

Developing Elders in the Local Church

The Scriptures teach that there are many resources within each congregation at two levels: (1) in gifts and callings of lay ministry and (2) in lay leadership. God has designed the church, the body of Christ, to produce growth within itself through development of these two areas. The church needs leaders who can “equip the saints to do the work of the ministry,” and throughout the Bible we find references and descriptions of those who are called “elders.” Deeper study and reflection reveal the strength and key roles they have within any community of believers. They are examples, they feed, protect, care for and equip the flock, and they stimulate community by their presence and service. In a group context of “working by agreement or consensus,” they find themselves both under authority and called to exercise authority and protect the church over which they have been made overseers. This session looks at how such men are found, developed, and recognized to serve the local church.

Tom Streeter is the teaching elder of the church he began in Zionsville, Indiana, in 1981. Having planted churches in Illinois and Indiana, his 45 years of pastoral ministry have been characterized by a devotion to developing disciples within the context of the church. Whether training believers in participatory worship, meaningful relationships, cultural engagement, or a vigorous life of the mind, he has a passion for right thinking and authentic living. His lifelong study in theology, the church, and history has included leading several Reformation tours in Europe along with his wife, Judy.

I. Eldership: A biblical pattern

A. Not a new idea

1. Community leaders—Genesis 50:7

2. Men who are “elders indeed”—Numbers 11

a. Age and experience

b. Practicing leadership and care

c. Men of the Spirit

d. Plurality: “the elders”

3. New Testament pattern

B. Resource for today

a. Model of maturity for all Christians

b. Model of virtuous behavior

c. Model of manhood

II. What elders do

A. Example

B. Teach

C. Oversee

D. Shepherd

E. Community

F. Serving Authority

G. Under Authority

III. Let them *also* first be tested: I Timothy 3:10

A. Having right *aspirations*

B. Building the right *reputation*

C. Building the right *relationships*

D. Holding fast to *biblical teaching*

IV. Appointing elders

A. In an existing church

B. In a new church