

We aim to reconcile people unto God through Christ

SERMON TITLE:	RESPONSIBILITY OF ELDERS IN THE CHURCH #2
PREACHER:	ROELOF KWANT
DATE:	30.05.2010

Elders are called to provide three basic foundational responsibilities in the life of the Church – protection, direction and correction. There are many different issues involved in the three basic areas of responsibility, without them the church will not reach its full potential.

In Acts 20:28-31

²⁸Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, ^[b] which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

We started 2 weeks ago by looking at the first of the three foundational responsibilities which was

1. Give protection

- Elders Guard the Church
- Elders are responsible for the spiritual diet of the church
- Elders lay down their lives for the sheep
- Elders are responsible to pray for the believers under their care
- Elders teach the Flock
- Elders safeguard the church against false ministries

2. Give direction

Elders are called to set out the course for the church. They are responsible for the vision and direction of the church. Keeping watch over the flock means they are called to rule the church.

Elders rule the church. Historically when the word ruling is used it has not got a positive connotation. To most of us when the word rule or ruler is used it has the connotation of domination and control.

When Elders are called to rule the church it has to be carried out with the heart of a Shepherd, the heart of love and self sacrifice. Leadership has to be by example. Governing the church is both spiritual and managerial.

In the early church Peter dealt with some elders who were Lording over “those entrusted to them”. 1 Peter 5:3. He condemned their behaviour. Being an elder is never about power but about servanthood and leading by example.

Floyd McClung in his book “The Father Heart of God”, show the difference between dominating leaders who try to lord it over people and those who rule as fathers in the Lord.

Dominating Fathers	Fathers in the Lord
1. Function as if they are the source of guidance for people's lives	1. Believe that God is the source of guidance and desire to help other Christians learn to hear His voice
2. Emphasise the rights of leaders	2. Emphasise the responsibilities of leaders
3. Set leaders apart and give them special privileges	3. Emphasise the body of Christ serving one another
4. Seek control over peoples actions	4. Encourage people to be dependent on God
5. Emphasise the importance of leaders ministering to others	5. Emphasise the importance of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry
6. Use rules and laws to control people and force them to conform to a mould	6. Provide the atmosphere of trust and grace to encourage growth

Elders have chosen a life of servant leadership not rulers and dictators. They are fathers in the church who understand that God leads His people through theocracy rather than monarchy or democracy.

Let's look at three types of rule and see the difference:

Autocratic Rule is ruling with little or no regard for the input of others. It is a monarchy when one person "runs the show". A King rules a country. God runs the universe in an autocratic way because he is the King of the universe. It is only God who can dictate. No one, including elders should have this kind of authoritarian power. The desire for power should be a foreign concept to elders. Elders do not dictate they direct.

Democratic rule is allowing people to rule. In many parts of the world society runs the world by voting power. Some churches use democratic rule or voting to make decisions in the church. In this kind of rule the people have the majority of power. Final decisions are made by popular vote.

Theocratic rule is the third type of rule, which is the Biblical model. This is God ruling through His divinely appointed leaders. It is God-rule or God-inspired rule.

Rom 8:14 Says

"those who are lead by the Spirit of God are the sons of God".

How does God inspire and eldership team to rule

- Through His Spirit
- Through His word
- Through wise council of others

Elders are answerable to their fellow believers and to God. They do not dictate but lead by the spirit and the word and wise council.

Elders govern the church. Elders are appointed and put in place to govern the church, this implies that they have authority and responsibility. Paul would not have warned the elders in 1 Peter 5:3 against lording over the people if they had no authority. Humble servanthood does not imply they have no authority.

Heb 13:17

obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give account.

Paul writes to the church in Thessalonians and says

1 Thessalonians 5:12

" respect those who work hard among you and who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you."

Directing the church means they have responsibility and authority to handle the legal responsibilities of the church. They have financial responsibility over the church.

In Acts 11:27-30 Barnabas and Saul delivered a gift from the believers in Antioch for the church in Jerusalem and it was handed over to the elders who were responsible to disperse this gift to those in need.

3. Give correction

Someone once said “if you don’t like problems don’t be an elder”. Every local church will have its’ problems that need to be addressed.

Acts 20:30

³⁰Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

Sometimes people are led astray by ignoring the truth, others by distorting the truth, others may add to the truth. Sometimes people are led astray by a divisive person in the church. Others may fall into an immoral lifestyle.

Paul writes to Titus as recorded in Titus 2:15 and encourages the church to “encourage and rebuke with all authority.” In Titus 3:10 he says a divisive man should be warned. Elders are the ones who bring correction when necessary.

Elders who bring correction respond in love, like fathers but sometimes sternly. A father wants his son to learn and not repeat the same mistakes he made. A father’s goal is a loving investment in his son, to see him become all he can be. A father sees the benefit of discipline and understands that discipline produces fruit.

Elders in bringing correction do so for the protection of the body. The final goal is to bring wholeness and not humiliation.

When Paul found out that the Corinthian church were tolerating sin he chastised the leaders for their tolerance of sin. 1 Cor 5. He encourages Titus to warn the divisive person in the church (Titus 3:10). He instructed Timothy to correct those who were teaching false doctrines (1 Tim 1:3).

The responsibility of the Elders is not to help people to have fun, it is to guide them towards holiness.

In the great commission in Matt 28:20 it says “and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.

A good way to discern if an Elder is doing a proper job is to ask this question “is he teaching the people to obey everything the Lord commanded.”

An elder who desires to be popular will fail.