

I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD: A SOCIETY

- A. I see different facets of the church in scripture. I believe that God intends the church to function as a family, army, bride, body, priesthood, temple, and as a society.
- B. God intends that we function as a society of believers with a corporate purpose, structure, and government. The church is a society only in the sense that it unifies His people to move in one direction to fulfill His purposes. God gave the government to secure unity in society and among its people. Government or authority is always that foundational issue of unity.
- C. Webster defines a kingdom as, “An organized community, having a form of government headed by a king or queen.” Therefore, when we think of God’s kingdom we must think of a society of redeemed believers with a government headed by Jesus.
- D. God’s Kingdom is a theocracy (ruled by God) and not a democracy (ruled by popular vote). God’s Kingdom is ruled by His government which is expressed on earth through God’s delegated authority. The four spheres of delegated authority are expressed in civil government, church government, employers, and the family unit.
- E. God’s government flows from the Head (Jesus) yet it rests upon His shoulders (Isa. 9:6-7). I believe the shoulders of the Body of Christ are the five-fold ministry described in Eph. 4:11.
- F. God’s delegated authority in the church (the society of believers) is the eldership, which must be appointed and anointed by God Himself (1 Tim. 5:17; Acts 20:28).
- G. The basic function of the eldership in both the Old and New Testament was to rule. In other words, to express God’s government on earth as representatives of His delegated authority. “Let the elders who rule...” (1 Tim. 5:17).
- H. Kingdom blessing and power will have the most permanent and widespread impact when it comes in proper relationship to Kingdom authority or government. The full impact of blessing soon disappears without proper government (authority) to maintain unity.

II. THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS (2 THES. 2:7; MT. 24:12)

- A. Lawlessness is powerfully at work seeking to bring division, strife, and destruction to every order of society.
- B. There are overt forms of lawlessness such as murder, war, theft, etc. There are also subtle forms of lawlessness that undermine God’s government in both the secular and “spiritual” societies. The overt and subtle forms of lawlessness are both enemies of righteousness.

- C. The Spirit of independence in the church which claims to be under no authority at all is a subtle expression of this lawlessness. The independent believer does what is right in his own eyes without any reference to God's corporate purposes (Judg. 21:25). They claim to be "of Christ" and therefore they have no sense of obligation to cooperate with God's authority in the church. The independent believers that claimed to be "of Christ" gave Paul great resistance and trouble (1 Cor. 1:12; 2 Cor. 10:7-12; 11:12-15).
- D. Jesus prophesied that this independent and stubborn spirit would climax in the final generation. Lawlessness will increase causing love to grow cold (Mt. 24:12). Lawlessness always produces strife which destroys the love of the brethren. This conflict of authority will be the greatest conflict of the ages (Rev. 12:10; 13:4-7).
- E. The church will triumph with a people fully unified which results partially from being submitted to authority (Jn. 17:21-22). Therefore, understanding eldership is a vital aspect of this triumph.

III. THREE GREEK WORDS DESCRIBING ELDEERSHIP

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; 3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; 4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence 5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); 6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 1Tim. 3:1-7

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— 6 if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. Titus 1:5-9

- A. Presbuteros (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5)
 - 1. This is a noun which translates into the word "Elder".
 - 2. This noun denotes stature by comparison of age, maturity, or authority.
- B. Episkopos (1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7; Acts 10:28; Phil. 1:1)
 - 1. This is a noun which translates into the word "Overseer" (KJV-Bishop).
 - 2. This word denotes function.
 - 3. It is a compound word: Epi = over, and skopos = see (to oversee).

4. The verb form translates “to oversee” (1 Pet. 5:2).
- C. Poimen (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28)
1. The verb form translates “to shepherd” or “to feed”.
 2. This word is usually used in the verb form to describe the work of an elder or an overseer.
 3. It is used as a noun only one time in relation to government in the church (Eph. 4:11).
- D. Three Passages describing the same man
1. Elder: presbuteros (Acts 20:17)
 - a. Episkopos: This same elder is also referred to as an overseer (Acts 20:28).
 - b. Poimen: This elder is called to shepherd or feed the flock (Acts 20:28).
 2. Elder: presbuteros (1 Pet. 5:1)
 - a. Episkopos: This same elder is called to give oversight (1 Pet. 5:1).
 - b. Poimen: This same elder is called to shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1).
 3. Elder: presbuteros (Titus 1:5)
 - a. Episkopos: This same elder is also referred to as an overseer (Titus 1:7).
 - b. Poimen: This elder is called to shepherd or feed the flock (Titus 1:9).

IV. PLURALITY OF ELDERS

- A. Every church in the New Testament was ruled by a group of elders instead of a one-man eldership. This is called “plurality” and it describes team ministry as God’s pattern for eldership.
- B. The New Testament church was committed to the plurality of elders (Acts 11:30; Acts 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; Phil. 1:1)
- C. Plurality of elders does not imply equality of authority within that eldership. There are many elders in the city church, yet they all vary in their individual function and responsibility and therefore they all vary in their authority within their particular eldership. Authority within a local Body is always based on practical function and responsibility in that local Body.
- D. Eldership must always be created by the need rather than by a traditional number required to fill the eldership quota. A man can only have true authority as he fills a genuine need in a local Body. To carry the title “elder” without meeting a genuine need is only empty words.

- E. Why did Moses choose 70 elders? Because 70 men were needed.
- F. To select all those who qualify as elders without reference to them fulfilling a specific need is unfair to those who qualify. Such an eldership suffers the frustration of having an office/title without a genuine function.
- G. God's ideal is to unify all the God-ordained elders in each city to form the one unified city eldership. We believe that some cities will begin to see that ideal fulfilled to some degree before the Lord returns. Such unity in a city eldership would require a supernatural intervention of God. Praise the Lord!

V. THE THREE-FOLD WORK OF AN OVERSEER

- A. To Rule
 - 1. Ruling includes the responsibility and authority to bring direction and correction to the church.
 - 2. Such direction and correction brings resolution to the needy issues of the church.
 - 3. The ability to discern needy areas or needy people that require new direction or correction is fundamental to the eldership that "brings resolution".
 - 4. The elder is called to rule but never dominate another believer's faith.
 - a. Rule (1 Tim. 3:17; 1 Thes. 5:12-14; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; Rom. 12:8; Acts 15:22)
 - b. Dominate (2 Cor. 1:24; 10:8; 13:10; Mt. 20:25; 1 Pet. 5:3)
 - 5. The elder rules in the tenderness and care of a father (1 Tim. 3:5; 1 Thes. 2:7-11).
 - 6. The eldership brings "rule" to all spheres of the corporate church life.
 - a. The ministry spheres:
 - (1) Paul directed Timothy's movement in ministry.
 - (2) The Jerusalem elders determined ministry issues (Acts 15:1-6, 22-23; Acts 16:4).
 - b. The financial spheres (Acts 4:34; 5:2; 11:29-30)
 - c. The administrative spheres: to meet practical needs (Acts 6:6).
 - d. The spiritual spheres: the spiritual diet of the local Body.
- B. To watch over the souls of believers (Heb. 13:17). The eldership is responsible to make available the following ministry to each believer. Each believer must take the initiative to respond freely.

1. To develop the weak areas: character weakness, emotional instability, inability to cope with pressure, immature areas, etc.
 2. To adjust the areas of sin: rebellion, and wrong attitudes.
 3. To develop the areas of strength, calling, and gifting.
 4. To provide oversight for blind spots in one's perspective of his or her life. The eldership is available to provide counsel and confirmation for one's personal direction.
 5. To "take care of" the needs of the church (1 Tim. 3:5).
 6. To oversee and to feed (shepherd) the church (Acts 20:28).
 7. To watch for wolves (Acts 20:29-31).
 8. To help the weak (Acts 20:35; 1 Thes. 5:14).
 9. To minister to the sick (Jas. 5:14-15).
- C. To teach
1. The eldership is responsible to provide a proper diet in the Word to equip the Body to fulfill God's corporate purposes and to nourish the individual believer in faith, hope, and love. A balanced diet includes some food that tastes good and some food that does not taste good. This involves individual and corporate instruction of the word.
 2. The elders must be able to teach at least at the individual level (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7-9; 2 Tim. 2:2; Heb. 13:7).
 3. The elder admonishes and counsels the individual believer (1 Thes. 5:13-17).

VI. DEACONS

- A. Deacons, like elders have a crucial role in the life and the health of the local church, but their role is different from the elders'. The biblical role of deacons is to take care of the physical and logistical needs of the church. This team approach with the elders validates the calling of each role releasing each other to operate in their primary biblical functions.
- B. This distinction is based on the pattern found in Acts 6:1–6. The apostles were devoted "to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (v. 4). Since this was their primary calling, seven men were chosen to handle more practical matters in order to allow the apostles the freedom to continue with their work.
- C. This division of labor is similar to what we see with the offices of elder and deacon. Like the apostles, the elders' primary role is one of preaching the Word of God. Like the seven, deacons serve the congregation in whatever practical needs may arise.

VII. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

- A. The only passage that mentions the qualifications for deacons is 1 Timothy 3:8–13. In this passage, Paul gives an official but not exhaustive list of the requirements for deacons
- B. The similarities of the qualifications for deacons and elders/overseers in 1 Timothy 3 are striking. Like the qualifications for elders, a deacon must:
1. not be an addict (v. 3,)
 2. not greedy for dishonest gain (v. 3)
 3. blameless (v. 2; Titus 1:6)
 4. the husband of one wife (v. 2)
 5. an able manager of his children and household (vv. 4–5).
 6. Furthermore, the focus of the qualifications is the moral character of the person who is to fill the office: a deacon must be mature and above reproach.

The main difference between an elder and a deacon is a difference of gifts and calling, not character

- C. Paul identifies nine qualifications for deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8-12:
1. ***Dignified*** (v. 8): This term normally refers to something that is honorable, respectable, esteemed, or worthy, and is closely related to “respectable,” which is given as a qualification for elders (1 Tim. 3:2).
 2. ***Not double-tongued*** (v. 8): Those who are double-tongued say one thing to certain people but then say something else to others, or say one thing but mean another. They are two-faced and insincere. Their words cannot be trusted, so they lack credibility.
 3. ***Not addicted to much wine*** (v. 8): A man is disqualified for the office of deacon if he is addicted to wine or other strong drink. Such a person lacks self-control and is undisciplined.
 4. ***Not greedy for dishonest gain*** (v. 8): If a person is a lover of money, he is not qualified to be a deacon, especially since deacons often handle financial matters for the church.
 5. ***Sound in faith and life*** (v. 9): Paul also indicates that a deacon must “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” The phrase “the mystery of the faith” is simply one way Paul speaks of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16). Consequently, this statement refers to the need for deacons to hold firm to the true gospel without wavering. Yet this qualification does not merely involve one’s beliefs, for he must also hold these beliefs “with a clear conscience.” That is, the behavior of a deacon must be consistent with his beliefs.

6. **Blameless** (v. 10): Paul writes that deacons must “be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless” (v. 10). “Blameless” is a general term referring to a person’s overall character. Although Paul does not specify what type of testing is to take place, at a minimum, the candidate’s personal background, reputation, and theological positions should be examined.
 7. **Godly wife** (v. 11): It is debated whether verse 11 refers to a deacon’s wife or to a deaconess. For the sake of this discussion, we will assume the verse is speaking about the qualifications of a deacon’s wife. According to Paul, deacons’ wives must “be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things” (v. 11). Like her husband, the wife must be dignified or respectable. Secondly, she must not be a slanderer or a person who goes around spreading gossip. A deacon’s wife must also be sober-minded or temperate. That is, she must be able to make good judgments and must not be involved in things that might hinder such judgment. Finally, she must be “faithful in all things” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10). This is a general requirement which functions similarly to the requirement for elders to be “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6) and for deacons to be “blameless” (1 Tim. 3:10).
 8. **Husband of one wife** (v. 12): The best interpretation of this difficult phrase is to understand it as referring to the faithfulness of a husband toward his wife. He must be a “one-woman man.” That is, there must be no other woman in his life to whom he relates in an intimate way either emotionally or physically.
 9. **Manage children and household well** (v. 12): A deacon must be the spiritual leader of his wife and children.
- D. In general, if a moral qualification is listed for elders but not for deacons, that qualification still applies to deacons. The same goes for those qualifications listed for deacons but not for elders. For example, a deacon should not be double-tongued (v. 8, ESV). Paul does not explicitly say this about elders, but no doubt it applies to elders since Paul has said that elders must be “above reproach,” which would include this prohibition.
- E. Still, we should observe the differences in the qualifications, since they either signify a trait that is particularly fitting for the office-holder in order to accomplish his duties, or is something that was a problem in the location to which Paul writes (in this case, Ephesus). This should be more clear as we turn to considering a deacon’s responsibilities.

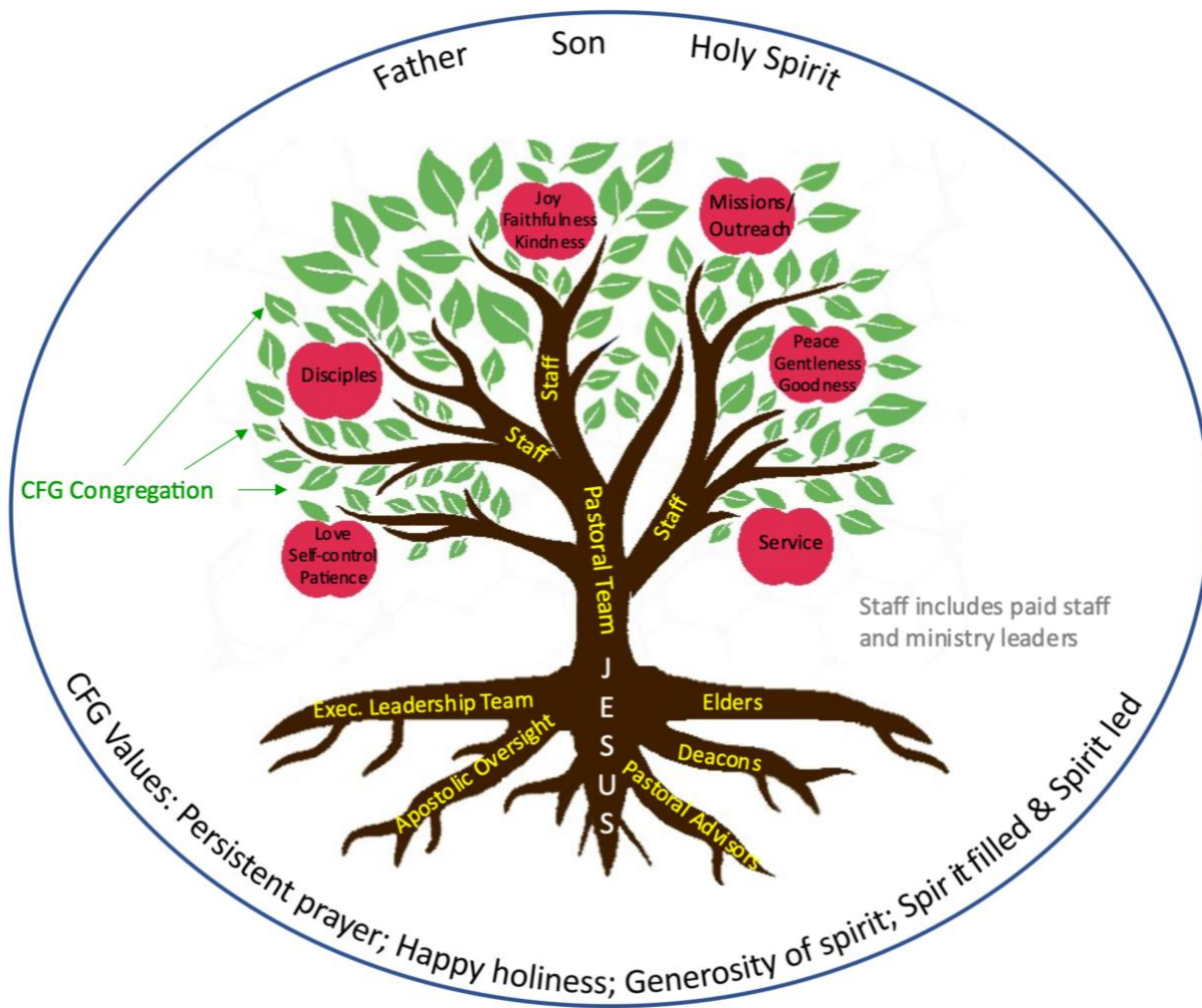
VIII. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEACONS

- A. The New Testament does not provide much information concerning the role of deacons. The requirements given in 1 Timothy 3:8-12 focus on the deacon’s character and family life. There are, however, some clues as to the function of deacons when their requirements are compared with those of the elders. Although many of the qualifications are the same or very similar, there are some notable differences.

- B. Perhaps the most noticeable distinction between elders and deacons is that deacons do not need to be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). Deacons are called to “hold” to the faith with a clear conscience, but they are not called to “teach” that faith (1 Tim. 3:9). This suggests that the deacons do not have an official teaching role in the church.
- C. Like elders, deacons must manage their house and children well (1 Tim. 3:4, 12). But when referring to deacons, Paul omits the section where he compares managing one’s household to taking care of God’s church (1 Tim. 3:5). The reason for this omission is most likely due to the fact that deacons are not given a ruling or leading position in the church—that function belongs to the elders.
- D. Although Paul indicates that a person must be tested before he can hold the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:10), the requirement that he cannot be a new convert is not included. Paul notes that if an elder is a recent convert “he may become puffed up with conceit” (1 Tim. 3:6). One implication concerning this distinction could be that those who hold the office of elder are more susceptible to pride because they possess leadership over the church. On the contrary, it is not as likely for a deacon, who is in more of a servant role, to fall into this same sin. Finally, the title “overseer” (1 Tim. 3:2) implies general oversight over the spiritual well-being of the congregation, whereas the title “deacon” implies one who has a service-oriented ministry.
- E. Based on the pattern established in Acts 6 with the apostles and the Seven, it seems best to view deacons as servants who do whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church.
- F. What are some duties that deacons might be responsible for today? They could be responsible for anything that’s not related to teaching and shepherding the church. Such duties might include:
1. **Facilities:** The deacons could be responsible for managing the church property. This would include making sure the place of worship is prepared for the worship service, cleaning up, or running the sound system.
 2. **Benevolence:** Similar to what took place in Acts 6:1–6 with the daily distribution to the widows, the deacons may be involved in administrating funds or other assistance to the needy.
 3. **Finances:** While the elders should probably oversee the financial business of the church (Acts 11:30), it may be best left to the deacons to handle the day-to-day matters. This would include collecting and counting the offering, keeping records, and so on.
 4. **Ushers:** The deacons could be responsible for distributing bulletins, seating the congregation, or preparing the elements for communion.
 5. **Logistics:** Deacons should be available to help in variety of ways so that the elders are able to concentrate on teaching and shepherding the church.

IX. SPECIFIC LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE FOR CFG

A. Jesus Christ is the head of the one true Church. To fulfill the purpose of this Church, it needs to be structured in a way that each of its congregants are willingly and fruitfully engaged in its ministry. A healthy, thriving fruit tree provides a good illustration of how the Church can best be organized to function. The following diagram illustrates the parallels between the CFG structure and a fruit bearing tree.



- B. The roots, trunk and branches represent various aspects of Church leadership, organized to nourish, support and facilitate the ministry of CFG by all of its congregants. It also provides for the growth of CFG's congregants, for CFG's alignment with biblical principles, its development of community outreach, its spiritual governance, and its administration. The leaves of the tree represent every congregant involved in CFG, which includes everyone in a leadership role in CFG. Congregants with leadership roles can find themselves located in multiple places on the tree diagram.
- C. All congregants are expected to reflect the harmonious relationships required for the effective functioning of the Church.
1. The Pastors and the Elders provide spiritual leadership of CFG. Together they give direction to Ministry, which is the primary function of CFG. Ministry activities are led by the Senior Pastor for the healthy, biblical, and spiritual development of CFG and its congregants. The Senior Pastor will call upon the Pastors, the Staff, the Elders, the Deacons, and the members and congregants, as required, to carry on the Ministry of CFG.
 2. The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for the governance of CFG in the areas of approving its vision and objectives, approving leaders, monitoring performance, and overseeing conduct standards. The Executive Leadership Team includes the Pastors, the Elders, and the Deacons, and is chaired by the Senior Pastor.
 - a. The Executive Leadership Team is accountable to secular authorities for the conduct of CFG in matters related to their authority.
 3. The Staff primarily handles administration and some of the Ministry activities, under the leadership of the Senior Pastor or their pastoral delegate.
 4. The Deacons' responsibilities include management of the financial, property, and business matters of CFG, and administering care for the poor and needy congregants of CFG. The Deacons are accountable to the Executive Leadership Team.
 5. The congregants' responsibilities include maintaining healthy relationships within CFG, carrying out ministries of CFG, and allowing God to produce fruit in their lives.