

How Will The Bridge Be Governed as a Church?

Short Summary

As The Bridge, we have committed to discern our structure, methodologies, and practices from The Bible and from the established historical Traditions that are foundational to the Christian faith rather than simply copying what has been done before in one church or another. Thus, because all of the churches in the New Testament were governed by elders, because the Bible proscribes two church offices (the office of elder and the office of deacon), and because Baptists have historically recognized that there are two church offices (elders who lead and deacons who serve), it is my intention that we adopt an elder form of government at The Bridge. These elders will be men selected from the congregation who meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 2:12-3:7 and Titus 1:5-9 and who are affirmed as spiritual leaders by the congregation. The biblical duties of the elders are to govern the church, take responsibility for the preaching / teaching in the church, equip others to teach and do ministry, and to shepherd the church. As the lead pastor, I will serve as the lead elder. Down the road, other staff members may or may not be considered elders depending on their responsibilities. Under this system, the elders would be responsible for top level, strategic decision making in the church, the Leadership Team would be entrusted by the elders with responsibility for the more hands on direction of specific events and ministries, and team leaders under the Leadership Team would lead their individual teams and ministries in a manner consistent with the vision and direction set by the elders. The congregation would “vote on,” or more aptly stated give or withhold affirmation on, only a few key decisions such as the appointment of elders, the hiring and firing of the lead pastor, and perhaps a few other key decisions. The identity and role of the office of deacon at The Bridge is still somewhat of an open question at this point.

Introduction

Throughout the history of the Christian faith, churches have practiced a number of forms of “baptism.” These forms of “baptism” have differed in both the “how” (sprinkling, pouring, immersion) and the “who” (infants or believers). Most of what has been historically practiced as “baptism” by churches has not been believer’s baptism by immersion. Baptists however hold to believer’s baptism by immersion because this is what the New Testament means when it refers to baptism. Even though it is a symbol, Baptists affirm that it is important for us to be faithful to the instructions that Christ has set forth for us in His Word. There are a number of ways that baptism has been practiced, but there is also one way proscribed by Scripture. We, however, could correctly say that the New Testament gives us a great deal of latitude in performing the ordinance baptism. We would affirm that baptism can take place in a river, lake, ocean, baptismal pool, swimming pool, hot tub, bath tub, etc. We would affirm that the baptismal candidate has latitude in the type of clothing that is worn. We would affirm that the person performing the baptism might be a pastor, a deacon, or any other person who has committed to follow Christ. We do not insist that the baptism be performed in our church, in a Baptist church, or really even in a church at all. The Bible gives us freedom and flexibility in many of the details, but where the Bible gives us specifics we are to follow those specifics.

Throughout the history of the Christian faith, churches have practiced a number of forms of church government. The three main forms of church government are labeled as Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Congregational. As Congregationalist, Baptists recognize that each church is responsible for its own governance and that there is no group outside of an individual church that can tell that church how to govern itself. However, there are a number of forms of Congregationalism. In some Congregational churches the church body votes on every decision, in some the church body votes on

only a few decisions and the deacons or the church staff or the senior pastor or the elders are responsible for most of the governing of the church. There are a number of forms of church government have been practiced, but there is also a way that is proscribed by Scripture. We can correctly say that there is flexibility and freedom in many of the details of how a church governs itself, but where the Bible gives us specifics we are to follow those specifics. For this reason, it is my intention that, recognizing that we affirm a Congregational style of church government, we adopt a form of Congregational church government that includes a governing body of elders. In the following, I have laid out the reasons that we should pursue this form of government and discussed in some detail the identity and roles of the two biblical church offices: the office of elder and the office of deacon. Unfortunately, in many churches, the office of elder has been ignored and the office of deacon has been misunderstood. However, there is a trend in many modern churches to correct this error.

Why Have Elders?

(1) **All New Testament churches had elders:** It is clear from an examination of the New Testament that all New Testament churches were led by elders. In fact, in Titus 1:5, Paul's instructions to Titus inform us that appointing elders is one of the first steps in establishing a church (*see also* Acts 14:21-23). Acts 11:27-30 tells us that there were elders over the churches in Judea. Acts 14:23 describes Paul and Barnabas appointing elders in "every church" in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. Acts 15:2 tells us that there were elders over the church of Jerusalem. Acts 20:17 tells us that there were elders over the church in Ephesus. Titus 1:5 tells us that there were elders in all the churches of Crete. James 1:1 and 5:14 inform us that there were elders over the all churches of the dispersion throughout all of the Roman Empire. 1 Peter 1:1 and 5:1 tells us that there were elders over the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The New Testament churches were comprised of people of different backgrounds and cultures, but it is apparent that all New Testament churches had elders.

(2) **The Bible tells us that one of the two biblical offices in the church is the office of elder:** In the New Testament, three different terms are used to describe the office of elder. Each of these terms describes a single office. The first term is of course "elder", which is the Greek word *presbuteros*. "Elder," when used in the context of the church, refers to a church office and not a stage in life. For example, James was the lead elder of the church at Jerusalem, which was consider to be "the Church" during the earliest days of New Testament (*see for example* Acts 15:12-21). James was the younger half-brother of Jesus, and thus was no older than 32 at the time of Christ's death. Timothy was also apparently young (*see* 1 Timothy 4:12), yet Timothy served as the lead elder of the church at Ephesus.

The Bible also calls elders "overseers" (or some translations say "bishops"), which is the Greek word *episcopos*. *Epi* means "over", *scopos* means "sees", so *episcopos* means "one who oversees." It carries the idea of a governing official, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly. It is clear, however, that elders and overseers are the same position. In Titus 1:5-7, these terms are used interchangeably: ⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint **elders** [*presbuteros*] in every town as I directed you— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an **overseer** [*episkopos*], as God's steward, must be above reproach" (ESV; notes and emphasis added).

The Bible also calls elders "pastors" or "shepherds", which is the Greek word *poimen* (which means "feeder of sheep"). It is again clear that elders, overseers, and pastors are the same position. In 1 Peter 5:1-4 and Acts 20, each of these terms is used interchangeably. 1 Peter 5:1-4 states, ¹ So I

exhort the **elders** [*presbuteros*] among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² **shepherd** [*poimaino*, the verb form of *poimen*] the flock of God that is among you, exercising **oversight** [*episkopeo*, the verb form of *episkopos*], not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” (ESV; notes and emphasis added). Acts 20:17-18, 28, reads, “¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the **elders** [*presbuteros*] of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them.... ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers** [*episkopos*], to **care for** [*poimaino*, the verb form of *poimen*; lit. “tend like a shepherd; rule; keep sheep”] the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” (ESV; notes and emphasis added).

(3) **Baptist confessions agree that the office of elder is one of the two offices in the church:** John Smyth, who in 1609 founded what is considered to be the very first Baptist church, listed two church offices: that of bishop and that of deacon.^a An early Baptist Confession from 1611 states: “The Officers of every Church or congregation are either Elders, who by their office do especially feed the flock concerning their souls, or Deacons, Men and Women, who by their office relieve the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren concerning their bodies.”^b Another early Baptist Confession states: “That Christ hath set in His outward church two sorts of ministers: some who are called pastors, teachers or elders, who administer the Word and sacraments, and others who are called Deacons, men and women: whose ministry is, to serve tables and wash the saints’ feet.”^c New Hampshire Baptist Confession of 1833, Section 13, states, “We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers [and]... that its only scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons....” According to the *1858 Abstracts and Principles of Southern Seminary*, Section XIV, “The regular officers of a Church are Bishops or Elders, and Deacons.” A Baptist Confession from 1879 states, “In addition to pastors or elders, the local church may have other responsible servants, for example deacons and deaconesses whose role it is to assist the pastors or elders in their ministry, by assuming especial responsibility for everything that relates to the material interests of the congregation.”^d The Baptist Faith & Message (2000), states in Section VI – “[The church’s] scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.” In earlier versions of the Baptist Faith & Messages, the churches Scriptural offices are listed as: “pastors and deacons” (1963) and “bishops or elders and deacons” (1925). The *1988 Resolution On the Priesthood of the Believer*, adopted at the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14-16, 1988, states in part, “Whereas, the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer can be used to justify the undermining of pastoral authority in the local church.... Be it further resolved, That the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer in no way contradicts the biblical understanding of the role, responsibility, and authority of the pastor which is seen in the command of the local church in Hebrews 13:17, ‘Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account;’ and Be finally resolved, That we affirm the truth that **elders, or pastors**, are called of God to lead the local church (Acts 20:28).” (Emphasis added).

^a *A Short Confession of Faith in Twenty Articles* by John Smyth, Article 16 (1609).

^b *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam*, Article 20 (1611).

^c *Propositions and Conclusions Concerning True Christian Religion*, Proposition 76 (1612-14).

^d *Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical Principles of the Evangelical Association of French-Speaking Baptist Churches*, Part 2, Article 2.

Who Are the Elders? Are They Paid Staff Members? Do They Have the Same Level of Responsibility?

Elders are men who are selected from the congregation, meet the requirements set forth in 1 Timothy 2:12-3:7 and Titus 1:5-9 (see below), and are affirmed as spiritual leaders by the congregation. Church staff members who have top level responsibility for teaching and leadership in the church (and especially the lead pastor) will likely serve as elders, but this does not mean that someone has to be a paid staff member to be an elder or that all staff members will automatically be elders.

1 Timothy 5:17 states, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” It can be inferred from this passage that, while all elders are responsible for leading, some elders also have higher levels of responsibilities because of their roles in preaching/teaching. Also, the context of this passage and the word that Paul uses for “honor” indicate that Paul is referring to financial pay, that is, those elders who devote a significant portion of time to leading the teaching and preaching ministries of the church are worthy of twofold honor in the sense of both respect and financial pay. This context is confirmed by the next verse, 1 Timothy 5:18, “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages.’” Thus, it seems that, in the New Testament church, some elders were paid by the church, while other elders had other jobs.

At The Bridge, we will have both elders who are paid staff members and elders who are not paid staff members. We will also recognize that some elders are entrusted with more responsibility (more on this below), especially those entrusted with the teaching/preaching ministry of the church. However, regardless of responsibility or pay, there is one office of elder. We will likely start with three elders and when we identify the need for more, look for men who are already demonstrating the level of spiritual leadership that we want from our elders and place them before the church to be affirmed as elders. (I have used the word “affirmed” here because the office of elder is not determined by a popularity contest, it is not something where everyone gets a turn, but rather it is the congregation’s affirmation that a candidate meets the qualifications set forth in Scripture and is being entrusted with leadership by the congregation).

Does This Mean that We Don’t Have a Lead Pastor?

No. As the lead pastor, I will also be an elder and I will serve as the leader amongst the elders. While there is only one office of elder, there is biblical and historical precedent for seeing one of the elders as a leader amongst the elders. He is still an elder, if there is the need for a vote he gets one vote, but he is entrusted by the elders and by the congregation as the leader. The phrase that is typically used to describe this relationship is that the lead pastor serves as the “first amongst equals” or “leader amongst equals.”

We see this pattern reflected in the biblical text in Acts 15. In Acts 15, all of the elders gather, all of the elders discuss towards a consensus, and when a decision starts to emerge one person, James who is the lead elder of the church of Jerusalem, stands up and says, “Here’s what we’re going to do.” This is also suggested in the Book of Revelation, as John writes the letter to seven churches, but addresses it to the singular “messenger” (many translations render “messenger” as “angel” as both are the same Greek word) of each church. Commentators see this address as referring to the lead pastor for each of the seven churches.

There is also a good argument for seeing one elder as the lead elder/pastor from the history and tradition of Christian churches over the past 2000 years. In Paige Patterson’s chapter arguing for

“Singular-Elder Congregationalism”^e in the book *Who Runs the Church*, Dr. Patterson, who is the president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, states, “when on February 23, AD 155, Polycarp, the near centenarian pastor of the church in Smyrna, walked to the stake and was burned, the church there had not just suffered the loss of one of its elders; it had lost its pastor. When Chrysostom addressed his parishioners in Saint Sophia’s for a final sermon in Constantinople in AD 404, then slipped across the Bosphorus under cover of night into exile, the Constantinopolitan church had lost its pastor. The people of the London’s Metropolitan Tabernacle knew that with the passing of the incomparable Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1892, they had lost their pastor. On January 10, 2002, when W.A. Criswell loosed from earthly moorings and entered heaven’s rest, the saints at First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, lost their pastor even though he had formally retired some years earlier.” Dr. Patterson goes on to argue that the pattern of “a single elder who is at least the decided leader of the congregation” is in accordance with the biblical pattern of God raising up a single leader from amongst the people, the influences of the Jewish synagogue on the early church, and that “this pattern is also true to the development of church history and to the psychology of leadership. John Chrysostom was the obvious pastor at Antioch and later at Saint Sophia’s in Constantinople. Augustine was the clear leader at Hippo. Jonathan Edwards was the pastor at Northampton, etc. Even in congregations where more than one elder functions, the contemporary milieu often finds one designated *senior pastor*, almost always a reference to his priority in leadership rather than his age.” In response to Dr. Patterson’s chapter, Roy Taylor, even though he argues for a Presbyterian form of government, states, “Few would dispute the reality that whoever is the pastor has the primary role of spiritual leadership in the congregation, no matter a local church’s form of government.”

What Do Elders Do? (The Offices of the Church)

While all followers of Christ are called to minister inside and outside the church, the Bible recognizes only two church “offices”: that of the ***pastors/elders*** and that of the ***deacons***. The qualifications for pastors are found in 1 Timothy 2:12-3:7 and Titus 1:6-9 and the qualifications for deacons are found in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The only significant difference in these two lists of qualifications is that deacons are not required to be able to teach or to exercise authority over the church. Likewise, there is almost no difference in the qualifications of deacons and the New Testament expectations for every Christian.

DUTIES OF THE PASTORS/ELDERS:

(1) **Governing the Church:** In Acts 20:28, Paul tells the elders, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for [*poimaino*] the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (ESV). The Greek word “*poimaino*” means to tend like a shepherd, to rule or govern. In 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul states, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (ESV). 1 Timothy 3:3-5 states, “⁴ [An elder] must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” (ESV). Peter instructs elders that they are not to use their governing power for their own personal gain stating, “¹ So I exhort the elders among you,

^e From Dr. Patterson’s perspective there may be one elder in a local church or there may be more than one elder, but there is always a lead elder. While I think an argument can be made that it is *permissible* to have only one elder, I think that it is wiser to have more than one elder, one of which serves as the lead pastor, because the term elder almost always appears in its plural form in the Bible. A single elder may be permissible, but there is some evidence that the Bible favors a plurality of elders.

as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” 1 Peter 5:1-4 (ESV).

(2) **Responsibility for the Preaching / Teaching in the Church:** Elders must also be able to teach. This does not necessarily mean that each of them must be able to stand up in front of a crowd and preach, but rather that they know the essential doctrines of the church well enough to give instruction to others. 1 Timothy 3:2 states, “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach**” (ESV, emphasis added). Likewise, Titus 1:9 states, “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be **able to give instruction in sound doctrine** and also to **rebuke those who contradict it**” (ESV, emphasis added).

(3) **Equipping Others to Teach and Do Ministry:** In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul tells us that the elders are to equip the church to do the work of ministry stating, “¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² **to equip the saints for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (ESV, emphasis added). Likewise, in the pastoral epistle of 2 Timothy, Paul instructs Timothy, “[W]hat you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, ESV).

(4) **Shepherding the Church:** Elders are also given responsibility for what is typically referred to as pastoral care. Acts 20:28 states, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (ESV). Likewise, 1 Peter 5:1-4 instructs, “¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (ESV).

DUTIES OF DEACONS:

The second office in the church is the office of deacon. In many, but certainly not all, Baptist churches, the deacons act more like the elders, but this is a misunderstanding of the office of deacon, which is biblically distinct from the office of elder. The New Testament provides less information regarding the role of deacons than it does the role of elders, but several clues are given as to the function of the deacons in the New Testament church. 1 Timothy 3:8-13 lists the qualifications for serving as a deacon and the qualifications focus on the deacon’s character and family life. However and in contrast to elders, deacons are not required to be able to teach (although they must hold to the faith) or to be able to manage the church. The position of deacon, which is the ordinary Greek word for “servant,” is a serving role in the church, whereas the elders are vested with the responsibility for management and authoritative teaching. This certainly doesn’t mean that deacons cannot teach, but that they are not vested with a level of teaching authority akin to elders.

Whereas elders are the spiritual leaders of the church, deacons assist the elders by providing leadership over the service-oriented functions of the church. The establishment of the office of deacon in Acts 6 indicates that deacons serve the church by overseeing ministries to allow the elders to focus on the teaching and shepherding ministries of the church. Thus, each church has a great deal of latitude in shaping the role of deacons to meet the church's individual needs. Two distinct duties can be generally discerned for the office of deacon:

(1) **Serving the Church:** The word translated / transliterated "deacon" in our Bible is the Greek word *diakonos*, which is the ordinary Greek word for "servant" or even "waiter". Further, 1 Timothy 3:13 states, "For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (ESV). *Also cf.* Acts 6:1-6.

(2) **Assisting the Pastors/Elders:** Acts 6:1-4 tells the story of the first crisis in the early church. The Greek widows complained against the Hebrews because they felt that they were being neglected in the distribution of food. The apostles recognized that this was a problem, but also that they could not neglect their duties of preaching and prayer to attend to this problem. They therefore instructed that "seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," be selected and the apostles entrusted the duty of the fair distribution of food to this group. This story is seen as the birth of the office of deacon. One of the duties of the deacons is thus to assist the pastors/elders so that the elders can focus on their responsibilities in the church.

WHAT ABOUT DEACON "CARE" MINISTRY?

Some Baptist churches entrust their family care ministries to the deacons. While this is certainly permissible given the great flexibility that churches have in assigning duties to deacons, this does not change the fact that all Christians are responsible for caring for and ministering to one another. At The Bridge, we believe that small groups, rather than deacon "families," are the best environment for caring for and ministering to one another.

DO WE HAVE DEACONS AT THE BRIDGE?

At present, we do not have a group at The Bridge that is referred to by the title "deacon." However, a significant number of the people on The Bridge's leadership team do fulfill duties consistent with the biblical role of deacon. The Bridge leadership team is a group is comprised of the area leaders at The Bridge that meets monthly to help us plan the events of The Bridge. It currently consists of 10 individuals: Jenny and myself, Roger Patterson (who oversees all the areas of our ministry), Tony Davis (who oversees our Consider ministries), Renee Sanders (who oversees our Connect ministries), Delbert Sanders (who oversees our Commit ministries), John Fitch (who oversees our music ministry), Kristy Wright (who is the point person for our servant evangelism projects), Elizabeth Boyd (who oversees our children's ministry), and Trish Patterson (who oversees our preschool ministry). This is a fluid team that I have asked to assist me with planning, equipping, and recruiting. Thus, at present, the duties performed by the Leadership Team assist me such that I can place the majority of my focus on providing preaching, shepherding, and leadership to The Bridge. One option we might consider as we develop the structure of The Bridge is to view those members of the Leadership Team who are not elders as deacons. Because the Greek word "deacon" simply means "servant," if we do consider the Leadership Team to fulfill the biblical role of deacons for The Bridge, we could keep the biblical designation of this office by simply renaming the Leadership Team as the Servant Leadership Team. Another option would be to consider the

Leadership Team plus other key leaders, such as small group leaders, at The Bridge to be deacons. Yet another option would be to designate another group as deacons at some point down the road.

DUTIES OF THE CONGREGATION:

Biblically, the congregation is charged with using their gifts to do the work of ministry and to support and follow the Pastors/Elders. Ephesians 4:12, states that the congregation is to do “the work of ministry” (ESV). 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 instructs the churches, “¹² We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work” (ESV). Likewise, Hebrews 13:17 instructs “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (ESV).

What are the Qualifications of Elders?

The qualifications for the office of elder are listed in 1 Timothy 2:12-3:7 and Titus 1:6-9. These qualification are:

- (1) Male (1 Timothy 2:12) – this is not a slight against women, but rather is accordance with the order set forth by Creation
- (2) Desire to serve / Calling (1 Timothy 3:1)
- (3) “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6, 7)
- (4) “husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6) – literally, “one-woman man”
 - a) Titus 1:6 adds, “his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination” (“believers” here is more accurately translated “faithful,” that is, the elders children have been raised to be faithful, not necessarily that they are believers in Christ).
- (5) “sober-minded” (1 Timothy 3:2)
- (6) “self-controlled” (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- (7) “respectable” (1 Timothy 3:2)
- (8) “hospitable” (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8))
- (9) “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2)
 - a) “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9)
- (10) “not a drunkard” (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- (11) “not violent but gentle” (*Id.*)
- (12) “not quarrelsome” (*Id.*)
- (13) “not a lover of money” / “not greedy for gain” (*Id.*)
- (14) “must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive” (1 Timothy 3:4)
- (15) “must not be a recent convert” (1 Timothy 3:6)
- (16) “well thought of by outsiders” (1 Timothy 3:7)
- (17) “not... arrogant” (Titus 1:7)
- (18) “not... quick-tempered” (Titus 1:7)
- (19) “a lover of good” (Titus 1:8)
- (20) “upright” (Titus 1:8)
- (21) “holy” (Titus 1:8)
- (22) “disciplined” (Titus 1:8)

How Will This Work at The Bridge?

The Head of the Church is Jesus Christ. Jesus as the Chief Shepherd entrusts leadership of His church to elders who serve as the undershepherds. Under this system, the elders would be responsible for top level, strategic decision making in the church. The lead pastor/elder is to seek God's vision and direction for the church and the other elders are in place, not to second guess or overrule this vision and direction, but rather to provide affirmation, wise counsel, and accountability to drive the vision forward. The strategic decisions made by the elders would include: asking what we are good at, what we are not so good at, and how we can get better; guarding the vision of the church and making sure our ministries are consistent with that vision; guarding the doctrine of the church; determining how to use finances, resources, and positions to carry forward the vision; raising up and equipping other leaders; and the like. The Leadership Team would be entrusted by the elders with responsibility for the more hands on direction of specific events and ministries. The elders do not exist to micromanage leadership or ministry, but rather to guard the larger vision of the church and to entrust leadership and ministry down to every level, so long as the leadership and ministry is conducted in manner consistent with the vision, direction, and doctrine of the church. Team leaders below the leadership team would be entrusted to lead their individual teams and ministries in a manner consistent with the vision and direction set by the elders. The congregation would "vote on," or more aptly stated give or withhold affirmation on, only a few key decisions. I think that these key decisions would certainly include requiring approval from the congregation in order to: (1) hire or fire the lead pastor, (2) affirm a candidate for the office of elder, or (3) dissolve the church. There are other key decisions that we will need to determine whether or not we want the congregation to "vote on" or not, such as: (1) do we want to require congregational approval of the annual budget for the church, and (2) do we want to require congregational approval for the acquisition of real property and taking on related indebtedness. In considering what decisions will require congregational approval, we need to remember that we do not have schedule business meetings and that we will have to take time away from worship services, or set aside some other time, to inform the congregation and allow them to affirm or disaffirm the decision. We also want to guard against practices that will *per se* cause division in the church or that will cause us to make decisions based on personal preference or opinion rather than on leadership and vision from God.

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