversity concerning alcohol consumption among the elders who completed the questionnaire. It also communicated four of the six elders answered favorably to the varied consumption of alcohol by elders. Question three asked if the elders believed an elder must tithe to their local church. Two elders agreed, and four strongly agreed. The PI understood the elder’s responses to indicate they believed elders should support their local church by example with their finances.
Question four asked the elder if they believed an elder is disqualified if they have unruly, unbelieving adult children. One elder strongly agreed, three disagreed, one somewhat agreed, and one agreed. The PI understood the results to reflect that a majority believe adult children are no longer under the direct supervision of the elder or in their home and should not be held responsible for their lifestyles. Those who responded in agreement to the question appear to believe the elder is somewhat accountable for their children’s behavior no matter their age. Question five asked the elder if they thought the potential elders should sign a statement of doctrinal belief and alignment with Family Church as part of their elder training process. Two elders agreed, and four strongly agreed to indicate a clear consensus to ensure they completely agree with the church's doctrinal positions before being installed as elders. Question six asked if they believe every church should have a plurality of elders. Three elders agreed, and three strongly agreed. These responses revealed the elder’s convictions that a plurality of elders would benefit the local church and that they have had a favorable opinion of a plurality of elders in their church.

Question seven asked the elders if they believed elders should serve for a lifetime at their church. One elder somewhat disagreed, three elders somewhat agreed, and two elders agreed. These responses communicated to the PI the elders believed in the benefits of longevity in eldership in the local church. It seems the one that somewhat disagreed had questions about serving for a lifetime. Question eight asked the elders if they believed the most important responsibility of an elder was guarding against false teaching. Two responded in agreement, and two strongly agreed. The PI understood their responses to communicate elders should guard against false teaching in the local body. Question nine asked the elders if they believe women
should be elders. Four of the elders strongly disagreed, and two disagreed. This communicated to the PI the elders strongly believe only males should be elders.

Question ten asked elders if they believed the congregation should have input in the elder identification and training process. Three of the elders somewhat agreed, and three of the elders somewhat disagreed. The PI understood their responses to reflect their uncertainty in this concept. Question eleven asked elders if they believed the current eldership should be in complete agreement and unity before approaching, training, and ordaining potential elders? One elder agreed, and five strongly agreed. This communicated to the PI that elders must be in unity in selecting, training, and installing elders. It also conveyed their desire to protect the unity of the elders and the church body in this process. Question twelve asked the elders if they believed the lead pastor should be the lead elder. Five of the elders strongly agreed, and one agreed. This communicated to the PI that the elders desired the lead pastor to lead the congregation and those who lead the congregation.

In all, the questionnaire results reflected a substantial unity of beliefs in the questions asked among the six participants in the research project. The PI interpreted the questionnaire’s overall unified responses to indicate the elders’ time in the workbook training in stage two would be highly productive towards the stated problem and primarily void of disagreement on qualifications, responsibilities, and the workbook training materials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe an elder must be married</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe it is permissible for an elder to drink alcohol.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe an elder must tithe to their church.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe an elder should be disqualified if they have unruly unbelieving adult children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe potential elders should sign a statement of doctrinal belief and alignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1.5 Questionnaire Results Section Two

**Stage Two Results**

**Elder Training Workbook Introduction Meeting**

Once the PI finalized the elder training workbook, the elder participants met with the PI to introduce the elder training workbook phase. During this meeting, the PI assigned roles and partners for the workbook training. The three elders with the most experience would facilitate the current elder position. The three remaining elders would facilitate the potential elder role as they had been elders for a shorter time. All the participants received elder training workbooks, and the PI presented a quick review of the topics along with certain expectations and parameters. The PI asked the elders to meet once a week for approximately one hour for seven consecutive weeks to complete the elder training workbook. The PI asked three current elders to prompt the
questions for discussion in each section and respond to the questions. The PI asked the current and potential elders to complete an Elder Workbook Lesson Evaluation Form for each lesson and return it to the PI (see Appendix M).

The PI explained the desired outcomes from the elder training workbook stage. These outcomes would strengthen one another and provide a more substantial church body. First, the workbook training stage would help current elders gain a better understanding of biblical eldership. Second, an increased emphasis on one-on-one discipleship among the elders would be an excellent example for the entire church body. Third, the current elders would be forming a plan to train men in biblical eldership. Fourth, the current elders would formulate a more effective process to identify, train, and ordain new elders. Fifth, this process would help strengthen the church’s view and support of elders (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Cooperative View of Elder Training Workbook Goals
Elder Training Workbook Lessons

The elder training workbook included seven lessons for current elders to disciple potential elders over seven weeks. The lesson topics were (1) week one: the elder training process at Family Church and the necessity of elders in the local church, (2) week two: biblical references concerning elders and biblical prerequisites for elders, (3) week three: the elder’s qualifications, (4) week four: the elder’s spiritual example, (5) week five: the elder, the gospel, and making disciples, (6) week six: the elder’s doctrine and teaching, and (7) week seven: the elder’s role as shepherd and the elder’s responsibilities and installation at Family Church (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Flow of Elder Training Workbook Lessons

As the elders completed each lesson, an evaluation form containing four basic questions and statements was completed and returned to the PI. The four questions and statements were: (1) describe one or two principles of eldership you learned from today’s lesson, (2) as you
discussed this lesson, what stood out to you the most, (3) in what way did you see you could grow as an elder from what you learned today, and (4) how the PI could improve this lesson. The following will display what each elder learned from the elder training workbook process.

Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week One

The first week’s lesson of the elder training workbook discussed the elder training workbook process and the necessity of elders in the local church. For question one in the evaluation form, each of the current and potential elders’ answers communicated a deep appreciation and awareness of the need for an elder training process. One current elder said they had taken for granted the serious nature of eldership. A potential elder initially thought the workbook training process was too long but quickly realized the slow and tedious process was necessary to ensure calling, qualifications, and communication of responsibilities. Another current elder expressed the needed help of the Holy Spirit for endurance, patience, and teachability during the training. A potential elder communicated the calling and desire of an elder to be different. They said one could feel a desire to be an elder but not have a call from God. Their desire could reflect their love for the church and the necessity of elders. A current elder said the calling of an elder was a commitment by the elder’s entire family as it would shape everything about all their lives.

In question two, one potential elder thought the introduction to the workbook was apparent and communicated the purpose and anticipated outcomes of the workbook. Another potential elder said they understood there was no guarantee, although one desired to be an elder. Two of the current elders and all the potential elders conveyed this sentiment. A current elder said that involving family in the training process from the beginning seemed beneficial to ensure they all understand the commitment level of eldership. One current elder described the
importance of eldership to the local church body as vital to carrying out the mission and vision of the local church. Two of the potential elders said the initial introduction questions helped them validate their desires to become elders and investigate if their motives were pure. All three of the current elders found the signed commitment agreements helpful in communicating the seriousness of the workbook training and eldership at Family Church. All of the elders expressed the importance of an inner desire of a man to become an elder.

Every current elder communicated their responsibility to develop future elders in question three of the evaluation form. All three potential elders said this section of the workbook caused them to evaluate their calling to be an elder. One potential elder expressed the need to ensure support for the elder’s wife and children while they served as an elder. They felt the other elder’s wives and children should develop close relationships to make sure of this. One potential elder said they should talk to their spouse often about eldership to pray together and support one another better. As the church identified potential elders, a current elder suggested communicating the church’s expectations for elders during the discovery and training process. The current elders believed it was acceptable if the potential elders decided not to continue the elder training process. If that was the case, the current elders said they must communicate to them the importance of serving the local church with the gifts and call of the Lord they did possess.

Question four of lesson one asked the elders how the PI could improve the lesson. Aside from correcting a few grammatical errors in the workbook, one current elder suggested that it be made clear that women could not become elders because of biblical standards. Another current elder indicated the need to clarify the workbook was for those who desired to be an elder and those who chose to learn more about eldership. This statement was in the hope of better
communication from the current elder to the potential elder that no promise of eldership was guaranteed at the end of the workbook process. The current elders agreed that no man should study the workbook alone without the agreement of the entire eldership. One potential elder desired more emphasis on the importance of spousal agreement and understanding of eldership, and they suggested elder’s wives also go through the workbook with other elder’s wives.

The current and potential elders communicated they understood the elder identification process at Family Church in lesson one. First, the entire current eldership would pray about potential elders, observe them from a distance over some time, invite them into a discipling relationship with a current elder with the seven-week training workbook, assess their progress during and at the end of the seven-week training, and either continue or end the discipling relationship for continued elder mentorship (see Figure 6).

![Figure 6: Flow of Elder Identification Process](image)

The current and potential elders also discovered and discussed the elder training process. After the identification process, the potential elder would complete an initial assessment. Then, they would join a current elder to complete a seven-week training workbook. Next, the entire eldership would approve the potential elder to proceed with mentorship, observe elder meetings, and continue elder mentorship until the entire eldership agrees the potential elder is ready for installation (see Figure 7).

![Figure 7: Flow of Elder Training Process](image)
Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Two

In the second week of the elder training workbook, current and potential elders discussed biblical references and biblical prerequisites for eldership. The desired outcome of this lesson was for potential elders to grow in their understanding of the primary biblical texts about eldership and discover from them the prerequisites needed for eldership. In question one of the lesson evaluation forms, the PI asked the current and potential elders to describe a principle they learned from the lesson. One potential elder said the need for prayer and the anointing of the Holy Spirit for vision and purpose to lead rightly was critical. All three of the potential elders admitted they did not know there were so many Scriptures about eldership. One of the potential elders said they were also not aware the Bible contained lists of qualifications for elders. A current elder said many areas needed examination in the elder and potential elder’s life. These were significant criteria that were not easily met but necessary for eldership. One elder noted the need for continuation of qualifications required for eldership throughout eldership. Concerning qualifications, one current elder stated the need for open and honest discussion and self-reflection. The discussion of these biblical qualifications helped potential elders understand the church did not formulate the list of qualifications. Current elders wrote that mentoring and investing in men to be elders required investigating their lives over time to ensure they possessed these qualifications with increasing measure. Potential elders noted perfection in these qualifications was not the goal. Elders must be growing in these qualifications, know their weaknesses, and humbly help one another understand and develop in them.

In the second lesson evaluation question, the PI asked the elders to list something that stood out to them during their experience. One current elder said the spiritual maturity of a man who seeks the office of an elder was critical. The maturity consisted of growing in qualifications
and humility to endure self-assessment and mentor-assessment. The potential elders discovered the need for a church body to choose the right men for eldership as the future of the church’s mission and vision depended upon it. One current elder said the biblical basis for eldership confirmed their belief that every local church should have a plurality of eldership. Another elder believed eldership was so serious in the local church that the Scriptures contained more instruction than deacons. The current and potential elders viewed the prerequisite list generated by the Family Church eldership as helpful and thorough. They saw it as having the ability to disqualify those who were not called and capable of being elders. The potential elders completed the self-evaluation form in the case study. They all agreed these introspective questions caused them to grow in their desire, curiosity, and love for eldership in the local church body.

The third question asked the elders how they could grow from what they learned. They discovered that every elder has room for growth in their understanding of biblical eldership and qualifications. While meeting all elder qualifications, the level to which the elders met them should be high and growing. Those in the case study saw the need for prayer and the study of God’s Word as a prerequisite for discovering the right men for potential eldership at Family Church. Without these, they would indeed select the wrong men or prematurely ordain elders. The current and potential elders discovered the continual need to review the biblical prerequisites to increase and model them to the church body. Some of the case study participants realized they had neglected and even ignored some of the qualifications. They saw the one-on-one lessons as a way of keeping one another accountable to the biblical mandates of eldership. They believed fulfilling these qualifications not only helped a church to be spiritually healthy, but it foremost gave God glory to have qualified and spiritually mature leadership in the local church.
Question four asked how this lesson could be improved. One found the lesson to be redundant in some of its teachings. They asked that the church’s prequalification list include a spiritual gift inventory and a personality test such as DISC or Enneagram. One of the elders said the biblical references list was incomplete and asked to include other references concerning elders, such as Acts 20:13-38 and James 5:13-16. Overall, the elders found lesson two to be a good overview of biblical references and qualifications for eldership.

Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Three

In week three of the elder workbook training, those in the case studies studied the qualification for elders found in Scripture. The main observation all participants discussed was elders are shepherds. They should be capable of being men who oversee the spiritual health of the church body. One elder noted they were to be humble because they are undershepherds of Jesus the Chief Shepherd. Some potential elders noticed the difference between aspiring to be an elder and desiring to be an elder. They believed desiring may be present as hope but aspiring indicated an elder's effort to grow in their calling. The potential elders discovered while everyone in the church body was valuable and had a role to discover and perform. The elder had a crucial role in helping every church member do that effectively. The most important qualifications the potential elders mentioned were calling and character. Elders must sense a direct calling from God and walk in Christlikeness in their role.

Question two asked the elders to discuss what stood out to them the most in the biblical qualifications of eldership. One elder noted that becoming an elder includes continual aspiration and growth as that does not stop at the moment of installation. They believed an elder must maintain and grow in godly character as lead examples to the church body. A qualification that the elders noticed as a responsibility of the eldership was that of teaching the Scriptures. They
saw their calling and character as vital to the effectiveness of teaching Scripture. People would respond better to a man whose life exhibited Christlikeness than one whose life did not. Another qualification that stood out to the elders was a godly home life. This qualification included the spiritual condition of their marriage and children. They all indicated that if their marriages and children were not growing in Christ and were not leading them well, they would be ineffective in helping the church body grow spiritually.

Question three asked how they could potentially grow in the biblical qualifications from what they learned in lesson three. Most of the elders discovered and agreed a systematic process for vetting elders in their calling and character was necessary to ensure the proper selection and training of biblical men for eldership. A continual self-evaluation of meeting biblical qualifications was also needed. Elders must be accountable and transparent in their lifestyles to remain above reproach in all areas. The potential elders appreciated the one-on-one discipleship relationship and saw it as essential in ensuring the growth of their calling and character. They believed this discipling relationship would help protect them from becoming disqualified and remaining true to the call and mission of biblical eldership.

Question four asked how the PI could improve the lesson on biblical qualifications. The current elders appreciated the evaluation forms and questions in the elder workbook and suggested a few more that would better investigate the character of the potential elder’s lifestyle. They noted the elder workbook training process was an excellent tool to discover an elder’s character as they completed homework, answered questions, and interacted throughout the material. The current elders asked if the biblical qualifications section could appear in every lesson as the elder’s character was essential to every eldership aspect. They agreed this was a lesson to cover early in the workbook as everything else hinged upon calling and character. The
current elders asked if potential elders could provide personal references to confirm their character. The elders discovered the qualifications of eldership worked together like the interconnectedness of many sprockets in one machine. Each qualification was dependent upon the others as one that was broken or missing could disqualify an elder from serving (see Figure 8).

![Figure 8: Interconnectedness of Elder Qualifications](image)

Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Four

Week four of the elder training workbook discussed the elder’s spiritual example to the church body. The PI asked the elders to describe principles they discovered in this lesson. One current elder said without following the leading of the Holy Spirit, elders would not be worth imitating. The potential elders realized the need for spiritual examples in the church body. They mentioned spiritual examples should not be those the church body observes from only a distance but those who interact personally with people in the church body. The potential elders noted that
they must rely upon the Holy Spirit to show them how to be humble in their example to the church. The elders mentioned prayer and the study of God’s Word as an area where church members needed mentors to teach them how to do both effectively for spiritual growth.

Question two asked the elders to describe something that stood out to them in the lesson on being spiritual examples to the body. The elders realized how much influence elders had on a church body's spiritual health and maturity. If elders compromised in certain areas of obedience to Scripture, it could permit church members to do the same. The current elders realized they were modeling calling and character to the potential elders during the workbook training and mentorship process. The most important quality the potential elders discovered in being spiritual examples to the church body was humility. They believed elders who displayed humility would help others grow faster than those who appeared perfect or untransparent. The participants agreed a dependence upon God was necessary to be examples to the church body.

Question three asked how they could grow in their examples to the church body. The current elders said they should have been training men in biblical eldership and discipleship more consistently before this opportunity. The potential elders believed accountability ensured effective mentoring. They knew their example to the church only reflected the time spent with the Lord and the condition of their relationship with Him. The current and potential elders believed the one-on-one discipling relationship should continue beyond the discovery and initial training process to help one another grow as examples to the church member.

Question four asked the elders how they would improve the lesson about spiritual examples to the church body. They believed the questions on each section that explored the elder’s example should ask for specific instances in how they had been examples to someone else in that particular area. This process would help show how the potential elder was an
example in a specific area. The current elders believed the PI should expand the section on sexual purity to include questions about pornography, lust, and temptation. To prepare the potential elder, the current elders asked about having a caution at the beginning of the workbook concerning the investigative nature of the material. The participants discovered how qualifications, responsibilities, calling, and understanding of eldership interworked to form biblical eldership (see Figure 9).

![Figure 9: Interworking Nature of Biblical Eldership](image)

Elder Training Workbook Lesson Five

The fifth lesson of the elder training workbook discussed the elder’s role in sharing the gospel and making disciples. The current and potential elders all agreed that elders must be examples to the church body in sharing the gospel and making disciples of Jesus. In the first evaluation question from lesson five, all elders communicated the importance of sharing Jesus with others. One of the elders stressed the importance of sharing the gospel by saying elders
must personally experience salvation and publicly share the good news. One potential elder said the elder must be ready to share the gospel at any given time, which requires knowing the Scriptures necessary for the task. The current elders noted they like the accountability of witnessing among the elders as it kept the urgency of the gospel in front of the elders. One of the potential elders said that elders who are not consistently sharing the gospel are not fit for eldership. All the participants felt the gospel must be correctly understood and effectively communicated. They felt the responsibility of protecting the gospel from being redefined or diluted. The elders believed they should also be examples to the church in discipling others. They agreed they must share their faith and life with others as they grow in Christ together. Discipling one another through these elder training materials inspired them to meet with other men for discipleship.

Question two on the evaluation form asked elders what stood out to them in the lesson about the gospel and discipleship. One elder said they recognized the importance of modeling total discipleship in obedience to God’s Word, and the power of the Holy Spirit to boldly proclaim the gospel was of utmost importance. Another elder communicated that ministry opportunities to share Christ and make disciples in everyday life and not only in a seven-week process. All the participants enjoyed the inclusion of questions about Acts 2:41-47 in the discussion on discipleship. They felt the church should reflect the activity of the Holy Spirit and the church in Acts 2. The elder training workbook gave them a tool to use in discipling other potential elders and a pattern of discipling for other men of the church.

Question three on the evaluation form asked the elders how they could grow from what they learned about the gospel and discipleship. All the participants admitted they had not shared the gospel proactively and consistently as elders. The elders desired the Holy Spirit’s boldness
and accountability to share the gospel and have someone they are disciplining regularly and intentionally. The current elders asked if they could give testimonies of gospel and discipleship efforts at each elder meeting to encourage one another. The elders also said they needed to be more proactive in asking people in the church if they were sharing their faith and discipling someone. One potential elder asked if they could share their witnessing and discipling stories during church services or on video to encourage the church members to share the gospel and make disciples. The current elders asked if we could produce a discipleship training tool to help people meet and discuss their faith. They asked if the church could make an evangelism class and resources more readily available to encourage and equip church members to share their faith.

Question four of the evaluation asked for ways to improve lesson five. One elder said we should require an elder to share testimonies of who they have shared the gospel with and who they are discipling as part of the potential elder identification process before beginning the elder training workbook. Another elder said the current elder should give examples to the potential elder of those they have led to Christ and those who did not receive Christ and discuss the difficulties that sometimes arise in witnessing. One suggestion an elder had was to write out their salvation testimony as part of the workbook assignments. Another elder said the potential elder should share the gospel in less than five minutes in the workbook training process. Overall, the current and potential elders understood the urgency and saw their weaknesses in sharing the gospel and making disciples.

Elder Training Workbook Lesson Six

Lesson six of the elder training workbook discussed the elder’s doctrine and teaching ministry. Because elders are to teach the Bible, they must hold accurate positions on the central doctrines of Scripture such as the resurrection, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and the inspiration
of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit. In the first lesson evaluation question, the PI asked the elders to describe principles of eldership they learned concerning doctrine and teaching Scripture from lesson six of the elder training workbook. The elders all communicated their agreement to be biblically sound in their doctrinal beliefs. They all believed the elders shaped the church's doctrine and had the final say as a whole to what the main doctrinal statement of the church should entail. One elder said the elders were doctrinal guardians of the local church. They believed potential elders should agree with the doctrinal statement of the local church and should sign a statement of agreement that said they would not be divisive towards and would teach in favor of the church’s stated doctrinal positions. The elders believe those well-grounded in the Word would lead, teach, and serve the church well. The elders thought the teaching ministry of the elder must use the church’s doctrinal statement as a basis for all teaching endeavors, including sermons, Bible studies, counseling, small groups, ministries, and conversational teaching.

In question two of the lesson evaluation of the elder’s doctrine and teaching ministry, the elder stated a role of the elder was a protector of the church body in doctrinal matters. One elder suggested the church develop a plan on addressing doctrinal error when it arises. If a doctrinal error presents itself in the church, the elders should know how to handle it. One of the potential elders proposed a multi-faceted approach of approaching those in error, correcting them biblically, addressing the error in general in a sermon, and evaluating the corrective methods to see if they are producing truth.

Question three of the lesson evaluations asked elders to identify potential growth areas from the lesson. The elders agreed that while there would be some minor discrepancies and differences within any local church and among believers, there are foundational doctrines with
which all believers should agree. They believed they needed to study the foundational doctrines to gain a better biblical perspective. The foundational doctrines they listed included, but are not limited to, the Trinity, the person of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, salvation, Scripture, the church, Jesus’ death, and resurrection. To be consistent with Family Church’s doctrinal statement, we looked at its foundational agreed-upon doctrines. The elders said they had not read the church’s doctrinal statement, and they needed to familiarize themselves with the church's stated doctrinal positions. The elders believed a doctrinal statement was not exhaustive teaching on every aspect of a particular doctrine. It simply served to point out the essential foundations of that doctrine.

When asked how the PI could improve the lesson, the elders inquired about theological resources to help them study. They thought the PI should include a list of suggested theological resources in the workbook. The elders desired a statement of doctrinal agreement be added in the workbook for potential elders to sign. All the participants signed a statement of doctrinal agreement during their workbook training process. The elders also said the regular elder’s meetings should include a time of doctrinal training, especially in controversial areas of doctrine like women in ministry, spiritual gifts, and church leadership.

Elder Training Workbook Lesson Week Seven

Lesson seven of the elder training workbook discussed the elder’s role as shepherd of the church. Question one of the lesson evaluation form asked the elder to describe principles they learned from the lesson on the elder as a shepherd. The elders all agreed that elders were not board members who only made decisions about church matters. While this could occur, the elders were primarily shepherds over the church. The elders agreed they were to provide pastoral leadership in the local church. Elders should be aware of factions, false teaching, and
the spiritual maturity of the church they lead. Elders must be on guard and keep watch over the church body. They also believed elders are to confront false teachers aggressively and swiftly.

Evaluation question two asked the participants to list what stood out the most about being shepherds. The elders believed in the importance of depending upon the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of Scripture. This principle would help them discern and teach the validity of the Scriptures as they shepherd the church. The elders agreed they should be above reproach and encourage those in their church to do the same. One undergirding characteristic in which elders must lead and watch out for in the lives of their church members is humility. They stated elders must be humble shepherds who the church can follow in word and actions.

Question three asked the elders how they could grow as shepherds from what they learned in the workbook training. The elders desired to grow in their understanding of church leadership in the New Testament, such as elders, shepherds, overseers, deacons, and servant leaders. Table 1.6 helps the elder know the roles of church leadership in the New Testament and where to find the description and responsibilities in Scripture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Leadership in the New Testament</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elders</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acts 11:30</td>
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<td>Acts 14:23</td>
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<td>Acts 15:2-23</td>
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<td>Acts 16:4</td>
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<td>Acts 20:17</td>
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<td>Acts 20:28</td>
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<td>Acts 21:18</td>
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<td>1 Timothy 5:17-19</td>
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<td>Titus 1:5</td>
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<td>James 5:14</td>
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<td>1 Peter 5:1-5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shepherds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acts 20:28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ephesians 4:11</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Peter 5:2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Overseers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acts 20:28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippians 1:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Timothy 3:1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Titus 1:6-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Peter 5:1-5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Deacons</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippians 1:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Timothy 3:8-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romans 16:1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Servant Leaders</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acts 6:1-6</td>
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<td>Hebrews 13:7, 17</td>
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<td>1 Thessalonians 5:12-14</td>
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Table 1.6: Church Leadership in the New Testament

Question four of the lesson evaluation form asked elders how the lesson on elders as shepherds and the installation process of Family Church could be improved. The elders agreed
the installation of elders needed to be unanimous by the current elders. They believed elders should present candidates to the church but varied in their opinion on proper timing. Some thought they should before and after the workbook training process. The elder participants believed the elder identification process and elder training workbook process served as great tools in seeking called and qualified elders for installation. The elders understood the elder installation process to include prayer and fasting, completion of the training process, spouse affirmation and interview, unanimous agreement among elders, a public ceremony at church, and celebration in the church body (see Figure 10).

![Figure 10: Flow of Elder Installation Process](image)

Another result of the elder training workbook program was the elders agreed they needed a yearly review of their elder identification and training process effectiveness. The elders also suggested forming an annual elder awareness plan to include preaching on elders, providing Bible studies on elders, presenting elders before the church in various ways, and preparing elder prospects in one-on-one discipleship training (see Figure 11). They commented on the effectiveness of the elder identification and training process. They agreed that before the elder workbook existed, there was no clear way to identify potential elders, no consistent training method for elders, no defined responsibilities and expectations, and no leadership pipeline for eldership. After developing the training workbook, they felt they had a clear list of prerequisites, a seven-week one-on-one training manual, outlined responsibilities, and current elders engaged in discipling methods (see Figure 12).
Figure 11: Yearly Elder Awareness Plan

- Preach on Elders
- Provide Bible Study on Elders
- Present Elders Before Church in Various Ways
- Prepare Elder Prospects One on One

Before Elder Workbook
- No clear way to identify potential elders
- No consistent training method
- No defined responsibilities and expectations
- No leadership pipeline

After Elder Workbook
- Clear list of prerequisites
- 7-week one-on-one training material
- Responsibilities outlined
- Elders Discipling Potential Elders

Figure 12: Before and After Workbook Results
Stage Three Results

Elder Focus Group

After the PI completed the elder workbook training, the participating elders met in a focus group to review their discipleship time together and improve the elder identification and training workbook process. The PI asked the following questions and provided an overview of the elders’ responses.

Why are elders important to the local church?

Elders are God-ordained. The Scriptures established elders as leadership and shepherds of the church. A church is blessed when they have biblical church leadership. When elders know their position in the church to oversee, protect, shepherd, and lead, they will be more focused on advancing the church's mission. Deacons have led the church in most local churches without the plurality of elders. Some of the elders have been in churches without elders. They have seen a stark difference in how elder-less churches function in shepherding and oversight. Family Church is elder-led and shares the shepherding and oversight responsibilities of the church. This structure has allowed their deacons to focus primarily on servanthood. The elder-less churches were primarily deacon-led in leadership and shepherding responsibilities. This structure caused the church to function without biblically functioning elders and deacons. They noticed the elder-less churches they attended placing most of the duties of shepherding and leadership on a single elder, namely the senior pastor. Their observation was those elder-less churches could not shepherd and lead as well as an elder-led church. Elder-led churches help the senior pastor lead well as they also shepherd the church alongside him.
What are the major qualifications from Scriptures for elders?

The number one qualifier of an elder is godly character. They can know theology, have a great family, and be very charismatic, but their character is most important. Vetting an elder for hidden character problems is a must to ensure that men of integrity and purity lead the church. Elders should watch over the church willingly. They must desire to lead the church from a relationship with Christ. There must also be a call of God on their lives to be an elder. Elders must not love worldly ways or operate in them. They must have a deep love for Jesus and His church. Elders must be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit so they can spiritually lead others. An elder must exhibit righteousness and purity. An elder must know the Bible well to teach it and correct false doctrine or misunderstandings of Scripture. Elders must be men of the Word and prayer. They should have a reputation of being men who share the gospel and disciple others.

Are there prerequisites aside from Scripture necessary for eldership?

Elders must be men who have consistently walked with the Lord and show maturity in their faith. They must be men who have humbled and submitted themselves well to the church leadership. Elders must be men who have a basic understanding of eldership in the local church before entering the elder training process. This knowledge will help them not be overwhelmed during the training process. Elders must be men who have been well established and engaged in the mission of the church. They should be known as men who have invested themselves fully in the work of the local church. They should be generous men who have faithfully given their money, time, and talents to the church. Elders should be men who others have sought out for counsel in the past as this will display their shepherd’s heart. Elders must be men who the
church would be excited about ordaining without reservation. Elders must be men who have an
evident relationship with Christ.

What was beneficial in the elder identification and training workbook process?

The best part of the elder training workbook is it gives time to discuss all of the qualifications, responsibilities, and calling of eldership in a discipling relationship. The PI designed it as a tool to slowly build relationships with other elders to investigate the potential elder’s calling, character, and qualifications. The workbook is simplistic as an introduction of eldership to a potential elder. While it may be common material to a current elder, it will help guide them and potential elders in the basics of shepherding a church. The workbook also keeps the essential functions of eldership in front of current elders. The PI worded the workbook well to help the potential elder discover if they have a call to be an elder or function in some other calling in their life. The order of the topics helped discuss the calling and character of an elder before it discussed their responsibilities. The self-evaluation helped the potential elders assess the growth of their spiritual life and qualities of eldership. While the workbook is a one-on-one program, it promotes the plurality of eldership. All the elders participate in the entire process of identifying and training elders. Elders are nominated, agreed upon, trained, and ordained by all elders as they trust the one-on-one discipling relationship of an elder and potential elder.

What needed improvement in the elder identification and workbook training process?

The workbook needs more clarification that finishing does not automatically guarantee installation as an elder. The identification of potential elders should be prayed about for several months before submitting names and approaching potential elders. Elders must unanimously agree upon those they desire to take through the elder training workbook. The current elder must
maintain the one-on-one discipling nature of the training with the potential elder. Potential elders must know they are not working through the materials on their own as homework or personal study. Seven weeks may be too short to process all the materials in the workbook fully. It seems the seven lessons could produce twelve or more lessons. There should be more room for conversation about each topic discussed in the workbook. The PI should consider a lesson on prayer for the potential elder. The elder lessons should be more than a survey of eldership and should be more for someone who is seriously pursuing the office of eldership. The elders should agree upon the pairing of a current elder and a potential elder. It may even be beneficial for two elders to work through the training material with a potential elder.

In your opinion, what disqualifies elders from being nominated or trained in eldership?

An elder that has extensive trouble in their marriage and family should not consider eldership. While not permanent, they may need to wait to work on the condition of their marriage and family. One should not consider a man with improper motives for eldership. Some wrong reasons are pursuing power and prestige. Elders should not consider men who disagree with the church’s doctrine and mission. Elders should investigate a potential elder’s doctrinal and missional differences for possible resolution. Elders should avoid nominating men who have a bad reputation in personality, actions, and speech. For example, if the potential elder is known for bad business deals or has been hot-tempered in their child’s ball games, elders should proceed with caution in nominating them for eldership. A man with a rebellious attitude toward authority in the church may not be a great fit for eldership. Men known for past sexual sins may not be fit for eldership.
What other chapters would you add to the elder training workbook?

A chapter on disciplining sinful people in the church would be helpful. Another area to address in the workbook is how to handle potential false teachers or divisive people in the church. Elders should know the Scriptures that will guide them through church discipline and identify false teaching in the church. Elders should know how to handle conflict and offenses in the church. Elders should know how to guard the church body against sexual predators. Elders should also know how to shepherd the church body through issues of transgenderism, homosexuality, and other prominent worldly positions that affect the church today. Elders need to know how to restore people to the church body and confront people in sin. Elders should know how to lead the church with a biblically centered vision.

Overall Results

The overall results of the research project educated current elders on the biblical qualifications and responsibilities of eldership, established prerequisite qualifications for identifying potential elders, created a seven-week elder training workbook, emphasized the necessity of a one-on-one discipleship relationship between current and potential elders, formed guidelines for ordaining elders and strengthened the unity among the current elders. These steps have helped Family Church and could help other churches desiring a plurality of elders leadership structure, grow in identifying godly men who can mature spiritually with other elders to strengthen the church’s leadership structure. These overall results can be clearly seen in Table 1.7.
### Overall Results of Research Project

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Education of current elders in the biblical qualifications and responsibilities of eldership</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Establishment of prerequisite qualifications for identifying potential elders</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Creation of a seven-week elder training workbook</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Emphasis on the necessity of a one-on-one discipleship relationship between current and potential elders</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Formation of guidelines for ordaining elders</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Strengthening of unity among current elders</td>
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Table 1.7 Overall Results of Research Project
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The completion and implementation of this research project will begin to bring lasting and needed change to the elder ministry at Family Church. This research project will ultimately strengthen the mission and vision of Family Church. By uncovering the strengths and weaknesses in the current methods of selecting and training elders, Family Church will fortify its current leadership capabilities and help promote its growth for years to come. As Family Church elders walk side by side with potential elders and ordain them for ministry, the elders, elder candidates, and the church body will become more appreciative and aware of the ministry of elders. The expected long-term results of implementing this research project are improved church leadership and a healthier approach to accomplishing the church’s mission. Several achievements and challenges developed from this training process.

Achievements

This research project helped to strengthen the eldership at Family Church in several ways. First, Family Church created a process for identifying potential elders. The development of prerequisites for eldership brought clarity and unity to the current elders’ expectations of potential candidates. Before this list existed, several unwritten prerequisites were understood by some of the elders but not universally known by them all. For example, not all the previous elder candidates had read a book on eldership before being ordained. All the elders agreed this was a significant step to display the elder’s desire for eldership and strengthen their knowledge of the qualifications and responsibilities of elders. Another example of unanimous agreement in the elder prerequisites was that elders must have read through the Bible. The elders determined if
they were to teach the Scriptures, they must know the Scriptures. The elders discussed creating a possible Bible survey assessment for potential elders to evaluate their biblical foundation. The elders also agreed upon adding a prerequisite of being a faithful member of Family Church with at least five years. They also believed elders should commit to continuous membership for at least another five years after installation. An elder candidate who has been at the church for more than five years will have a more thorough understanding of the church’s mission, vision, and strategy for ministry. They will have been at the church long enough for the other elders to have assessed their character, ministry involvement, family condition, and spiritual maturity.

The commitment of staying at Family Church for at least another five years after installation also brings stability to the leadership. It helps an elder become established and grow with the other elders in vision, commitment, leadership, and servanthood. It also helps the church build trust in their leadership and identifies men who can model Christlikeness.

A second achievement was, for the first time, the elders at Family Church had a lengthy discussion about a man’s character when being considered for eldership. This discussion led to the current elders self-examining their character and looking for ways to mature. When the elders assessed their character, they all found areas of weakness and growth. This discovery deepened their appreciation for elder prequalifications and an elder’s growing walk with Christ. The formation of prerequisites helped elder candidates know expected biblical character. As elders underwent a self-evaluation process of their character and calling, it confirmed that an elder was not perfect in their character but growing and striving to be more Christ-like in all areas. An elder must be a man who is above reproach. They agreed there must not be a hint of sexual immorality or any other sin lingering in their present lives. Flawed character in elders could cause Family Church members to lose confidence in their leadership and provide a false
impression of biblical character. The elders determined the identification process of potential elders should be done slowly and methodically as choosing the wrong men for candidates could damage them and the church. All of the elder participants agreed that seven weeks was not enough time to train elders before installation. They believed the elder candidates should continue a discipling relationship with their mentoring elder and that elder should update the entire eldership monthly on their progress.

A third achievement of this research project was the formation of an elder training workbook. The elders were pleased to produce a tool for discipling potential elders. There had never been a training manual for elders at Family Church till this point. While the elders studied selections from various resources on eldership in the local church, there had never been a consistent way to evaluate and train potential elders. The formation of this elder training workbook helped unite the elders in the biblical necessity, mandate, qualifications, and responsibilities of eldership. The workbook helped the elders know precisely what each elder candidate should undergo in training for eldership. It allowed the elders to employ a consistent and systematic process to identify, train, and ordain the right men in Family Church’s leadership.

Fourthly, as the elders worked through the topics, they helped to strengthen a discipling resource and grew in their understanding of eldership. The reinforcement of the qualifications and responsibilities of elders in the workbook training helped them evaluate their effectiveness as elders and produce a plan of discipling potential men for eldership. The elders discovered the workbook needed to add a couple more topics like guidelines on handling conflict, confronting sinful situations, and confronting false teaching in the church. The PI will add a chapter on praying because they need more time in prayer with potential elders. These changes could
expand the workbook from seven weeks to possibly twelve weeks. These changes will allow for
deeper evaluation of the potential elder’s life.

A fifth benefit of the research project was the improved relationship among the elders.
Spending more time with one another as the elders worked together on this project helped them
grow in their affection, admiration, and dependence on one another. Elders gained a better
understanding and appreciation for preparing leaders for the next generation of the church. They
realized new elders were a product of discipling men in the church through a systematic process.
Making disciples was a command from Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 that they must also do for
God’s glory and an example to the church body. They understood their responsibility of
continually looking for potential elders to prepare the next generation of leaders for the church.
This process strengthened the trust among the elders as they listened to one another’s views on
the many topics of eldership. It also clarified some of the previous discrepancies and
misunderstandings concerning elder qualifications, love for the church, the person of the Holy
Spirit, and women in ministry. For the first time, elders agreed eldership is a male-exclusive
calling and office of the local church.

Elders discovered their dependence upon one another. Some of the elders were better at
identifying the topics needed for elder training than others. Others were better at teaching the
elder training material in a one-on-one setting. A few of the elders excelled in encouraging the
other elders as they proceeded through the materials. Other elders needed to receive
countenance in their calling as an elder. The process of discipling one another through the
material highlighted the gifts and abilities of each elder and caused them to value one another
more. The elders discovered their need to work more as a team, know one another’s spiritual
gifts and abilities better, and admit their weaknesses in leadership. The elders found the
workbook a valuable resource for evaluating one another’s input on church matters. This
discovery helped increase their respect for future contributions from one another.

The elders concluded the training they received before installation lacked several
essential elements such as self-evaluation, mentorship, and communication of expectations.
They agreed if they had been discipled more consistently and thoroughly, they would have
avoided some pitfalls early on in their eldership. They also felt the elder team would be much
more robust in character and could carry out its responsibilities better than its current condition.
The elders realized they knew more about eldership than they initially thought. They also
realized they had neglected several vital qualities necessary for successful eldership: unity,
prayer, listening to one another, discipleship, and character. The elders decided they should
continue the discipling relationship for accountability in Christ-like character, effective calling,
and united friendship. The elders saw the benefit of meeting regularly with another elder and
committed to meeting, calling, or texting one another weekly. The elders felt the monthly elder
meeting was effective for general vision and growth, but they felt responsible for one-on-one
relationship development with another elder. They believed meeting regularly with the other
erlers would strengthen our monthly meetings and our overall elder effectiveness.

A sixth strength of this process was the deliberate discussion of future elders at Family
Church. The elders began to observe the men of our church differently than they had previously
done. The elders said they were internally evaluating the potentiality of eldership in several men
of the church for the first time. They never had a vision or permission to evaluate and grow in
eldership before this research project. This process has helped them identify three potential men
for eldership, and the elders have committed to praying, observing, and discussing these men
among themselves.
Challenges

This project revealed several challenges Family Church elders need to address. The first challenge will be determining the timing of considering potential elders. In the past, Family Church elders have served for a lifetime without any breaks in leading. Openings for new elders have only become available when an elder dies, moves, sins, or the church grows to a point to need more oversight. During this research project, the elders considered if elders should serve in a rotation of three to four years, take a break in leadership for a year, or be given a sabbatical for a few weeks after serving a few years as options to promote and strengthen healthy leadership. The elders agreed they needed a break from leadership at some point. However, they did not believe elders should rotate off the elder board indefinitely as their leadership calling and contributions should be long-term.

The second challenge the elders discovered was helping the church body view elders as shepherds who are equal in calling to the pastoral staff. While they may be different in the day-to-day function of the church, the elders are men among equals with one another and the pastoral staff. The consensus was Family Church members have not viewed its elders as shepherds who help oversee the spiritual lives of its members. Most members view the elders as overseers of the church’s vision, mission, and strategies for ministry. The elders determined the eldership must be more visible to the church membership. Some of the elders are part of the preaching teams at the church campuses. To help church members better understand their elder leadership’s responsibilities, the elders suggested assigning titles of directional and shepherding elders. While some of the elders were better gifted to give overall direction to the church, they all were to shepherd it. Instead of only calling them elder, they could add the clarifying terms directional and shepherding before the word elder to describe their primary function in the
church body. Another idea was to promote the ministries of the church under the elder’s direct supervision. Family Church’s elders oversee the church's ministries, but this should be displayed more to convey the shepherding nature of the elders. Another example given was to announce all of our elders as counselors in the church. Staff pastors do most of the counseling of church members. However, the elders agreed they should share this responsibility. Family Church will need to discover more ways to help the church body see its elders and pastors as shepherds with equal calling and responsibilities.

Third, current elders must remind themselves to be constantly aware of and in persistent prayer for their future leadership. It would be easy to continue with the status quo as new elders are not currently needed. Current elders must not rush into beginning the new elder training process because of eagerness to test its effectiveness. The elders must wait on the Lord and trust one another for the right candidate to be identified and trained. This research project has increased the elders’ prayer lives and dependency upon the Lord to show them the potentiality of eldership in the men of Family Church. The elders agreed men must be discipled in eldership. Although they identified three men as potential elders in the church, the elders decided they must identify more men in the church who could be potential elders and begin praying for them and generally discipling them without talking to them about eldership.

Fourth, elders will face the temptation to speed through the training process and ordain men because of needed leadership. The elders must be committed to thoroughly and slowly navigating through the one-on-one discipleship process in unanimity. While some potential elders will be more mature in certain areas than others, the current elders must be committed to completing the entire process. Not following the training process will inevitably produce weak elders and potentially place wrong men in church leadership. The demands of discipling elders
in a one-on-one relationship will challenge current elders to complete the elder training process. Elders must be careful not to avoid and overlook specific steps in the process because of favoritism or carelessness. As a new candidate is identified and taken through this new process, the elders must be open to adjusting the process to produce the most qualified and effective elders possible.

Fifth, elders recognized some selfishness and busyness among themselves. While elders invest their time in many great efforts, they discovered more time was necessary to disciple the potential elders. Implementing this new process will cause elders to reevaluate how they spend their time so they can make discipling potential elders a priority. Elders discovered selfishness among themselves as they discipled one another. The identification process would require intentional awareness and evaluation of the men of Family Church. The eldership workbook training process would require a commitment of an hour each week for seven weeks. The deliberation of new elders who complete the workbook process would also involve more time and effort. These added measures would require more time from the elder, but they would also produce better elders for the church’s future leadership needs.

A sixth challenge would be allowing the church body to see the importance of identifying, training, and ordaining new elders. The elders determined preaching about elders should occur at least once a year. They also decided a class about understanding church leadership should happen yearly. They believed current elders should be more visible and active in the ministries of the church. The transparency of the elder training process among the church body would also be challenging. Whereas the church body would need to know potential elders are being identified and trained, they would need to discuss the church’s type of involvement beyond being generally informed. The timing in which they should present potential elders to
the church would be critical. If they present potential elders too early, they could drop out of the training process, causing the church to doubt the program’s effectiveness. If they present potential elders too late, the church may feel left out of the process as they could have been praying and offering some input on the candidates.

A seventh challenge is accepting new elders as equals among current eldership. Most of the current elders have been serving in their roles for over five years. New elders would need to believe they are among equals while they gain experience. Elders would also need to establish how to minister to those who did not complete the training process. The potential is for the elder candidates who do not complete the process to feel failure and lose sight of the callings and giftings they do possess. Elders must know how to direct those who do not complete the training process to use their spiritual gifts in the areas of their calling.

An eighth challenge is elders should not consider installation without proper identification and training of potential elders. The elders must unanimously agree upon installation after the necessary time of identification and training has taken place. The church should celebrate the installation of a new elder during a Sunday service to honor, introduce, and install new leadership in the church. As the church understands the process for identifying and training potential elders, they will likely appreciate elders and receive the new elders as co-equals among the current elders of Family Church.

Conclusion

Overall, the research project developed valuable methods of identifying and training future elders for installation at Family Church. The project unified the church’s elders, strengthened their training process, and brought awareness to the church body about the necessity of elders. The problem that Family Church does not identify, develop, and install their
potential elders well was adequately addressed and strengthened by establishing prerequisites for elder identification, a seven-week elder training workbook, and guidelines for installation.

This research project created a self-propagating system unlike any discovered during research. While other elder training materials offered similar material concerning biblical qualifications and responsibilities, this research project stressed the need for every elder to actively disciple another man for potential eldership in a one-on-one discipling relationship. Several models offered elder training through personal reading of the material or as ongoing training in a group of already identified and installed elders. The uniqueness of this research project places the identification and training of future elders as a responsibility of every current elder, not just something in which the lead or certain elders are engaged. Discipleship is a mandate by Jesus for all disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). In order to identify and develop future elders for the church, every elder must actively pursue and disciple other men who may one day become elder candidates.

This research project addressed the need for elders to personally disciple another man as preparation for becoming a potential elder. While this material could be taught as a general course to any man on biblical manhood or any church on the importance of biblical eldership, the main intent is to use it to specifically identify men who have the potential to become elders. By using the prerequisites, current elders should be able to select men who fit the qualifications for potential eldership. A Bible study on eldership could help a church better understand the role of eldership and cause its members to support elders in a greater way. However, this material is designed to be more than a general Bible study on eldership or biblical manhood as it specifically helps current elders discover men that can potentially become elders through a one-on-one discipleship process.
Continued Research

The problem of identifying, training, and installing elders, while adequately addressed for Family Church’s purposes, has some potential next steps of development for future researchers. One such area of potential research is how elders should handle conflict in the church. Another area of possible investigation is how elders should be removed from office in situations of sinful behavior. Still another area of research is how elders deal with false teaching and teachers that may arise in the church. The installation process of eldership, such as how the ceremony and celebration methods are to be carried out, could also be researched and prove to be helpful.
Dear Stephen Harrison and Wesley Steenburg,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research
Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office
Bibliography


Stenschke, Christoph. "Lifestyle and leadership according to Paul’s statement of account before the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17–35" HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies, Volume 76 Number 2 (11 June 2020).


Winslade, Bryan N. *They Want Me to Be an Elder! What Do They Do?* New Zealand: Oikos Books, 2018.


Appendix A: Recruitment Email for Current Elders

Dear Current Elder at Family Church:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am researching to better understand the elder selection training process at Family Church. The purpose of my research is to institute an elder training program at Family Church. The elder training program should help the current elders of Family Church understand and utilize a consistent process for identifying and training potential elders. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be current elders at Family Church. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a questionnaire (20 minutes), complete a case study by teaching the elder training manual to a potential elder (7 weeks), and participate in a focus group (1 hour). Participation is voluntary, and results will be completely anonymous.

To participate, please contact me at sharrison7@liberty.edu. Please email me the consent document. Once I receive it, I will email you the questionnaire to be completed within one week. Once the questionnaire is conducted and approved, you will be partnered with a potential elder and given instructions for participation in the elder training material case study.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you must sign the consent document and return it to me before beginning.

Sincerely,

Stephen Harrison
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix B: Recruitment Email Follow Up for Current Elders

Dear Current Elder at Family Church:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am researching to better understand the elder selection training process at Family Church. The purpose of my research is to institute an elder training program at Family Church. The elder training program should help the current elders of Family Church understand and utilize a consistent process for identifying and training potential elders. Last week, I sent an email to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email serves to remind you to respond if you want to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is TBD.

Participants must be current elders at Family Church. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a questionnaire (20 minutes), complete a case study by teaching the elder training manual to a potential elder (7 weeks), and participate in a focus group (1 hour). Participation is voluntary, and results will be completely anonymous.

To participate, please contact me at sharrison7@liberty.edu. Please email me the consent document. Once I receive it, I will email you the questionnaire to be completed within one week. Once the questionnaire is conducted and approved, you will be partnered with a potential elder and given instructions for participation in the elder training material case study.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you must sign the consent document and return it to me before beginning.

Sincerely,

Stephen Harrison
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix C: Recruitment Email for Potential Elders

Dear Potential Elder at Family Church:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am researching to better understand the elder selection training process at Family Church. The purpose of my research is to institute an elder training program at Family Church. The elder training program should help the current elders of Family Church understand and utilize a consistent process for identifying and training potential elders. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be members in good standing at Family Church. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a questionnaire (20 minutes), complete a case study by being taught the elder training manual by a current elder (7 weeks), and participate in a focus group (1 hour). Participation is voluntary, and results will be completely anonymous.

To participate, please contact me at sharrison7@liberty.edu. Please email me the consent document. Once I receive it, I will email you the questionnaire to be completed within one week. Once the questionnaire is conducted and approved, you will be partnered with a current elder and given instructions for participation in the elder training material case study.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you must sign the consent document and return it to me before beginning.

Sincerely,

Stephen Harrison
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix D: Recruitment Email Follow Up for Potential Elders

Dear Current Elder at Family Church:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am researching to better understand the elder selection training process at Family Church. The purpose of my research is to institute an elder training program at Family Church. The elder training program should help the current elders of Family Church understand and utilize a consistent process for identifying and training potential elders. Last week, I sent an email to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email serves to remind you to respond if you want to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is TBD.

Participants must be members in good standing at Family Church. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a questionnaire (20 minutes), complete a case study by being taught the elder training manual by a current elder (7 weeks), and participate in a focus group (1 hour). Participation is voluntary, and results will be completely anonymous.

To participate, please contact me at [sharrison7@liberty.edu]. Please email me the consent document. Once I receive it, I will email you the questionnaire to be completed within one week. Once the questionnaire is conducted and approved, you will be partnered with a current elder and given instructions for participation in the elder training material case study.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you must sign the consent document and return it to me before beginning.

Sincerely,

Stephen Harrison
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix E: Consent

Title of the Project: Identifying, Developing, and Installing Elders at Family Church
Principal Investigator: Stephen Harrison

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be over 18 and a member in good standing at Family Church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?
The purpose of the study is to institute an elder training program at Family Church. Family Church has done a respectable job of identifying their potential elders but has struggled to be consistent and thorough in identifying and developing potential elders. The elder training program should help the current elders understand and utilize a consistent process for identifying potential elders and providing material to train them.

What will happen if you take part in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:
1. Complete a questionnaire within one week.
2. Complete the elder training material in a case study in seven weeks.
3. Complete a focus group at the end of the case study.

How could you or others benefit from this study?
The direct benefits all participants should expect from taking part in this study are a clear understanding of the requirements and qualifications needed as a potential elder at Family Church. As a current elder, you will also better understand your role and the material with which to train potential elders. Family Church will not install elders during this project. Potential elders are not promised or guaranteed to become elders by taking part in this project.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?
The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?
The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the documents. The PI may share data collected from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared,
any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be anonymous. The PI will conduct the case study in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and stored for potential use in future presentations. After three years, the PI will delete all electronic records.
- The PI will record and transcribe the focus groups. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- The PI cannot guarantee confidentiality in a focus group or case study settings. While discouraged, other focus group members and case study members may share what they have learned with persons outside the group.

**Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Family Church. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and not included in this study. The PI will not destroy focus group data and will not include your contributions in the investigation if you choose to withdraw.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Stephen Harrison. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at or  

You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. W. Ryan Steenburg at

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board.

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you agree to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will receive a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with his study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.
I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

____________________________________________________________________
Printed Subject Name

____________________________________________________________________
Signature & Date
Appendix F: Permission Request

Dear Pastor Dan McDonald,

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am researching to better understand the elder selection training process at Family Church. The title of my research project is “Identifying, Developing, and Installing Potential Elders at Family Church,” and the purpose of my research is to institute an elder training program at Family Church. The elder training program should help the current elders of Family Church understand and utilize a consistent process for identifying and training potential elders.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Family Church.

I am asking participants to contact me to complete a questionnaire, a case study where three current elders will train three potential elders in the elder training material, and participate in a focus group. Family Church will not install any elders during this project, and no promises are given for potential elders to become elders at the end of the project. Participants will receive informed consent information before participating. Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to sharrison7@liberty.edu A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Stephen Harrison
Doctoral Candidate
Appendix G: Permission Response

Dear Stephen Harrison:

After carefully reviewing your research proposal entitled “Identifying, Developing, and Installing Elders at Family Church,” we have decided to permit you to conduct your study at Family Church with participation from our current willing elders.

Check the following box, as applicable:

☐ We grant permission for Stephen Harrison to contact current Family Church elders to invite them to participate in his research study.
Appendix H: Project Explanation

Family Church Current and Potential Elders:

Thank you for participating in this action research project to investigate how Family Church can identify, train, and install potential elders more effectively. Your participation is vital. This page will serve to help you understand the anticipated steps and goals of this project.

Research Project Steps:

1. Discuss the overall scope of the project in a regular monthly elder’s meeting (current elders only).
2. Meet with case study participants and explain the research project.
3. Read, sign, and return the consent form (see appendix E).
4. Complete and return the questionnaire by email (see Appendix I) within one week.
5. Complete case study training within seven weeks.
6. Complete current elder and potential elder focus groups to discuss training manual and process.
7. The final discussion of the research project results and elder training manual will occur in a regular elder’s meeting.

Research Project Objectives:

1. Educate current elders on biblical necessity, qualifications, responsibilities, and expectations of elders at Family Church.
2. Introduce a prequalification checklist for identifying potential elders at Family Church.
3. Create buy-in from current elders by using a case study approach to training potential elders paired with current elders.
4. Create discipleship initiative with current elders and potential elder pipeline.
5. Develop a potential elder training manual designed to pair current elders with potential elders.
Appendix I: Questionnaire for Current and Potential Elders

Below is the questionnaire for participating in the case study. The purpose of the questionnaire is to help discover your knowledge about the role, qualifications, and biblical information concerning elders. Stephen Harrison is conducting this research for thesis research. In this research, participants will answer 20 total questions. All information you provide will be confidential. Participation in this questionnaire is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Completion of this questionnaire gives informed consent to use your responses in this research. Please return your completed questionnaire to sharrison7@liberty.edu.

1. Which is a biblical text concerning elders?
   A. 1 Timothy 3:1-7
   B. 1 Peter 4:1-5
   C. Titus 3:5-9
   D. Matthew 5:3-12

2. Which is not a biblical qualification for elders?
   A. Hospitable
   B. Husband of one wife
   C. Blameless
   D. Not quick-tempered
   E. None of the above

3. Which should be an automatic disqualification when choosing a potential elder?
   A. Anger
   B. Adultery
   C. Lack of church attendance
   D. Accusation of stealing

4. Which are the biblical responsibilities of elders?
   A. Teaching
   B. Shepherding
   C. Pray for the sick
   D. Overseer of spiritual health
   E. All of the above

5. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being highly dissatisfied and 10 being highly satisfied), how important are prerequisites for identifying the potential elder before beginning training?

6. Approximately how long should a potential elder training process generally last?
   A. 1-3 months
   B. 3-6 months
   C. 6-9 months
   D. 9-12 months
   E. Longer than 12 months
7. In 1 Peter 5:1-5, which of the following is not listed as a qualification or responsibility for elders?
   A. Shepherding
   B. Do not pursue dishonest gain
   C. Tither
   D. Eager to serve

8. Rank (1-4) the following elder training categories in your opinion of order of importance.
   ___ The biblical doctrine concerning elders
   ___ Church responsibilities of elders
   ___ Character and example of elders
   ___ Qualifications and disqualifications of elders

In the questionnaire below, please answer the statement with the answer you believe is best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe a man must be married to be an elder.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe it is permissible for an elder to drink alcohol.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe an elder must tithe to their local church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe an elder should be disqualified if they have unruly, unbelieving adult children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe potential elders should sign a</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
statement of doctrinal belief and alignment with Family Church as part of their elder training process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I believe every church should have a plurality of elders.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believe every elder should serve for a lifetime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the most important responsibility of an elder is guarding against false teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe women should be considered for eldership.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe the congregation should have input in the elder identification and training process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I believe the current eldership should be in</td>
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<tr>
<td>full agreement and unity before approaching, training, and ordaining potential elders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe the lead pastor should be the lead elder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J: Focus Group Questions

These questions serve as a guide for the focus group. The PI will ask all the primary questions. Follow-up questions to the primary questions will follow based on the responses of the participants. The supplemental questions serve as continued discussion starters if needed.

Primary Focus Group Discussion Questions:
1. Why are elders important to the local church?
2. What are the major qualifications from Scriptures for elders?
3. Are there prerequisites aside from Scripture necessary for eldership?
4. What was beneficial in the elder identification and training workbook process?
5. What improvements can you see in the elder identification and workbook training process?
6. In your opinion, what disqualifies elders from being nominated or trained in eldership?
7. What other chapters would you add to the elder training workbook?

Supplemental Focus Group Discussion Questions:
8. What were your likes and dislikes concerning your elder training process?
9. What qualifications should men possess before considering them for candidacy in the potential elder training process?
10. What disqualifies a potential elder from continuing in the elder training process?
11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of pairing potential elders with current elders during the elder training process?
Appendix K: Potential List of Prerequisites for Eldership at Family Church

The potential elder candidate:

- Meets the 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5 requirements for elders
- Has a strong sense of calling to shepherd the church
- Has been observed shepherding others well in various situations over time
- Has read through the Bible in the last three years
- Agrees 100% with the Family Church doctrinal statement
- Agrees 100% with the Family Church mission and vision
- Currently oversees/shepherds a group of people at Family Church
- Has been a church member in good standing for at least five years
- Is visibly committed to the church’s worship services, training meetings, outreaches, and events
- Is involved in and preferably leads a Life Group
- Is significantly serving in the church
- Regularly, sacrificially, and joyfully contributes financially to the church
- Is committed and content and not looking to move for at least the next five years
- Is not overly committed to other leadership roles that may bring about a conflict of interest and schedule such as coaching travel sports, school board, governmental appointments, etc.
- Is someone we consider an example in marriage, parenting, and lifestyle
- Does not have accusations or examples of bad character in or outside the church body
- Has read Jeramie Rinne’s book on Church Elders
Appendix L: List of Potential Elder Training Manual Topics

These training topics will be included in a training manual and be taught by current elders to potential elders in a case study format over seven weeks.

1. The Elder Training Process at Family Church (week 1)
2. The Necessity of Elders in the Local Church (week 1)
3. Biblical References Concerning Elders (week 2)
4. Biblical Prerequisites for Elders (week 2)
5. The Elder’s Qualifications (week 3)
6. The Elder’s Spiritual Example (week 4)
7. The Elder, the Gospel, and Making Disciples (Week 5)
8. The Elder’s Doctrine and Teaching (Week 6)
9. The Elder’s Role as Shepherd (Week 7)
10. The Elder’s Responsibilities and Installation at Family Church (Week 7)
Appendix M: Elder Workbook Lesson Evaluation Form

Week and Lesson Number: __________

1. Describe one or two principles of eldership you learned from today’s lesson.

2. As you discussed this lesson, what stood out to you the most?

3. In what way did you see you could grow as an elder from what you learned today?

4. How could this lesson be improved?
Appendix N: Family Church Elder Training Workbook

The Biblical Elder:
A Seven-Week Journey in Biblical Eldership
Introduction

How to use this book

Lessons

1. The Elder Training Process at Family Church (week 1)
2. The Necessity of Elders in the Local Church (week 1)
3. Biblical References Concerning Elders (week 2)
4. Biblical Prerequisites for Elders (week 2)
5. The Elder’s Qualifications and Disqualifications (week 3)
6. The Elder’s Character and Example (week 3)
7. The Elder’s Spiritual Life (week 4)
8. The Elder’s Marriage and Family (Week 5)
9. The Elder’s Basic Doctrine (Week 6)
10. The Elder’s Teaching of Scripture (Week 6)
11. The Elder’s Role as Shepherd (Week 7)
12. The Elder’s Installation and Responsibilities at Family Church (Week 7)
“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD.

This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

- I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock.
- I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves.
- I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

- I will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep.
- I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.
- I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land.
- I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land.
- I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.
- I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays.
- I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy.
- I will shepherd the flock with justice.

-Ezekiel 34:7-16
Introduction

Jeremiah 3:15 says, “Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.” The first time I read this Scripture was shortly after my call to ministry at the age of 15. I did not fully understand the calling and responsibilities of the pastorate at that time. I’m still learning today after 25 years of pastoring. Since the first day I read it, that verse has shaped my view of the pastorate. I want a heart like the Lord in my spiritual formation. I want His heart in my marriage and family. I also want His heart as a pastor. He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), and the Shepherd of our souls (1 Peter 2:25).

I was first asked to be an elder in my church when I was an associate pastor. Honestly, I did not know much about eldership. I wasn’t sure how that many people could find unity in leading a church. I grew up with a single pastor/elder-led church model that was ultimately led by a deacon board. A lot of churches are like that. Sometimes, that leadership style produces a church with no elders, deacons functioning as bad elders, while leaving the church with no biblically functioning deacons. What a mess that can be!

Elders are not simply board members that make decisions. Deacons are not glorified janitors. As I would learn, an elder was a pastor. He was to be a shepherd and overseer of the body. I knew somewhat how to work with a pastoral team while being in a church with multiple pastoral staff. However, I did not understand at all what it meant to lead a church by example in the plurality of eldership. It was biblical. It was necessary. It is still challenging. Eldership was way more fulfilling and challenging than simply performing my associate pastor responsibilities. It became “weighty” real quick. I, along with the other elders, was responsible for the souls, direction, mission, doctrine, discipleship, and essentially everything in the local church. To this, I learned, I would give an account by God Himself one day (Hebrews 13:17). Talk about more than sitting on a board of directors!

I know in everything you “learn as you go”. On-the-job training (OJT) is important in any field. However, I quickly realized I was ill-equipped for the task to which I was asked to perform. It wasn’t that the men who were currently elders weren’t good at being elders – they were exceptional! I just wish I would have had someone walk me through the process of becoming an elder more thoroughly and systematically before I became an elder. I needed someone to explain and demonstrate in-depth the responsibilities, qualifications, calling, character, and necessity of biblical eldership. What I needed was to be discipled and not just given a title.

Don’t get me wrong. I was discipled. The men who asked me to be an elder thoroughly examined my life and helped me walk as an elder every step of the way. I just wish the responsibilities, expectations, and biblical requirements for eldership were more clearly defined upfront. I needed to see the big picture before walking out the smaller details of it. For the first two years of my eldership, I felt unprepared and in over my head. I didn’t see myself as equals with the men in the room. They had walked as elders much longer than me. I’m thankful for godly men who reassured me of my calling and were extremely patient while walking with me as we grew together in eldership those first couple of years. I would have given up without them.
When I became the lead pastor, I desired a more intentional and consistent elder identification, training, and installation process. The church must always be discovering and developing its leadership. As I would learn, elders pass away, grow weary, move, sin, stray, and resign. If a church does not continually identify and train potential elders, it will lack leadership for the next generation and the church will suffer by not reaching its full potential. The pipeline of leadership must be active. If not, new leadership will be a pipe dream.

I took what I learned over almost ten years of identifying, training, and ordaining elders and compiled a consistent starting point through an elder training workbook. It’s not perfect. It’s not exhaustive. It will need to be adapted to fit your context. Feel free to adapt it to best serve your church. I produced it alongside elders who took each other through it, evaluated its effectiveness and offered suggestions along the way.


For the Good Shepherd,

Stephen Harrison
How to use this Workbook

This Elder Training Workbook is designed to help you gain a better understanding of biblical eldership, support the elders in your local church body, and discern if God is calling you to become an elder. Sometimes the local church has placed men in leadership that have not been thoroughly evaluated and trained in the role of elders or assessed in their calling to be an elder. They may truly love the Lord, their local church, and be willing to serve, but may not be biblically fit or called to shepherd the church body as an elder.

Because the bride of Christ deserves the best possible biblical and loving leadership, this workbook is meant to serve the local church in identifying, training, and installing qualified men to effectively lead and shepherd the church body. To gain a proper understanding of biblical eldership, one must spend time studying what the Scriptures say about eldership. To identify potential elders in one’s church one must spend time with faithful and growing men in the church to know if they are qualified and called to become elders.

A current elder will walk with you one-on-one through this material in weekly meetings that will last approximately one hour. While this will take a commitment of time, it is well worth it. You are investing in being personally discipled and in the future of your local church body. The goal of each meeting is to discuss the material in the lesson, delve deeper into a discipling relationship with another disciple, gain a better understanding and appreciation for elders in your church, and determine if you are a potential elder that should continue beyond the twelve weeks of lessons towards becoming an elder candidate. These lessons are done in an upfront and unapologetic “no guarantees” format. By starting and finishing these lessons, you are not guaranteed to become an elder.

The foremost goal of this workbook and process is understanding eldership in the local church and how you as a church member can support your leadership in a greater way. If God is calling you to be an elder, it will not only be clear to the current elder but also the entire eldership. As the potential elder learns about biblical eldership, the current elders ask that you please be open and honest with your elder mentor in the Holy Spirit’s leading to be or not to be considered for eldership. If at the end of (or during) this workbook you believe you are not to be an elder, you still will have gained a valuable biblical understanding of how to best support your local church leadership. This will ultimately grow your church, your appreciation for elders, and help you better serve your church leadership.

Each chapter will have questions to discuss. Take as much time as necessary in these. Allow these questions to spark other questions and discussion. Along with the workbook, the potential elder will be asked to complete a self-evaluation to assess their understanding of eldership and determine their fitness to become an elder. If the potential elder and elder mentor deem it proper to proceed with more evaluation after the workbook, the potential elder can expect to be evaluated by the entire elder team in one or more interview-style meetings that are not intended
to be intimidating. These steps are necessary to reach a unanimous and prayerful conclusion that the potential elder is fit to proceed with training and could one day be installed as an elder in the local church. After the twelve-week training material is completed, the potential elder can expect six months to a year of evaluation and training before potentially setting an installation date.
Week 1: Lesson 1, Part 1
The Elder Training Process at Family Church

The office of the elder is vital to the local church. Choose the wrong men for the office and it can have devastating effects on the church’s mission and ministry. Hopefully, the right men are selected to oversee and shepherd your church over a period of investigation of character and biblical qualifications. Even then, if the right men function in the wrong way or neglect the responsibilities set forth in Scripture, you could still have a recipe for disaster. This workbook is designed to help you understand the biblical necessity, foundation, and responsibilities of eldership in the local church. Whether you seek to become an elder one day or simply desire to gain a better understanding of eldership as a church member, this study will help you strengthen, support, and appreciate the leadership structure designed by God in the church. If you are pursuing the potential call of eldership in your life, be encouraged as you are seeking a high calling in the church of Jesus Christ. Scripture says, “Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task” (1 Timothy 3:1). Over the next seven weeks, you will be paired with an elder and walk side by side discovering the biblical texts, qualifications, responsibilities, and need for called and competent elders in the local church.

While the lessons will be completed in seven weeks, one cannot be fully trained and examined in less than two months to become an elder in the local church. Throughout these lessons, the elder paired with you will be praying for you, watching your life closely, and asking you important questions to help determine if God is beginning the call of eldership in your life. The process of becoming an elder could take up to three, six, nine, twelve months or longer beyond these lessons. Upon completion of these lessons, the elder mentor will determine if you are ready to proceed further as a potential elder candidate based upon your interaction during the training, the desire to become an elder, prayer, and confirmation by the Holy Spirit and His Word. An elder of a local church is a weighty task as they oversee the spiritual health and guard the doctrine of the local church. They prayerfully determine the church’s mission from Scripture and implement a vision to activate it. Elders are more than leaders of short-term projects, chairmen of committees, and volunteers of church initiatives. Elders are not simply board members either. They oversee the eternal souls of Jesus’ church. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”

These lessons are designed to be interactive as you open your Bible and study the Scriptures, pray with one another, and discuss the lesson topics. As you work through each lesson with an elder, you will grow in biblical manhood and become a better church member. Perhaps God will confirm a call in your life to be an elder as well. Our elders ask that you take this mentorship seriously and sign a commitment to finish the seven-week training process. At the end of each lesson, you will pray with your mentor and ask the Lord to reveal how you both can support the elder ministry of your local church. During the week, we ask that you take time to review the lesson and pray. Ask the Lord how He would have you apply each lesson. Perhaps you can pray for the elders more regularly. Maybe you can support the leadership efforts of the elders in a greater way as you discover the seriousness of their calling. It could be that God will call you to continue the eldership process beyond these lessons.
Introduction Discussion Questions

1. What challenges will you face over the seven-week training process?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What are your reasons for being involved in this elder workbook?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you have any desire to become an elder someday? Why?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. What elder-like qualities do you believe you currently possess?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. What elder-like qualities do you believe are lacking or need improvement?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. What do you believe are the most important qualifications and responsibilities of church elders?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Elder Training and Workbook Commitment

I, _______________________________ (the elder mentee), understand the importance of elders in the local church and desire to take this seven-week mentorship seriously. I commit to the best of my ability to finishing these seven lessons with my elder mentor to discover how to better support the leadership of my church, bring growth to my church, and investigate God’s call upon my life. I commit to pray for my elder mentor and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit throughout this process. I understand that no guarantee of becoming an elder exists upon completion of this workbook, and I trust and submit to the discernment and leadership of my elder mentor and the eldership of my church. If for some reason I cannot continue the eldership training, I will be completely honest and transparent with my elder mentor.

I, _______________________________ (the elder mentor), understand the importance of discipling other men in the church to be more like Jesus and discover His call on their lives. I commit to the best of my ability to convey the biblical necessity, qualifications, and responsibilities of eldership. I desire for my mentee to stay in step with the Holy Spirit and grow more in biblical manhood and church membership. I understand that I cannot guarantee on my own that anyone will become an elder and I fully submit myself and this training process to the whole of the eldership. I commit to pray for my mentee and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit throughout this process.

X_________________________________________
Mentee

X_________________________________________
Mentor

Date_______________________________________

We commit to meeting weekly for seven weeks at ___________________ am/pm starting on ___________________ (date) at ____________________________(location).
Elders are vital to the local church. Through prayer and fasting, the Apostle Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church they started and encountered. Before giving several qualifications and responsibilities of an elder, the Apostle Paul wrote to Titus, “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.” On the necessity of elders functioning well in the local church, Jeremy Rinne said, “Almost all of the New Testament authors address elders. There are more than a dozen texts. It became clear to me that Christlike elders are not an optional church feature; they are central to God’s plan for shepherding His churches.”

Discussion Questions
1. Why are elders important to the local church?
2. Why do some churches not follow a biblical model of eldership?

The Call of an Elder

Jeremiah 3:15 says, “I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” The role of the elder is not to be filled with volunteers looking for a place to serve but by faithful, qualified, and called men who have been appointed by other elders in the local church. An elder is a biblical office and a calling from the Lord. 1 Timothy 3:1 says, “The saying is trustworthy, if anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.” A man should have an inner passion and hunger to shepherd the flock of God. Just because someone wants to be an elder does not mean they should be one. While one can grow (aspire) in understanding of elder qualities and responsibilities, a potential elder must have the desire to be an elder. While God can spark the desire to be an elder as you grow in understanding eldership, someone who has no desire whatsoever to be an elder should never become one.

Discussion Questions
1. Do you sense a clear call from the Lord to be an elder? How do you know?
2. Why would you want to be an elder?
3. What are your hesitancies in becoming an elder?
4. What strengths would you offer as an elder?

Examining the Call Towards Eldership

Installing the wrong men to lead the church can damage the church’s mission, vision, unity, and gospel effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to identify and train the right men for the calling

284 Acts 14:23
285 Titus 1:5
286 Rinne, 17.
and office of elders in the local church. If an elder that was improperly assessed or unbiblically unqualified must be removed, it can be detrimental to that elder and their church. Because this must be done right, not only must the potential elder and elder mentor sense a clear calling from the Lord, but the entire eldership must also be fully convinced as well. This means much time must be taken to pray, evaluate, discuss, study the Word, and hear what the Lord is saying concerning His church.

An elder’s responsibilities are a main priority of life and not to be something to do if time permits. Eldership is not a hobby. The commitment of an elder will require sacrifice and involvement beyond normal service in the church. An elder must know how to properly balance a vibrant personal relationship with the Lord, family, work, and other life demands. An elder should walk in their calling daily, not just in once-a-month meetings or on Sundays. A potential elder may feel called to be an elder, but their present circumstances or life stage may necessitate delaying this calling as to best serve the local church.

An elder should have the support of their wife and children. Their family must also sense a calling on the elder’s life and understand and share the desire for him to be an elder. The elder will have to commit adequate time to oversee the church and shepherd the flock. There is nothing worse than an unsupportive spouse or bitter family for the elder. This does not mean the elder’s family is second place to the church as the elder is to make his family the top priority of discipleship and shepherding. The elder’s wife must feel called to support their husband as an elder. If this calling and confirmation do not exist, perhaps giving more time for the potential elder’s wife and family to get in sync is necessary. If the potential elder’s wife is unsupportive, the elder should not proceed with training.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How important is it to install elders slowly and methodically?
2. What could happen if elders are installed too quickly?
3. How important is it for the elder’s spouse and family to be supportive?
4. What could happen if an elder’s family is unsupportive?
Lesson 2, Part 1 - Week 2
Biblical References Concerning Elders

The Bible has a lot to say about elders in the local church. For the purposes of this elder training workbook, we will look specifically at some of the major verses about elders in the New Testament.

This section will provide a brief overview of the major biblical texts concerning elders in the New Testament. In the sections to follow, some of these Scriptures and several others not mentioned here will be examined more thoroughly to discern the elder’s qualifications, roles, and character.

Titus 1:5-9

“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”

In this Scripture, the Apostle Paul is writing to Titus, the pastor of the church in Ephesus about elders. The appointment of elders in every local town with a church was vital in the success of that church’s ministry effectiveness. While Paul may have appointed some elders in the towns around Crete, the Scripture clearly indicates Titus’ task of appointing elders under Paul’s apostolic direction.

Discussion Questions:
1. Why do you think it was important for Titus to appoint elders in every town?
2. If Titus was to appoint the right elders, what qualifications was he to use to select them?
3. From the list of pre-qualifications, which do you think are the top three?
4. From the list, which are your strengths?
5. Which are your weaknesses?
6. When it came to sound doctrine (v. 9), Paul described it to Titus very vividly.
   • What does “hold firmly” mean?
   • What does “trustworthy message” mean?
   • What does “as it has been taught” mean?
1 Timothy 3:1-7

“Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”

Paul also instructed pastor Timothy about elders in the local church. These instructions are like the ones found in Titus 1:5-9. An elder’s character in Christ should be exemplary as they model Christlikeness to the church body.

Discussion Questions:
1. What is the difference between aspiring and desiring eldership?
2. Do you desire to be an elder? How do you know?
3. How are you aspiring to be an elder?
4. How are Paul’s instructions in 1 Timothy and Titus similar?
5. Circle the qualifications Paul lists for eldership.
6. Paul mentions the devil twice in this passage. How serious are these references?

1 Peter 5:1-4

“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. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”

Peter was an elder and encouraged other elders in how to lead well. He reminds elders they are shepherds of a flock, the church, and gives us very important responsibilities and qualifications that must be evident in the life of the elder.

Discussion Questions:
1. Peter said, “To the elders among you” when addressing the dispersed churches. How important is it for elders to be among those they lead?
2. What does it mean to shepherd people?
3. What is the temperament of a willing elder? What about an unwilling elder?
4. Underline the qualifications Peter lists.
5. Which of Peter’s qualifications do you see as most important?
6. In relation to Christ, what does Peter say about an elder’s position? How is this important to the way an elder functions?

Philippians 1:1

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons. ”

In the opening verse of Philippians, Paul greets three distinct groups of people: the saints, the elders, and the deacons. Just as a church is made up of those who are saved, it is also to contain those who lead.

Discussion Questions:
1. As elders, Paul and Timothy greet the church and describe themselves as what?
2. How is this description important in being an elder?
3. Paul lists overseers (elders) and deacons. What are the differences between the two? (See 1 Timothy 3:1-13 to observe both offices).
4. How do churches confuse the roles of elders and deacons?
5. The two offices of elder and deacon are distinct and separate in function. Do you see yourself more as a deacon or an elder?
Before a man in the local church is approached about becoming a potential elder candidate, the elders in that local church should be sure certain prerequisites have been met. By investigating Scripture and establishing agreed-upon prerequisites for elder candidates, local church elders can best discover men that may potentially be elders at some point. Because proper oversight of the local church is vital to the spiritual health, ministry, and mission, Family Church has established requirements each potential elder must possess in growing measure to be considered for eldership.

**The prospective elder candidate:**

- Meets the 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5 requirements for elders
- Has a strong sense of calling to shepherd the church
- Has been observed shepherding others well in various situations over time
- Have read through the Bible in the last three years
- Agrees 100% with Family Church’s doctrinal statement
- Agrees 100% with Family Church’s mission and vision
- Currently oversees/shepherds a group of people or ministry at Family Church
- Has been a church member in good standing for at least five years
- Is visibly committed to the church’s worship services, training meetings, outreaches, and events
- Is involved in and preferably leading a Life Group
- Is significantly serving in the church
- Regularly, sacrificially, and joyfully contributes financially to the church
- Is committed, content, and not looking to move for at least the next five years
- Is not overly committed in other leadership roles that may bring about a conflict of interest and schedule such coaching travel sports, school board, governmental appointments, etc.
- Is someone we consider an example in marriage, parenting, and lifestyle
- Does not have accusations of examples of improper character in or outside the church body
- Has read Jeramie Rinne’s book *Church Elders* (2014)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Of the prerequisites, which ones (if any) do you not meet?
2. Are you in the process of any of these with anticipation to complete soon?
3. Which of these criteria are potentially disqualifying?
4. Do you disagree with any of these standards? Why?
5.
Appendix B - Potential Elder Self-Evaluation Questionnaire

Please write your answers honestly and prayerfully. Use extra paper if necessary. You will review this with your elder mentor at the end of the seven-week workbook training.

1. Why do you believe you have a call from God in the ministry?

2. What do you believe your major ministry gifts are?

3. In a couple of sentences, describe your wife’s opinion of your ministry calling.

4. In a couple of sentences, describe the condition of your relationship with your wife.

5. In a couple of sentences, describe the condition of your relationship with your children.

6. What is the spiritual condition of your wife and children?

7. By looking at the last two years of your life, do you believe you have a commendable lifestyle of holiness and character worthy of being emulated by others in the church? If yes, please explain in a couple of sentences.

8. What are your patterns for personal spiritual growth such as Bible study, prayer, and worship?

9. What are your practices and beliefs concerning tithing to the local church?
10. How long have you been an active member at Family Church?

11. What ministries have you been involved in at Family Church?

12. Have you ever shared the gospel with someone else? Have you ever led someone to Christ? How often do you share the gospel on a weekly basis?

13. Have you ever attended Bible School/college or Seminary?

14. What do you love most about Family Church?

15. What areas of ministry do you feel led to help grow at Family Church?

16. Do you see yourself at Family Church in the next ten years? Explain yes and no answers.

17. What Scriptures can you list about church eldership?

18. What are the main responsibilities of elders?

19. What are the main character traits of elders?

20. Can you wholeheartedly sign a statement of doctrinal agreement with Family Church?
21. Please write out your testimony of receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

22. Please write out your explanation of the gospel.
23. What are your favorite Scriptures?

24. With whom are you currently in a discipling relationship?

25. Why do you desire to be an elder?

26. How would you being an elder benefit Family Church?

27. What are some defining moments in your walk with the Lord and in life?

28. What are the biggest lessons the Lord has taught you?

29. Do you feel as though you have the ability to help people in this church body grow closer to Jesus? Please explain.

30. What are your views on church discipline?

31. What are your biblical views concerning marriage, gender, and sexuality?
Appendix C - Theological Assessment

An elder’s theology is important. The Apostle Paul said, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:16).

Explain your theology on the following by giving two or three points you consider the most important:

- The Gospel
- The Trinity
- God
- Jesus
- The Holy Spirit
- Spiritual gifts
- Scripture
- Salvation
- The church
Appendix D - Potential Elder Qualifications Self-Evaluation Survey

Please answer the following by placing a number beside the word. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being “no concern” and 10 being “major concern”, please answer the following questions about your level of elder qualification. Please comment at the end on any answer you feel you need to explain in depth.

How are you when it comes to being:

- Above reproach __________
- Disciplined __________
- Self-controlled __________
- Respectable __________
- Hospitable __________
- A drunkard __________
- Gentle __________
- Quarrelsome __________
- A lover of money or greedy for gain __________
- Upright __________
- Desirable of eldership __________
- Able to teach __________
- Able to hold firmly to the trustworthy Word __________
- Able to instruct and uphold sound doctrine __________
- Able to rebuke those who teach false or bad doctrine __________
- A one-woman man __________
- Having believing children __________
- Having obedient children __________
- A good manager of your household __________
- One who is not a new convert __________
- One with a good reputation with those outside the church __________

Comments:
Appendix E - Elder Mentor Evaluation of Potential Elder Survey

Please answer the following by placing a number beside the word. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being “no concern” and 10 being “major concern”, please answer the following questions based on your observation of the potential elder’s level of elder qualification. Please comment at the end on any answer you feel you need to explain in depth.

Based on your observation, how is the potential elder when it comes to being:

- Above reproach _______________
- Disciplined _______________
- Self-controlled _______________
- Respectable _______________
- Hospitable _______________
- A drunkard _______________
- Gentle _______________
- Quarrelsome _______________
- A lover of money or greedy for gain _______________
- Upright _______________
- Desirable of eldership _______________
- Able to teach _______________
- Able to hold firmly to the trustworthy Word _______________
- Able to instruct and uphold sound doctrine _______________
- Able to rebuke those who teach false or bad doctrine _______________
- A one-woman man _______________
- Having believing children _______________
- Having obedient children _______________
- A good manager of your household _______________
- One who is not a new convert _______________
- One with a good reputation with those outside the church _______________

1. Does the potential elder have a good understanding of the role of an Elder? Explain your answer.
2. Does the potential elder exhibit shepherding qualities that would help teach, care for, and encourage the church body?
3. Does the potential elder seem capable of being an example to the church body in every area of life?
4. Does the potential fit well with the other elders?
5. Would the church be surprised this person is being considered as an elder?
6. Do you have any major reservations about the potential elder continuing elder training or becoming an elder at Family Church?
Lesson 3 - Week 3
The Elder’s Qualifications

The New Testament specifically lists several key qualifications for eldership in the local church. The absence of these qualities in a man would disqualify or delay them from being considered or becoming an elder. Two scriptures written by the Apostle Paul to pastors in the local church help us understand the main qualifications or prerequisites for eldership. We will look at 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Most of the qualities Paul lists for Timothy and Titus and those whom they would ordain as elders overlap in these Scriptures. All but one quality (teaching the Word) are rooted in a man’s character.

An Elder’s Calling

It is worth noting that just because one has all these qualities does not mean one should be an elder. Calling must accompany character. The combination of these makes one competent to be considered and confirmed for eldership in the local church. Calling is crucial. God said, “I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:15). Elders are a gift by God to the local church. He calls and qualifies them because they have His heart towards the church as a Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14). Only then can they lead with proper knowledge and understanding. If calling is absent, you may have good men in the wrong offices. Perhaps they were supposed to be deacons? Maybe they should be leaders in a ministry. Installing wrong men into the office of eldership can have devastating consequences upon the local church. They can be shepherds who lead after their own heart, understanding, and knowledge of what the church’s leadership and mission are to be about. Ezekiel 34 warns us about shepherds who do not care for the flock and feed themselves. God will deal with them while He Himself shepherds His flock.

Let’s look at 1 Timothy 1:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

“Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.” –1 Timothy 3:1-7
“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” –Titus 1:5-9

The qualifications found in these two passages can be grouped into three categories: desire, character, and teaching the Word.

1. **DESIRE**

First Timothy 3:1 says a man should aspire and desire to be an elder. Aspire means “to reach out with one’s hand”. Desire means “to set one’s heart towards”. An elder should have internal and external markers that indicate they want to be overseers of God’s church. The tense and mood of these words in Greek indicate eldership is something not only you once aspired and desired, but currently aspire and desire. Just because an elder has a desire to be an elder doesn’t mean they are ready to become one. Just because an elder meets the qualifications in character does not mean they are ready either. Their life should be carefully examined for a period to ensure these aspirations and desires meet with calling. The existing elders should be unanimous in their agreement and discernment that this man is to enter the elder training process because he meets the biblical qualifications, has the desire to grow, and pursue a suspected calling as they believe he is worth the investment as a potential elder. There should also be obvious outward fruit such as shepherding people in various ways and the presence of a deep concern for the spiritual direction of the local church that matches an inward desire to be an elder. It takes heart and hands, internal and external, aspiring and desiring. As Paul said, becoming an elder is a trustworthy and noble task.

Questions:
1. Do you currently aspire (inward) to be an elder?
2. Do you currently desire (outward) to be an elder?
3. Describe the outward fruit and inward longing you have for eldership.

2. **CHARACTER**

In First Timothy 3 and Titus 1, Paul lists several character qualities every elder should have in increasing measure. Something to consider is that all these character traits should be present in all Christian men. Every Christian man should be hospitable, sober, above reproach, etc. Just because you are not an elder does not mean you are exempt from Christ-like character! The
elder, while not perfect, should be an example for other Christians to follow in these characteristics. Let’s look at each one Paul lists for Pastor Timothy and Pastor Titus.

“Since an overseer manages God’s household” (Titus 1:7), they should have impeccable character! A church that does not install elders with such character has unfinished work that needs to be completed (Titus 1:5).

Above Reproach

An elder is not sinless but should strive to be. They should lead exemplary lifestyles of faith, morality, and holiness. Their Christ-like character should be such that no one would ever suspect or accuse them of immoral behavior. Paul says they should be “above reproach” in 1 Timothy 3 and “blameless” in Titus 1. He says they should be holy and respectable. People look up to these kinds of men in all areas of life. Both qualities help to promote holiness and spiritual growth inside the church and protects the church from outward unjustified accusation. Elders above reproach are a great witness to a watching church congregation and city community. Above reproach and blameless elders can be trusted. They must love what is good (Titus 1:8) and hate what God hates. They must have a good reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7). This means even those not in Christ can attest to their sincere devotion to the Lord and their Christ-like character.

Questions:
1. Do others see you as above reproach and blameless?
2. Give examples of how you strive to be above reproach and blameless.
3. Are there hidden sins that would disqualify you from eldership?

Self-Control

Paul tells Timothy and Titus that elders are to be self-controlled, temperate, sober-minded, and disciplined. While these qualities are to be present in the life of every believer, they are to be models of partnering with the Holy Spirit and obedient to the Word in what it means to be self-controlled in all areas of life. After all, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). A self-controlled man oversees his emotions, mouth, sexuality, spiritual growth, health, marriage, family, business, actions, thoughts, and finances. There should not be any area that is out of control.

Questions:
1. Is there any area of your life that is out of control?
2. Are you humbly submitted to the Word and Spirit in all areas of life?
3. Would others say you are self-controlled in all areas of life?
No Self-Control

Just as Paul mentions the need for elders to be self-controlled, temperate, sober-minded, and disciplined, he mentions specific areas contrary to these qualities. Paul tells Timothy and Titus that elders should not be given to drunkenness. The Old and New Testaments are clear that drunkenness is a sin (Proverbs 20:1; Ephesians 5:18). Because drunkenness is so destructive to the lives of those they serve, elders should steer clear of being a bad example to people such as those who struggle with alcoholism and have been affected by an alcoholic family member or drunk driver. The lack of self-control would extend to overeating, gambling, drugs, anger, greed, and so many other areas of life.

Questions:
1. Is there an area in your life where you lack self-control?
2. Would someone characterize your life as out of control in a certain area?
3. Are you out of control in any of the areas mentioned above?

Hospitable

Both Timothy and Titus are instructed to ordain elders that are hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). Hospitality is love, kindness, compassion, and goodness in action. An elder should display these towards his family, congregation, and community. He should be kind and generous towards the poor, lonely, and vulnerable, not just with those whom he likes or is close friends. The way an elder treats others, especially his family and those he has in his home, displays his level of love, respect, and honor.

Questions:
1. Do you regularly serve and care for your wife and kids? Explain.
2. Are you consistently compassionate and kind towards the poor, needy, lonely, and vulnerable?
3. How often do you have people in your home for fellowship and discipleship?

Gentle

Paul says elders should “not be violent but gentle”. They should also not be violent, overbearing, and quick-tempered. Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit that is to be in every believer’s lifestyle. When someone describes an elder, one of the first words they should say is, “they sure are gentle”. Paul defines gentleness by listing abhorrent opposites. While he could have just listed “be gentle”, he was clear to say what gentleness did not look like. A man who is violent in their actions and speech with others, especially his family, should not be an elder. If a man has tendencies to be overbearing at work and quick-tempered when things do not go his way, he should not be an elder. Gentleness is not void of boldness and power. It is meekness
that we should learn from Jesus model to us (Matthew 11:29). Jesus said he was gentle and humble in heart. Humility produces gentleness. Elders who are not gentle in their approach with church members will “lord it over them” (1 Peter 5:3) instead of being humble (1 Peter 5:5-6).

Questions:
1. Are you heavy-handed with those you lead?
2. Does your leadership bring peace or chaos?
3. Are you slow to speak, slow to anger, and quick to listen?

Not Quarrelsome

In 1 Timothy 5:17, the Apostle Paul says that elders who do their work of leading the church well should be “considered worthy of double honor”. There is no way to do this and be quarrelsome. As an elder teaches and contends for the truth of God’s Word, they should not be arrogant or always looking for a spiritual fight. Someone who is quarrelsome is the opposite of peaceful. Instead of being contentious, an elder should be respectful, humble, and considerate of others.

Questions:
1. Do you often find yourself in arguments about Scripture?
2. Do you always have to be right?
3. Are you humble, considerate, and peaceful?

Not a Lover of Money

Paul told Timothy an elder should not be greedy. Paul told Titus not to pursue dishonest gain. Peter said an elder should serve eagerly and not for money. The message is clear that an elder does not lead the church to gain money. They should be generous like those in the early church who sold their possessions to give to those in need (Acts 2:45). If those who lead the church are lovers of money, they will eventually stop caring for the poor, widows, orphans, missions, and giving into other biblical ministries like pro-life pregnancy centers and food pantries. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10a). Loving money can even pierce you with many sorrows and draw you away from the faith (1 Timothy 6:10b).

Questions:
1. Do you struggle with giving to the Lord’s work?
2. Are you consistent in tithing to your local church?
3. Do you give with a wrong motive or with unbiblical expectations?
Not a Recent Convert

A new believer or a young disciple in the faith should not be considered as an elder. New believers can be zealous in their faith, highly evangelistic, and bold in their walk. These qualities should remain in believers as they mature in the faith. While tempting to put energetic Christians in front of others to motivate them toward good works, spiritual growth, and evangelism, one should not make new believers into leaders in the church until they have proven themselves faithful and genuine in their walk with Christ. Maturity in Christ is only gained one way: by maturing in Christ. This takes time. Character is built over time. How one handles adversity, tragedy, disappointment, and other setbacks in life builds their dependency on Christ. There is a “honeymoon” phase to everything. While Christians should not lose their zeal for Christ and His church, believers should be found standing with Christ when the dust settles. Paul warns that a new convert can develop pride and fall under the same judgment of the devil. One must make sure a man is saved and proven in their walk with Christ before considering and installing them as an elder. There is nothing worse than a church being led by unbelievers or spiritual infants.

Questions:
1. How long have you been saved?
2. What adversity, tragedy, or disappointment in life have you weathered with Christ?
3. Explain how you have grown with Christ over the years by contrasting life before and after salvation.

Faithful to His Wife

Both Timothy and Titus are told an elder must be faithful to his wife. Paul literally says they should be “one women men” who believe marriage is a covenant partnership with their wife for a lifetime. God created marriage (Genesis 2:24). If the congregation views an elder’s marriage as unstable, it can cause them to question their leadership ability in the church as well. No marriage is perfect, but an elder’s marriage must be genuinely united and visibly growing in Christ. An elder must display sincere love and spiritual leadership. He must love his wife as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25). He must not be flirtatious with other women. He must be accountable and walk within boundaries that honor marriage and specifically his wife. He must put her before their children but never Christ. An elder’s wife must agree with, support, and understand his calling. An elder must be sexually pure in marriage or above reproach in singleness. A man does not have to be married to serve as an elder, but if he is, his marriage should be a visible picture of Paul’s description of marriage in Ephesians 5:21-33 and Peter’s in 1 Peter 3:1-7. An elder’s marriage must be an example to the other marriages in the church body.

Questions:
1. What is the honest condition of your marriage?
2. Are you sexually pure and the marriage bed undefiled?
3. Does your wife support you in the ministry?

Children and Family

An elder must be the spiritual leader of his home. His children should respect him because he is a man of God, a faithful husband, and a good father. Paul asked Titus, “If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?” Paul wasn’t looking for an answer from Titus. He was making the statement that if a man can’t lead his family, he can’t lead the church either. Leading in the home is the litmus test for one’s ability to lead in the church. If a man’s marriage and family are in disorder and divided, how can one expect they will lead the church into order and unity? An elder should teach his family the Word and model its principles to them. If an elder’s children who are in the home are unruly and live apart from Christ, he should wait on being an elder and concentrate on winning them to Christ and discipling them well.

Questions:
1. Do your children respect you?
2. Are you bringing them up in the Lord? Explain how you practically and consistently do this.
3. Are your children out of control or well behaved?

3. TEACHING THE WORD

Most of the qualifications for eldership have to do with character. Paul also instructs Timothy and Titus that elders should be able to teach the Word of God. Elders should have a teaching role of Scripture in the local church. While this may mean preaching a sermon, it can also mean teaching a Bible study, small group, or some other means of teaching the Word to help feed the flock such as a new member’s class, spiritual growth classes, or children’s ministry. This means an elder must know the Bible well, having read through it several times. They must be able to discuss the primary and secondary doctrines of the church. Paul told Titus they must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught. An elder must teach the Bible as it was intended, understanding what the Holy Spirit inspired to the authors, the context in which it was written to the first hearers and readers, and how to apply it to our current situations.

An elder should know how to teach and defend the primary non-negotiable doctrines such as the resurrection, deity of Christ, Trinity, sovereignty of Scripture, salvation by grace through faith and not works, and believer’s baptism. They must also be settled in what they believe about secondary doctrines such as spiritual gifts. They must not teach against the church’s doctrinal statement publicly. If they have questions, they work them out with the other elders so as to protect the church’s unity and doctrinal integrity. If an elder cannot agree with and teach the church’s agreed upon doctrinal statement, they should not be an elder as it would cause division in the church.
From time to time, an elder will encounter those who misunderstand and unintentionally misuse Scripture. They must be able to guide that person in understanding the orthodox meaning of the Word. Occasionally, they will encounter someone deliberately teaching contrary to their church’s agreed-upon understanding of the Word. They should be able to explain why they and their church believe and teach differently. Rarely, they will encounter someone bent on blatant false teaching. They should be able to not only defend the Scriptures but, in this case, protect the unity of the church by asking the false teacher to leave the church. In this instance, the elders must be united in their efforts. Paul wrote much about false teachers in the church (e.g., Romans 16:17-20; 1 Timothy 6:3-5) and called them wolves who would abuse the sheep (Acts 20:29-31). Elders help the church body:

“Reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” -Ephesians 4:13-15

Questions:
1. Have you read through the Bible more than once?
2. Are you able to teach the major doctrines of the Bible and know where to find them in Scripture?
3. Have you read and do you fully agree with the doctrinal statement of Family Church?
Elders of the local church must be men of great Christ-like character. They must be men who can easily be recognized as “those who have been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Elders must be men who walk in step (Galatians 5:25) and are being filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). When it boils down to the bare bones, elders must be men who are worth imitating (1 Corinthians 11:1). Let’s look at and discuss the Scriptures we mentioned above.

“Men Who Have Been with Jesus”

Acts 4:13 says, “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Peter and John were “unschooled” and “ordinary”. This doesn’t mean they didn’t need education or be extraordinary. Luke mentions these to drive home the point that it was obvious that Jesus was radiating from their lives. No one could mistake their ministry success or lifestyles for their achievements or social status. It was crystal clear that these men had spent time with Jesus and He was shining bright through their lives. People saw Jesus in them!

Questions:

1. Can people genuinely say by observing your life that you have been with Jesus?
2. What does “being with Jesus” look like? How would you know if someone had “been with Jesus”?

“Men Who Walk In Step with the Spirit”

Galatians 5:25 says, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” In context, Paul is writing about living in the Spirit in Galatians 5:13-26. Read that passage of Scripture. If you are “out of step” with the Spirit, you are either disobedient or ignorant to the Spirit’s leading. Either way, you are walking in your own path. This is dangerous for the elder as we are to build and lead Jesus’ church in the way He has prescribed and He desires instead of our own preferences or perceptions. Elders must not step where the Spirit is not stepping. To do so is to lead the church away from Christ!

Questions:

1. What are several supporting evidence of walking in step with the Spirit listed in this passage?
2. What does this Scripture say is the opposite of walking in step with the Spirit?
“Men Who Are Filled with the Spirit”

When seven men were chosen to be what we refer to as the first deacons of the early church, one of the major qualifications was that they were “full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:3). If this was needed for deacons, it is certainly needed for elders. To be full of the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean you have all you’ll ever have of Him. Ephesians 5:18 says “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” Paul’s contrast of a man full of wine versus a man full of the Spirit is key. Have you ever seen how alcohol controls a drunk? In the same, yet completely opposite manner, the Holy Spirit should control an elder. To get a better picture of this, one may need to read Ephesians 5:18 in context with verses 1-20 to see evidence of being filled with the Spirit. To be filled means “be being filled”. We receive the Spirit at salvation, but we receive more and more of Him throughout our walk with the Lord as we die more and more to our flesh and welcome more and more of Him.

Questions:
1. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?
2. Why is this important for the elder?

“Men Who Are Worth Imitating”

Paul told the church in Corinth to “Imitate me as I imitate Jesus” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Elders serve as the lead mentors and examples of spiritual growth in the local church. They should be men who love the Word, prayer, worship, ministry, serving, giving, and all that is the church. Their marriages, family, business practices, and relationships should be those people in the church see as worth replicating. If an elder does not spend time growing in the Scriptures, prayer, ministry, with his wife and family, he must not expect the church to desire to follow His example. If an elder does not serve, he should not expect the church to serve. If an elder does not speak highly of the other church members with respect and love, he should not expect the church to either. Elder should be examples in holiness. While no elder is perfect, they serve as models for church members to emulate in all spiritual matters. Elders should serve as humble examples in all areas of life and godliness for those they have the honor of leading in the local church.

Questions:
1. Can people imitate your life and godliness? Do they?
2. What areas of your life would you not want others in the church to imitate?

Speech, Conduct, Love, Faith, and Purity

Paul instructed Timothy, a pastor/elder in the church at Ephesus, to be an example in five areas in 1 Timothy 4:12. He said, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but
serve as an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Let’s look at these five characteristics that elders should model.

“Men Who are Examples in Speech”

What we say is as important as what we don’t say. Elders should be men whose speech is full of godliness and free from godlessness. The tongue, though small, is powerful. There is death and life in the power of our words (Proverbs 18:21). James says it is difficult to tame (James 3:5-8). The elder, like any believer, must know their words originate from the desires of their heart and the condition of their mind. However, because of the elder’s position of influence, their words generally carry more weight and have a broader impact on others. Elders should be quick to listen and slow to speak (James 1:19). They should not be found in lewd talk, coarse jesting, gossip, lies, or godless chatter. You should be able to take an elder at his word because they have integrity. They don’t speak out of both sides of their mouth. Because they are teachers of the Word, they should not say anything contrary to the Scriptures. They should share the gospel regularly and use their words to edify people. Their everyday communication should be filled with the wisdom, principles, and verses of Scripture.

Questions:
1. Can your words be trusted?
2. Can people in the church repeat your conversations?
3. Are there areas of your speech you need the Spirit to “clean up”?

“Men Who are Examples in Conduct”

Scripture says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). Whatever elders do, their actions should emulate those of Jesus. Their actions should be full of the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” This fruit should be present in all an elder does. Elders should also be doers of the Word (James 1:22). An elder’s actions should include loving God and loving people. Philippians 2:1-18 tells us to be tender, compassionate, like-minded, unselfish, humble, concerned with others, and free from grumbling and complaining. You should not find an elder leading the church who is always angry, disingenuous, complaining, quarreling, selfish, and rude. An elder’s actions should resemble Christ’s in every way! An elder should imitate the Word in every way!

Questions:
1. Do all of your actions resemble that of Christ?
2. Is there an area of conduct in your life that is unbecoming of an elder?
“Men Who are Examples in Love”

If elders do not love those they shepherd, they will not shepherd them as Jesus intended. Love is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), a command of Jesus (John 13:34), evidence of discipleship (John 13:35), proof of being in the family of God (1 John 3:10), and the most important quality of discipleship (1 Corinthians 13:13). Jesus told Peter (an elder of the church) if he loved Him, he would feed and tend His sheep and lambs (John 21:15-17). An elder must love the church body with the love of Christ and be an example of how to love others. This is the ultimate example of fulfilling the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40). The world displays men of lust in everything, but Christ calls His disciples to be men of love. There’s nothing better for church leadership than an elder that genuinely loves God and loves his church.

Questions:
1. How do you express your love for the church?
2. Do people see you as an example of how to love God and love people?
3. What keeps you from loving God and the church to the fullest?

“Men That are Examples in Faith”

Faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:6). Elders should be examples in their faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). If elders are to grow in their faith, they must grow in the Word of God. By being obedient to the Scriptures, elders teach the church they lead to do the same. In Matthew 8, a Roman Centurion displayed great faith by asking for Jesus’ help to heal his servant. Elders must continually go to God in prayer with great faith. Even though Jesus offered to go and heal his servant, the Centurion showed greater faith by asking Jesus to just speak a word from a distance. He trusted Jesus could work even if He wasn’t present with his servant. Jesus commended him for his great faith (v. 10). Elders must display great faith by trusting Jesus to do His will and fulfill His Word. Elders must pray for people to be healed, miracles to happen, invite people to obey the gospel and be saved, and trust God at His Word.

Questions:
1. Do you have faith that asks and trusts God to move miraculously?
2. What hinders your faith?

“Men That are Examples in Purity”

Elders must have impeccable character. Purity is being unadulterated and faultless. Paul told Timothy and Titus that elders are to be above reproach and blameless. This means, they are living holy and set apart lives. Purity is expressing holiness. No one can be pure on their own. Jesus imputes righteousness to our lives (2 Corinthians 5:21). While Jesus makes us pure, we have a partnership to consecrate ourselves and live a holy life as Jesus is holy (1 Peter 1:16). Elders are to be sexually pure (1 Corinthians 6:18) and be faithful to their spouse, keeping the
marriage bed pure (Hebrews 13:4). Elders should be pure in their thought life (2 Corinthians 10:5), words (Ephesians 4:29), and actions (1 Corinthians 10:31). Purity begins in the heart and mind.

Questions:

1. Are you sexually pure?
2. Are you pure in your thoughts, words, and actions?
3. Would others consider you an example of purity?
Lesson 5 – Week 5
The Elder, the Gospel, and Making Disciples

The Gospel Must Matter to Elders

The Gospel matters. That’s because the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is what makes people Christians. Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). The church is built on Christ Who died for our sins and resurrected to give us victory over sin and death. People are saved by Jesus through His Gospel message. The church must share the Gospel with others! The church must not get the Gospel wrong. If the people in the church are going to see the importance of sharing the Gospel, the elders must lead the way in understanding, valuing, and communicating the good news of Jesus’ Gospel message.

Questions:
1. Why is it so important that elders understand, value, and share the Gospel message?
2. What are the main points of the Gospel message?

To know the Gospel, one must know what the Gospel is not. There are many things that are said to be the Gospel such as simply loving people, serving others in practical ways, ministry to the poor, even mission trips to other countries. However, one can (and should) do all these things and still not share the Gospel.

Read this Scripture: Romans 10:13-17

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news! But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our message?’ Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”

Questions:
1. What does Paul say people must do to be saved?
2. Can they call on the one in whom they have not believed?
3. Can they believe in Him if they never hear about Him?
4. Can they hear about Him if no one ever shares Him?
5. From where does faith come?
Deeper Questions:

1. Who is the last person with whom you shared the Gospel?
2. Who do you plan to share the Gospel with this week?
3. Can you share the Gospel now with one another in 2-3 minutes?
4. Can you share your testimony of salvation now in 2-3 minutes?

The Gospel is a verbal message that teaches people their own need to call on a Savior to forgive them from their sins. It asks people to believe in Him as Savior and Lord. While ministries to the poor, mission trips, and service projects are “bridges” the Gospel can travel across, they are not the Gospel. Someone once said, “Feeding people is great, but without the Gospel, they’d go to hell with full stomachs.” The Gospel must be shared and obeyed. Because our lives have been changed by the Gospel message of Jesus, because we love God, and because we love others, we are compelled to share the good news of Jesus with others!

An elder that does not consistently share the Gospel with others is not leading the church well. They may handle business affairs, ministry efforts, and even handle prayer requests, but they must base it all on the good news of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Understanding the Gospel Message

Paul’s sermon in Acts 17:22-34 (read it) helps us to understand God as Creator, Father, and Judge. It also helps us see our need for repentance from sin and salvation.

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead. When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject. At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.”

Discuss each of these points found in bold in the Scripture above:

1. God is Creator. He created us for His purposes. We are accountable to Him.
2. God is Father. He loves us and wants us to be His offspring (children).
3. God is Judge. He has a way for us to live and will one day judge the world for what they did with Jesus.
4. God wants people to seek Him, reach out for Him, and find Him.
5. God desires us to repent of our sins.
6. We must respond to the Gospel message of Jesus’ death and resurrection.
7. Some will reject the Gospel.
8. Some will want to hear more about the Gospel.
9. Some will believe the Gospel.

Man is Sinful and Needs Salvation

Romans 3:23 and 6:23 are very important verses for understanding and communicating the Gospel message.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” –Romans 3:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
–Romans 6:23

People must know why they need to call on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13). Mankind is sinful. Sin separates people from God, and they have a broken relationship with Him. People are unable to change their own lives and repair that relationship. God is holy and cannot overlook sin. He must punish and judge those who sin. People cannot earn forgiveness and need a Savior.

Questions:
1. Why do you think it’s important for people to see their sin and need for a Savior?
2. Why is it important for people to know they cannot earn forgiveness and salvation?

Jesus is the Answer for Sinful Man’s Need for Salvation

Jesus is the only answer for sinful man’s need for salvation. Only He can forgive sin. Romans 5:6-10 says,

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Since we have now been **justified by his blood**, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, **we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son**, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be **saved through his life!**”

Questions:
1. What does this verse say we are concerning saving ourselves?
2. What did Christ do for sinners?
3. What does it mean to be “justified by His blood”? What about “saved from God’s wrath”?
4. What does it mean that we are “reconciled to Him through the Son”? What about “saved through His life”?

Man Must Respond to the Gospel Message

God made a way through Jesus His Son back to right standing and relationship with Him. Jesus saves! Jesus forgives sin! Jesus gives eternal life! That’s the Gospel message!

In order for man to be saved, they must not just know about the Gospel message but actually respond to it. Romans 10:9-10 helps us with this.

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

God desires people to be saved. He wants them to respond to Jesus’ death and resurrection by declaring with their mouth and believing in their heart that Jesus is Lord and raised from the dead. It’s more than knowledge in the mind but transformation in the heart. People must respond to and obey the Gospel to be saved.

Questions:
1. Why is it important for Elders to share the Gospel?
2. Why is it important for Elders to understand the Gospel?

Discipleship Must Matter to Elders

Discipleship matters. Jesus told us to make disciples. Matthew 28:19-20 says,

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Elders must share the Gospel message and be examples of sharing the Gospel message. It’s simply not enough for elders to share the message of the Gospel. They must give testimony to the church body of their evangelistic efforts. The same goes for discipleship. Elders should be discipling other men in the faith in a consistent manner and giving testimony of these efforts. When elders share their evangelism and discipleship efforts it encourages the church body to share the Gospel and make disciples. Elders should ask those they lead about their evangelistic and discipleship efforts. They should ask, “With whom are you sharing Jesus?” and “Who are you consistently meeting with to grow in the faith?”
Matthew 28:19-20 tells us some important facts about a Spirit-filled healthy church. Jesus said, “go make disciples”. This is a command to be obeyed, not a suggestion to be considered. This discipleship should include baptism following salvation and obedience to everything Jesus said in Scripture. When we do this, the presence of the Lord is with and moving in the church. The KJV says, “and lo, I am with you always”. I like to say, “No go, no lo”. If we do not go, share the Gospel, and make disciples, the Spirit of God will not move in the church. Why would He? That’s what He has commissioned (mandated) the church to do!

Questions:

1. How important is it for Elders to make disciples?
2. Who are you discipling right now? When do you meet? What is your discipleship method/plan?

2 Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” Paul received from the Lord and passed it on to others (1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:3). You cannot be a disciple unless you are making a disciple! A person who keeps what they gain from the Lord and does not pass it on is not a disciple! Paul was discipled, he discipled others, and they in turn discipled others. That is the pattern for Christian discipleship.

Discussion:

Read Acts 2:41-47 and discuss all the elements of Christian discipleship mentioned.

Questions from Acts 2:41-47:

1. How are you devoted to and sharing the Word of God?
2. How are you devoted to sharing in fellowship with others in the church?
3. How are you devoted to breaking bread with others in the church?
4. How are you devoted to praying with and for others in the church?
5. Are you in awe of God and what He is doing in you and the church?
6. Are the wonders and signs of the Lord following your walk with the Lord?
7. How are you keeping the unity of the church?
8. How are you displaying generosity in the church?
9. How are you faithful in meeting with the church in large and small groups?
10. How are you displaying gladness and simplicity of heart among the church?
11. Is the Lord adding saved people to the church? If not, are you sharing the Gospel with anyone for that to happen?
Lesson 6 – Week 6
The Elder’s Doctrine and Teaching

Every believer needs to do as the Apostle Paul told Timothy, “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:16). Paul told them to watch their doctrine closely and persevere in it. In other words, believers should be knowing and growing in their doctrine. Elders must devote themselves more to studying, understanding, and applying the Scriptures. An elder should uphold the agreed-upon doctrinal statement of the church they serve. Differences and disagreements in the Word should be studied among the other elders and brought to unity for the benefit of the entire church, not just for a particular elder. Elders must be aware of doctrinal differences outside their local church that try to make their way into their local church. By weighing them against Scripture and the agreed-upon interpretation by the whole of the elders, the elders will help keep their church from doctrinal error.

Elders are doctrinal guardians of the local church. Those who are well-grounded in the Word will be able to lead, teach, and serve the church well. The elder’s teaching ministry must use the church’s doctrinal statement as a basis for all teaching endeavors (sermons, Bible studies, counseling, small groups, ministries, conversational teaching, etc.). While there will be some minor discrepancies and differences within any local church and among believers, there are foundational doctrines that all believers should agree upon. These include, but are not limited to, the Trinity, the person of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, salvation, Scripture, the church, and Jesus’ death and resurrection. To be consistent with Family Church’s doctrinal statement, we will look at its foundational agreed-upon doctrines. Remember, a doctrinal statement is not exhaustive teaching on every aspect of a particular doctrine. It simply serves to point out the most important foundations of that doctrine. Let’s look at several foundational doctrines:

The Scriptures
The Holy Bible (the 66 books of the Old and New Testament) and only the Bible, is the authoritative Word of God. The canon of Scripture is closed and is always in agreement with the Holy Spirit as it is inspired by Him. It alone is the final authority in determining all doctrinal truths. In its original writing, it is inspired, inerrant, and infallible. The Scriptures are God’s revelation of Himself to mankind. All Scripture is true, trustworthy, and applicable. Scripture is the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. The Scripture is sufficient for all that God requires for us to believe and do and is, therefore, to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and obey the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

(2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 1:1-2, 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; Proverbs 30:5; Romans 16:25-26)
Question: Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

The Trinity

There is only one true and living God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and co-eternal. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all-powerful and all-knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him, we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

(1 John 5:7; Genesis 1:26; Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; Luke 1:35; Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 3:7-11)

Question: Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.


Question: Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who
was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.


Question: Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination, He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.


Question: Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?
Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning, man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.


Question: Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. We are saved by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ: His death, burial, and resurrection. Man cannot save himself through good works, human efforts, or through faith in any other person, thing, or doctrine apart from the truth of the Scriptures. Salvation is a gift from God, not of any human efforts. There are several keywords one must understand about salvation:

1. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

2. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

3. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

4. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and
spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

5. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.


**Question:** Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

The Church

The Church is a New Testament institution established by Jesus Christ. A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local body of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel. Jesus is the sole Head, revealed through the Holy Apostles; empowered and perpetuated by the Holy Spirit to be His “Body” for service and His “Bride” for glory. The church is the habitation of God through the Spirit with divine appointments for the fulfillment of Jesus' Great Commission. Every person who is born of the Spirit is an integral part of the church as a member of the body of believers. There is a spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. While all Christians are part of the universal body of Christ, all should be actively involved in a local body of Christ which we see evidenced in the New Testament. The Church consists of saved people. This group of saved people should meet regularly as expressed in Scripture, covenant with one another in faith and fellowship, observe the sacraments of Jesus, be governed by His laws, exercise the gifts of the Spirit, have leadership of Elders, Pastors, and servants in Deacons, and be benevolent. The Church has the authority as evidenced by Scripture to commission individuals, committees, or groups by the laying on of hands to perform special tasks or missions as led by the Holy Spirit. The main goal of the Church is to glorify God, perpetuate His Gospel, make disciples that look like Jesus, and love the world around it as defined by the Gospel.


**Question:** Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?
Water Baptism

Baptism by immersion in water is a direct commandment of our Lord and is for believers (those who are born again) only. Believer's baptism is a symbol of the Christian’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is a testimony to the Christian’s faith in the final resurrection of the dead. It is a prerequisite to the covenant of church membership and the Lord's Supper. Following salvation, the new convert is commanded by the Word of God to be baptized in water in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism does not save as salvation is not of works but by grace through faith. Immersion is the only mode of baptism found in Scripture. Infant baptism is not believer's baptism nor is it found in the Bible. We do not require people to be "rebaptized" in order to become a member of Family Church if they have been biblically baptized (i.e. immersion, following salvation)

(Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41; Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12, 36-38; 10:47-48; Ephesians 2:8-9)

Question: Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

The Lord’s Supper (Communion)

A unique time of communion in the presence of God when the elements of bread and grape juice (the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ) are taken in remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. The elements of communion (bread and juice) do not turn into the blood and body of Christ but represent His atoning work of salvation from sin. We practice open communion, meaning communion is available to any Christian believer even if not a member of Family Church. We typically take communion weekly during our services centered in a time of prayer.


Question: Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

The Gifts of the Spirit

All Christians are filled with the Spirit at the moment of salvation and are given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit and Jesus Himself. The Holy Spirit is manifested through a variety of spiritual gifts to build and sanctify the church, demonstrate the validity of the resurrection, and confirm the power of the Gospel. The gifts that we see exercised in the Scriptures have not ceased with the death of the last Apostle or the closing of the New Testament canon. They are available today and are to be eagerly desired and practiced in submission to the Spirit through the Scriptures. The Bible lists of these gifts are not necessarily exhaustive, and the gifts may occur in various combinations. No one believer has all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, thus emphasizing the need for the whole church body. Having certain gifts does not create "super-Christians" as
all the gifts are necessary in the body of Christ. These gifts always operate in harmony with the Scriptures and should never be used in violation of Biblical parameters as God is orderly, not chaotic. The gifts are useless and meaningless void of Christ-like love.

(Hebrews 2:4; Romans 1:11, 12:4-8; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:16; I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6-7; I Corinthians 12:1-31, 14:1-40; I Peter 4:10)

**Question:** Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?

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**The Kingdom of God**

The kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by a trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

**Heaven** - Heaven is the literal, eternal dwelling place for all believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Good people do not go to heaven; saved people do. (Matthew 5:3, 12, 20, 6:20, 19:21, 25:34; John 17:24; II Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 11:16; I Peter 1:4).

**Hell** - After living one life on earth, the unbelievers (those who physically die in their sins without Christ) will be judged by God and sent to a literal Hell where they will be eternally tormented with the devil and the fallen angels. Most sadly, those who do not believe in the gospel will be eternally separated from God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and Heaven with no chance of return or salvation. The Lake of Fire is literal and everlasting. (Matthew 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 14:9-11, 19:20, 20:12-15, 21:8).

**The Second Coming** - Jesus Christ will physically and visibly return to earth for the second time to establish His kingdom. His return is imminent. When He comes, the dead in Christ will rise first and then those who are alive in Him shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Following the Tribulation, He shall return to earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Then, together with His saints, who shall be kings and priests, He shall reign for a thousand years. The second coming of Christ will occur at a date undisclosed by the Scriptures (Matthew 24:30, 26:63-64; Acts 1:9-11; I Thessalonians 4:15-17; II Thessalonians 1:7-8; Revelation 1:7; Revelation 20:6).


**Question:** Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?
Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Genesis 1:26-27). Rejection of one’s biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term “marriage” has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Genesis 2:18-25). We believe God created marriage to be one man and one woman as pronounced in Genesis 2:24, that Jesus affirmed the same in Matthew 19:5-6 adding “what God has joined together let not man separate”, and the Apostle Paul agreed by quoting them both in Ephesians 5:31.

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including but not limited to adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, polygamy, incest, prostitution, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matthew 15:18-20; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

We believe that to preserve the function and integrity of Family Church as a local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Family Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Family Church in any capacity, those who are members of Family Church, or who serve as volunteers in any way, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Family Church.

It is our practice as Family Church that our pastors only perform Covenant Marriages as set forth by the State of Arkansas the Covenant Marriage Act of 2001. If a man and a woman in our congregation desire a pastor outside our staff to perform their wedding ceremony in our facilities, they must receive approval from the Senior Pastor and that outside pastor must agree with our doctrinal beliefs concerning marriage. We also will only perform marriages between one man and one woman in our church for those who have formally gone through our membership process. We believe marriage is holy matrimony, created and ordained by God alone, and is a worship experience. Scripture is our final and ultimate authority and arbiter in this matter.

**Question:** Are you in agreement with this? If not, with what do you have an issue and how can you biblically support your position?
Final Authority for Matters of Belief and Conduct

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of Family Church's autonomy, faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our Elders are our final interpretive authority on the Bible’s meaning and application.

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Psalm 139).

**Question:** Are you in agreement with this? If not, what do you have issue with and how can you biblically support your position?

Statement of Doctrinal Agreement

Family Church emphasizes faithfulness to a biblical-theological position regarding doctrine. Elders are required to sign this doctrinal statement to indicate they agree, will be supportive, will use it as a foundation for teaching in all areas of the church, and will not be divisive to it. If disagreements, differences, or questions arise, elders agree to study the Scriptures thoroughly together in a spirit of unity until harmony and understanding are reached. If after studying with the other elders to bring doctrinal harmony you cannot continue in agreement and unity in the doctrinal statement of the church, it is best you resign as an elder so as not to promote disunity.

If you agree and support these foundational doctrines, promise to use them as a basis for teaching in all areas of the church, and agree not to be divisive of them, please sign below. Signing also indicates your willingness to work towards harmony if disagreements arise.

_____________________________________             _________________________________
Name:       Name:
Elders are to provide pastoral leadership in the local church. Elders are not a business committee, although they may sometimes need to make business-like decisions for the church. Using the term “elders” may convey board-elders and be misleading without proper explanation of how New Testament elders biblically function. They are, as Alexander Strauch says in *Biblical Eldership*, simply shepherd-elders, pastor-elders, or pastors. There are three Greek words that refer to or are translated elders in the New Testament. 1 Peter 5:1-2 and Acts 20:17, 28 show all three of these words, but the distinctions may be lost just looking at the English translation. In Peter and Paul’s day, elders, shepherds, pastors, overseers were interchangeable words to describe the same office. It is our belief that they still hold the same meaning although elders may function differently in ministry and time as some may be full-time church staff, part-time, or non-staff elders. Let’s look at 1 Peter 5:1-2 and Act 20:17, 28:

"To the elders (presbuteros) among you, I appeal as a fellow elder (presbuteros), a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds (poimainō) of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers (episkopeō) — not because you must, but because you are willing...." (1 Peter 5:1-2)

"From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders (presbuteros) of the church.... Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (episkopos). Be shepherds (poimainō) of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:17, 28)

Elders should function as *presbuteros* in calling and office for the local church’s spiritual direction and governance. Elders should function as *poimaino* in pastoral responsibilities to individuals and groups in the church’s day-to-day spiritual responsibilities through prayer, care, and ministry. Elders should function as *episkopos* in serving as overseers of the whole church’s spiritual health, ministries, mission, and discipleship.

*Questions for Discussion:*

1. Why is it important to see the full range of responsibilities of elders in the local church?
2. How dangerous is it for elders to neglect any of these three words?

*Responsibilities of Elders in the Local Church*

As elders walk in their calling to shepherd and oversee God’s people in the local church, there are several specific responsibilities that must be carried out according to Scripture.
Teachers

Elders should spend a bulk of their time in prayer and teaching God’s Word. This can be done through preaching a sermon on Sunday morning, leading a ministry of the church, shepherding a small group, or one-on-one with someone. It can be as formal as a class or counseling session, or as informal as an impromptu meeting after church or a question from a church member in a phone call. Elders must give attention to prayer and the Word. Acts 6:2-4 emphasizes this: "And the Twelve called near the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’" The elder must ensure that teaching and prayer remain central to the church’s mission as the church cares for the specific needs of people. From this Scripture, we can see that deacons are vital as lead servants to assist the elders caring for the immediate needs of the church body. The elder’s teaching role is both proactive and reactive. They are to teach the Word and protect the Word from being taught in error in the church.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is it important that proper teaching by elders be done at all levels in the local church?
2. Why must elders not separate teaching the Word and prayer?
3. How are you leading out in teaching the Word and prayer in the local church?

Spiritual Fathers

Elders are to oversee and care for the souls of those in the local church. The spiritual life of those in the church is under the care of the elders of that local church. Hebrews 13:17 says, “Yield to those leading you, and be submissive, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.” Church leaders, specifically elders, are accountable for how they watch over the souls of those with whom the Lord entrusts to their local church. This is done collectively by evaluating the effectiveness of all the ministry efforts of the local church and personally as they make disciples one-on-one. Elders must serve as spiritual fathers of the local church.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the elder’s character impact spiritual fatherhood in the local church?
2. Are you currently a spiritual father to anyone in the local church?

Pray for the Sick

Elders must be the lead prayer warriors for the local church. While this was already discussed in general above, they are specifically mandated in Scripture to pray for healing for those in the church that are sick. James 5:14 says, “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the
church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." Elders should offer prayers for people when they are sick and encourage the body to do the same.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Why do you think praying for healing is a role of the church elder?
2. How do you consistently pray for the healing of the sick in the local church?

**Peacemakers**

Elders are to help settle disputes among church members in the local church. Acts 15:1-2 says, “While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the Christians 'unless you keep the ancient Jewish custom of circumcision taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.' Paul and Barnabas, disagreeing with them, argued forcefully and at length. Finally, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question”. When a dispute arose in the church, the apostles argued for the truth and helped to reach a decision that stayed true to Scripture, best honored the Lord, and brought unity in the church. Elders should do this with Scriptures in mind like Jesus’ instructions on reconciliation in Matthew 18:15-20 and Paul’s restorative verses in Galatians 6:1-2.

**Questions for Discussion:**

1. Are there disputes or disagreements within the local church you know about now that no elder is actively (or in the past) is engaged? Can you help?
2. What are some good standard operating procedures for elders to remember when pursuing peacemaking with church members?

**Protectors**

Acts 20:28-31 says, “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.” These verses remind elders they must first guard their own hearts as they are “prone to wander” as the old gospel song says. Paul instructed Timothy to keep a close watch on himself and his doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16). It is hard to oversee others if you are not overseeing yourself. Elders face disappointment, spiritual attacks, frustrations, temptations, and much more. Elders should shepherd one another, hold each other accountable, confess sin and temptation with each other, and pray for and encourage one another.

As they grow together in the Lord, Elders must be aware of factions, false teaching, and spiritual maturity of the church they lead. Elders must “be on guard” or “keep watch”. Elders
aggressively and swiftly confront false teachers, “rebuking those who contradict” (Titus 1:9).
Elders need wisdom and discernment. Not every disagreement is from a savage wolf. Not every
disagreement about Scripture is to be labeled heretical. Sometimes people just need sound
teaching because of their lack of spiritual maturity or because they are new to the faith. Elders
must stand firm on non-negotiable primary doctrines such as having a high view of Scripture, the
resurrection and deity of Christ, and salvation by grace through faith, but know there will be
those in the church who have minor differences when it comes to secondary doctrines such as
spiritual gifts. Preferences like versions of Scripture (NIV, KJV, etc.) and worship style must
not become primary or secondary doctrines that divide the church. Elders must not be drawn
into foolish and stupid arguments which are unprofitable and useless (2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9).
The best way to know truth is to study the Word and walk in the Spirit in unity with other elders.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some more primary doctrines to protect?
2. What are some other secondary doctrines?
3. What are some other preferences in the church?
4. How do we discern correctly and keep from unnecessary confrontation and division?

Examples to the Flock

Elders serve as spiritual models to the flock. The characteristics we have studied in 1 Timothy 3
and Titus 1 are not exclusive to elders. Elders should be above reproach and encourage those in
their church to do the same. The same goes for every other characteristic mentioned. One
undergirding characteristic elders must lead in and watch out for in the lives of their church
members is humility. 1 Peter 5:2-3 says elders must “feed the flock of God among you, taking
the oversight, not by compulsion, but willingly; nor for base gain, but readily; nor as lording it
over those allotted to you by God, but becoming examples to the flock.” Elders are to “cloth
themselves in humility” (v. 5) and “Humble themselves under God’s mighty hand” (v. 6).

Questions for Discussion:

1. How do you consistently model humility to the church body? What does that look like?
2. Describe the opposite of a humble elder. Do any of those characteristics describe you in
   any way past or present?
Lesson 7, Part 2 - Week 7
The Elder’s Responsibilities and Installation at Family Church

The office and functions of elders are expressed differently at every local church. While the requirements and principles of eldership should be universal, each church must decide exactly how they desire their elders to function in this leadership role. In each of the previous lessons, you have read the biblical qualifications and responsibilities for elders in the local church. These are to be fleshed-out in the elder group and not interpreted individually. For example, an elder should not take it upon themselves to stamp out their perception of heresy in the local church if a couple of members favor the King James Version of the Bible over another. People utilize different translations for spiritual growth. However, if a couple of people are overemphasizing the King James version, discrediting the other translations such as NIV and NLT, and condemning others in the church, the elders should meet to discuss and agree on how to handle this issue.

Elders at Family Church operate in all the aforementioned character qualities and responsibilities in this training manual. If concerns arise about these, an elder must discuss them with the other elders to gain a shared understanding.

Elders meet at Family Church usually on the second Tuesday of each month for prayer, vision, direction, study, and unity. They invite the sick to be prayed for at any time during that meeting. They study the Word together. They pray over one another, discuss the church’s mission and ministries, and assess the spiritual health of the church. Elders should encourage one another during their meetings. Elders are busy during the month shepherding, leading, encouraging, praying, ministering, and need the once-a-month gathering of elders for personal equipping, encouragement, and evaluation. Their gathering should be viewed as a mini-retreat with like-minded and hearted brothers who love their church and the Lord.

The lead pastor is the lead elder of the church as well. He sets the direction of the elder meeting. The elders as a whole serve as the boss for the lead pastor. A single elder or even a few elders are not the lead pastor’s boss. The lead pastor is the boss of all the other church pastors and staff. The elders as a whole can hire and fire the lead pastor. The lead pastor hires support staff such as custodial, secretarial help at his personal discretion with the church’s mission and values at the forefront. The lead pastor recommends pastoral support staff for hire to which the elders must come to unanimous agreement over an agreed upon evaluation process before hiring.

The lead pastor recommends the overall vision and mission to the elders for approval. The goal is a unanimous agreement to move forward. The pastoral staff, under the direction of the lead pastor, carries out the agreed-upon mission and vision in the day-to-day operations of the church and are not micromanaged by the elders.

Concerns about mission, vision, division, doctrine, spiritual health, pastoral staff, and other major issues of the church must be brought to the elders meeting (even if a special meeting is
needed) and should not be handled unilaterally but by individual elders without discussion and agreement by the entire eldership.

This workbook serves as the basis for the responsibilities of all elders. How these are “fleshed out” properly should be discussed among the elders to come to an agreement.

Elder Installation

The Elder Training Workbook serves as a tool to identify potential elders in the local church. Completing the workbook does not guarantee eldership. After completion of the workbook between an existing elder and a potential elder, the determination will be made if the potential elder has a calling to be an elder at some point at Family Church. The existing elder will give a report to the other existing elders at their next meeting and determine if the potential elder should continue in observation and training. There is no rush to ordain elders at Family Church as Scriptures directs us not to lay hands suddenly on anyone (1 Timothy 5:22). That means a potential elder could continue with observation and training for several more months (but probably not past a year) until all the elders deem them ready for installation.

The installation process should include several meetings of the potential elder meeting with the entire eldership to discuss calling, qualifications, character, responsibilities, marriage, family, etc. Once the elders have prayed, processed, and come to a unanimous decision, they will set an installation date. The installation date is a “big deal” and should include inviting the potential elder’s family to church, calling the potential elder forward for prayer, informing the church body of the lengthy process for identifying and training, laying on of hands by as many elders as possible, and reading select Scriptures by the lead pastor. A sermon or extended teaching on elders may be appropriate as well that day. It may also be good to celebrate after church by hosting a meal where church members can congratulate and meet their newest elder (and other elders). An installation certificate with all the elder’s signatures will be presented to the new elder during the church service.

(Note: Our elders may have more input on the installation process and event. This section serves only as a guide for discussions along the way as our elders determine together what is best for the installation process and installation event. The lead pastor will guide the elders through this process during a few elder’s meetings leading up to installation.)