

**Studies in Church Leadership: Lesson One**  
***“Elders are NOT Optional”***

**i. Elders: God’s Plan for the Church:**

- a. It is obvious that there is a general need for organization in any undertaking:
  - i. Any time you have two or more people working together, there is no way that you will get as much accomplished as you would if there was some organization among you over who was going to work on what task, and when, for how long, etc
    1. In the absence of a plan of organization, not only will things not function properly, more often than not they will fall apart:

***ii. The Church is no different:***

1. It is the lack of organization in local churches that is often the greatest obstacle in Christians accomplishing the mission that God has given to the church:
2. And its not as though this is some revelation to a great mystery. Churches know this and often lament it: *(many have observed that they have never worshipped in a congregation without elders: would wager to say that there are at least equal if not more congregations who do not have elders, and have not had elders for many years)*
3. The desire to be organized, but the lacking in Elders, has led many to try and organize the Church in other ways:
  - a. Perhaps one of the most common, and one of the easiest to fall into, is that of having the **Preacher** be the de facto leader of a congregation: This is certainly the case in most denominations today:
    - i. But it in essence falls to the Preacher as the most visible member to be responsible for virtually everything in the church
  - b. It may be a man or men who take it upon themselves to be elders in everything but wearing the name; it might be that the congregation appoints various members to make up different committees.
    - i. The Bible would say that all of these are unscriptural ways to organize the church

4. Whatever it is that we try to put in place of Elders, it is not God's plan for what the Lord's Church is to look like:
  - a. Even business meetings are not a substitute for church leadership:
  - b. *Business meeting is an expedient means to exchange ideas in order to come to some kind of agreement as to how we can work together to get things done that the church needs to do in the absence of any oversight --it is not a ruling body. The only scriptural ruling body is an eldership. -Ed Bragwell Sr.*

**b. If we want** to build congregations that are pleasing to God, we have to use the pattern that He has left us: And the only pattern for Church leadership that can be found in scripture is an Eldership

- i. It is a pattern that is seen as a running theme throughout scripture:
  1. Paul in his letters to various churches, would occasionally include the Elders and Deacons in his greetings, such as in **Philippians 1:1**
    - a. (And while we wouldn't use that to try and prove Elders as God's only plan, It is telling that Paul and other Apostles never addressed any other office)
  2. We see that Elders overseeing works in different churches throughout Acts:
    - a. In **Acts 15** the Elders were guiding the Christians at the church in Jerusalem through difficult decisions
    - b. In **Acts chapter 20** we read about Paul giving instruction to the Elders of Ephesus on what to be on guard for as the worked among the Christians back home
    - c. It was important enough that Paul and Barnabas made return trips to the congregations that they had established during their first missionary journey and according to **Acts 14:23** appointed Elders in every church:
    - d. Instructions are given to both Timothy and Titus on the qualifications for men who would be Elders, and **Titus 1:5** especially stands out by identifying a church without Elders as "lacking"
      - i. As we said previously, this does not indicate that a congregation without elders is automatically made up of people who are not pleasing God; but it does highlight that it is an incomplete congregation:

ii. There is no way to read through the New Testament and somehow miss that it is God's plan for a Church to have Elders, except to ignore it:

i. Yes, this is a very basic point: "we need Elders because God said we do"... But it is a basic point that has to be in the back of our minds constantly as we move forward. It keeps us from giving up, it keeps us working towards the Goal, and it keeps us from pursuing other options: