

“Understanding the Eldership of the Church” 5/17/09

George Ladd Quote

Types of Church Government

- 1) Episcopal- from *episkopos* (overseer or bishop). Churches ruled by hierarchy of archbishops, bishops, priests in different levels of authority. Catholic Church with Pope as supreme Bishop of Rome; Anglican and Episcopal church with Archbishops ruling; Methodist and Lutheran churches typically follow this model with some variation.
- 2) Presbyterian- from *presbuteros* (elder). Elder rule is divided into Sessions (local churches), Presbytery Synods (council of Elders from groups of Sessions who make binding decisions for those local churches), General Session (council of Elders from Presbyteries).
- 3) Congregational- Complete democratic system; Single-Elder; Plurality of Elders

J. Alec Motyer Quote

POINT 1- To understand Eldership we need to know the biblical **STRUCTURE**

- A. The structure of the Eldership recognizes the **TERMINOLOGY**
(Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2; 1. Shepherd, pastor- Eph 4:11;
2. Overseer, Bishop- 1 Tim 3:1; Titus 1:7; 3. Elder)
- B. The structure of the Eldership maintains a **PLURALITY**
(Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23; 11:30; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4; 20:17-18; 21:18;
James 5:14-15; 1 Tim 5:17, 19 – singular “elder”; 1 Pet 5:1; Philippians 1:1)

Going Deeper *God wants His church to recognize the Holy Spirit appointed leadership!*

POINT 2- To understand Eldership we need to know the biblical **PRIORITIES**

- A. The priorities of the Eldership are rooted in **CHARACTER**
(1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; able to teach sound doctrine- 1:9; Tim 3:2)
- B. The priorities of the Eldership are shown in their God-given **TASKS**
(Shepherd/Pastor- 1 Peter 5:2; 1. Protect- Acts 20:17, 28-31a; Tit 1:5-9;
1 Peter 2:25; 2. Feed- Ezek 34:15; Isa 40:11; John 21:15, 17; Acts 2:42;
1 Tim 5:17-18; 3. Lead- manage/overseer, Acts 20:28; Heb 13:7, 17; Tit 1:7
as steward; 4. Care- Acts 20:35; James 5:14; 1 Thess 5:12; John 21:16)

Going Deeper *God wants His church to follow His Word and appoint qualified men!*

POINT 3- To understand Eldership we need to know the biblical **REWARD**

- A. The reward of serving in the Eldership comes from the Chief **SHEPHERD**
(1 Pet 5:1-4; 1 Tim 3:1; 1 Tim 5:17; 1 Thess 5:12; **Matt 23:7-9**)

ELDER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Going Deeper *God wants His church to honor and submit to His ordained Eldership!*

George Ladd in *A Theology of the New Testament*, page 534,

“It appears likely that there was no normative pattern of church government in the apostolic age, and that the organizational structure of the church is no essential element in the theology of the church.”

J. Alec Motyer in *The Message of James*, page 189,

“It is not as much as hinted in the New Testament that the church would ever need- or indeed should ever want or tolerate- any other local leadership than that of the Eldership group.”