



Deacons Training

John 12:26 *"If anyone serves me, he must follow me;
and where I am, there will my servant be also.
If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."*

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Introduction

Church leadership, biblically speaking, is profoundly simple. But human traditions and methods of building outside of God's pattern have clouded this subject a great deal.

Jesus is building His church and He builds it according to His pattern, not ours. In this booklet we explore the subject of deaconship – what does it mean to be a deacon? What do deacons do? What are the qualifications of a deacon?

Firebrand Church is a Christian community church in Gig Harbor with a heart for the nations of the world. This document forms part of Firebrand Church's Equipping Courses. It is used with permission and thanks to Cornerstone Church in Johannesburg, South Africa: CornerstoneChurch.co.za



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Part One - HOW WE LEAD

Philippians 1:1

"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers [elders] and deacons:

This scripture is a great example of God's model for church structure. In it we see (a) saints, (b) overseers, and (c) deacons mentioned. But there is also a fourth group mentioned here – Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, part of a translocal (or apostolic) team using Ephesians 4:11 gifts.

The order is important here. Firstly, the highest order of life in a local church are the saints. Within that, God appoints the offices and functions of overseers and deacons. ("Overseer" is a synonym for elder or pastor - 1 Peter 5:1-2)

Leadership is one of the many functions in the body of Christ.

God has anointed elders and deacons to lead and it's important that we understand that this call is from God.

Likewise, elders have been appointed by God and are the one governmental leadership office for the local church.

But every church also works in partnership and submission to servants.

Paul and Timothy introduce themselves as servants above, representing a translocal, or apostolic, team made up of people with Ephesians 4:11 gifts (apostle, prophet, teacher, evangelist and pastor).

These people with these gifts encourage and help churches translocally, making sure they are healthy and encouraging the vision of that church. To operate translocally means that these team members have responsibility outside their own local churches to guide, encourage, and challenge churches close by or very far away; but they also are accountable themselves to the leaders and the body of their own local church.

In the scriptures we see Paul and Timothy had this role and so we believe in following the same pattern for church today.

Defining Leadership

Leadership is a biblical and scriptural principle. Within the context of a local church, leadership is very important. As Dudley Daniel once said, *"Leadership is, and always will be, one of the most significant keys in the Kingdom of God."*

Some definitions of leadership:

LEAD - to show the way by going first; to guide by the hand; to direct; to precede.

LEADER - One who leads or who goes first. Example: a middle eastern shepherd who leads his flock by going first. The sheep follow his voice.

A BIBLICAL LEADER - A person with God-given capacity, gifting, calling and responsibility who does what it takes to influence a group of people for their benefit. A person who goes before the people and shows them the way towards God's revealed purposes and promises.

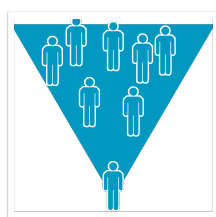
This is achieved with God's help, according to God's ways, and by God's authority and power whilst the leader remains accountable to God at all times for the people they are leading.

Biblical Leadership is not about static top-down hierarchy, it is about organic structure that allows for the forward movement of a church submitted to Jesus Christ, His Word and Spirit.

Models of leadership (See Firebrand Genes handout):



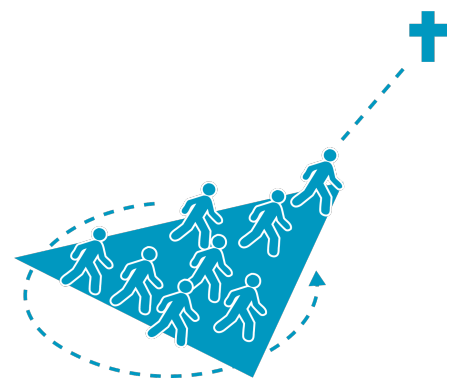
Autocratic



Democratic



Flat



Apostolic Prophetic

Why is leadership necessary?

- Leadership is a God-ordained principle.
- God appoints leaders for specific purposes – 1 Samuel 16:1-13
- God institutes leadership (authority) structure for all areas of our lives. This is part of his common grace to all. (The home/church/state)
- People need leadership – Proverbs 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Additional benefits of leadership:

- God brings inspiration through leaders
- God protects us from danger through leaders
- God uses leaders to teach us
- God brings direction and action through leaders.

The objective of leadership:

The biblical perspectives regarding leaders are as follows:

1. Leadership does not revolve around the leader but around others, ie. For the sake of those being led.
2. Leadership is not a promotion but is a responsibility (stewardship).

We have to remove 'self' from the idea of leadership. We cannot be driven by selfish motives, seek gain for ourselves, or focus on selfish privileges. *It's about putting God and others first.*

Matthew 22:37-40

37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.

Philippians 2:3-7

3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Mark 9:33-37

33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. 35 And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." 36 And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one such

child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

Matthew 20:25-28

25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Aspects of Leadership

There are five aspects of leadership that we can find in the Bible that are important to take note of for the purposes of this course. We need to have Biblical leadership in the church. We can't rely on the latest fad or book, psychology or philosophy. We must be grounded firmly in God's Word.

1. Heart
2. Calling
3. Character
4. Self-leadership
5. Servant-leadership

1. Heart (Motives)

Psalm 24:3-4

3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

Question: Why do we do what we are doing?

When God looks at us he doesn't see our professed intentions or the facade we want others to see. He doesn't see our outward appearance or our superficial interactions with others. He sees the true us. He sees our hearts.

1 Samuel 16:6-7

When they came, he [Samuel] looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." 7

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

God is not impressed by what leaders look like on the outside, he is interested in their hearts. He is not impressed by ambition, ideals, and high and lofty goals, what he wants is for us to have a heart of love.

Proverbs 4:23 (NASB)

Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

So leaders need to ensure that their hearts are right before God. **What does this mean?**

- True and loving motivations for everything we do
- The true nature of who we are needs to be aligned with God.
- By heart attitude we are generally referring to the motivations and desires that are in our hearts. When we refer to character we are talking about the true nature of our hearts.

2. Calling

You must feel a sense of God's call in this. Calling is a critical aspect of leadership

Calling produces:

- Confidence, faith, boldness and authority
- Motivation. Our calling sustains us in times of difficulty or when we face particularly trying challenges. Our calling reminds us that we are able to do it because we know God wants us to do it.
- A correct self-image. When we are called we know that it is something God has made us to be. Our leadership then is not a figment of our imagination or of our own deluded arrogance. Because God has decreed it, therefore I am.

3. Character

We do not risk with character. Character qualifies or disqualifies leaders. Deacons are not perfect people, but they are men and women of noble character, who take seriously God's command to "be holy, as I am holy." (1 Peter 1:16.)

Church leaders are those who are committed to living God's way and are continually renewing their minds so that they can know the full and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2). They need to have a pure conscience and a good reputation with the world outside the church.

Character refers to good qualities that are really and truly deeply entrenched in a person. It's the thing that gives a person true emotional, spiritual and moral strength. Deep strength. True strength.

Some qualities of good character include:

- Faithfulness (Proverbs 20:6, 1 Corinthians 4:2, 2 Timothy 2:2, Luke 16:1-13)
- Willingness to be taught and corrected
- Willingness to serve others
- A healthy and mature response to godly discipline
- Availability
- Integrity (influenced by the testimony of Jesus: Mark 12:14 not opinions and preferences of people)
- Perseverance / long-suffering
- Consistency
- Relational maturity: not becoming easily offended or hurt, protecting your relationships, forgiving those that have hurt you, etc.
- Transparency

4. Self-leadership

Self-leadership is about being able to have direction and vision from God for yourself and also living by God's Word when someone is watching or no one is watching.

It is a process of:

- Becoming more like Jesus
- Keeping your head up
- Continuously changing and remaining teachable
- Dealing well with difficult situations
- Ensuring that all aspects of your life are in order.

Self-leadership requires sacrifice, effort, discipline and, above all, faith in God. Only out of faith will the rest follow.

Self-leadership requires vision. How can we lead others if we don't even know where we are going ourselves? What your vision is filled with (your heart and mind, what you are pre-occupied with) determines what you are, become and do. Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Luke 12:34).

Jude 17-21

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear - hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.

"The way in which a leader conducts his personal life does, in fact, have a profound impact on his ability to exercise effective public leadership. There is a direct correlation between self-leadership and public leadership." – Samuel Rima.

The importance of self-leadership

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NLT)

Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! 25 All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. 26 So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 27 I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

Paul understood that it was possible for him to mess up. He knew that if he wasn't disciplined he might go astray. He could foresee the danger of neglecting his personal life. Because of this he was intentional about ensuring that he did what he could to keep himself in line: he was intentional about leading himself ("I run with purpose in every step").

He had a goal. He knew where he was going and he was determined to get there. He was willing to do whatever it would take to get there ("So run to win!"). Clearly, he did not exhaust all of his energy on his actual public leadership. A big chunk of his effort went into himself – into his personal life ("I discipline my body like an athlete ...").

The analogy is a good one. **A successful athlete spends a lot more time training than competing.** The idea is that in order to be effective with others (the race) your private life needs to be in peak condition (hence the training).

We can't expect to lead others if we can't lead ourselves. Paul was worried that if he messed up in his personal life it would bring his message into disrepute and bring down the name of Jesus. He understood that he could not preach to others what he was not living himself – this would be hypocrisy: the blind leading the blind. He knew that if he was to point others to Jesus, he needed to be pursuing Jesus himself.

Key elements to self-leadership

a) Our relationship with God

John 15:1-4

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are

clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

We cannot bear fruit outside of our relationship with God.

It is absolutely imperative that we stay connected to the life-giving vine of God. We need to learn to be absolutely dependent on Him for truth, wisdom, provision, direction, motivation and encouragement, strength in difficult times, and so on.

b) Fellowship

By definition "fellowship" means: *"The action of sharing; general fellowship; a union; communion; being one with each other in intimacy."* This is how we should be with God. We should be sharing our lives with him. We should be joined to him. We should have intimacy with him.

"God does not reveal Himself to casual seekers" - Hennie Keyter.

We need to set time aside to spend with God.

Psalm 46:10a

Be still, and know that I am God.

c) Prayer

Prayer is such a powerful tool available to all believers. For leaders it is more than a tool, it is a lifestyle.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

pray without ceasing,

d) Reading and knowing the word of God

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- We are to read the Bible regularly. Consider a daily reading plan. We recommend the **ReadScripture** mobile app from **BibleProject**.
- We need to develop good reading habits. Don't just read for the sake of reading. Study and meditate on the Word.
- We need to read the whole Bible.

e) Discipline

God is interested in our spiritual fitness. Spiritual fitness requires effort and training and discipline. Remember, discipline flows out of our relationship with God and a life of faith. Discipline assists us in creating good spiritual habits like Praying, reading the word, spending time with God, etc. It's been said that "Discipline is doing what you often don't feel like doing right now in order to get that which you really want to have."

1 Timothy 4:7b-8

Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Paul recognized that becoming godly is a matter of training, very similar to physically training to become fit. If you aspire to be in leadership then holiness is an area where you have to be training in. You will need to train your flesh to regularly spend time with God and do His will.

Don't be robbed from the promise and value of intimacy with God, who is our true source, by being lazy and ill disciplined.

5. Servant-leadership

Leaders are to be servants to those that they lead. They are to serve God by serving the people. If we want to be great in the Kingdom of God we need to learn how to be servants.

Mark 9:35

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.

"Biblical leadership is always servant-hearted," - Dudley Daniel.

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

By servants we mean the following:

- In service to others.
- Not for your own benefit. Not driven by your own selfish ambition or desire.
- Considering others more significant than yourself. To see others succeed.
- To see others go further than you have gone.

Matthew 20:25-28

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,[c] 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, [d] 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Part Two - THE CHURCH

Before we can look at the purpose or the nature of the church we need to understand what the meaning of the word "church" is.

The Greek reference to the word church is "ekklesia" which means "the called out ones."

So what is the church?

Wayne Grudem defines the church as *"the community of all true believers for all time."*

Dudley Daniel says the church is *"not a building or a denomination, but a Body of believers (Acts 7:48). The church comprises a body (assembly) of people called out of the world to be Christ's. We are still in the world but not of the world (John 17:9-19 especially: 9,15,16)."*

The first reference to the word church in the New Testament is seen in **Matthew 16:18**:

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

This passage draws our attention to the fact that Jesus Christ is building his church. It's not that we are building it – he is building it. Christ adds to the church (Acts 2:47) not us, although he commissions us to go into all the world and make disciples (**Matthew 28**).

"So great is God's plan for the church that he has exalted Christ to a position of highest authority for sake of the church," - Wayne Grudem.

The church is *always* the means by which God sees his plans and purposes worked out on the earth.

The Purpose of the church

According to Wayne Grudem in his *Systematic Theology*, the best way to summarize the purpose of the church is to think of it in three ways:

1. **Ministry to God - Upward**
2. **Ministry to believers - Inward**
3. **Ministry to the world - Outward**

1. Ministry to God: Worship

Our purpose as the church is firstly to worship God. We respond to God out of a personal relationship for what

He has done for us. For example, Paul encourages the church in Colossae to respond to God with a thankful heart for all that he has done for us.

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

2. Ministry to believers: Nurture

The church has an obligation to nurture all believers and build them up in their faith. Paul uses a brilliant illustration in **1 Corinthians 3:1-2**:

"1 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.

2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready."

Paul illustrates that the Corinthians still needed to mature before they could consume "solids", so therefore part of the church's ministry is to work "that we may present everyone mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

Ephesians 4:11-13

11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds 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.

Paul's intention here is to tell the church in Ephesus that God has appointed people in oversight to assist the body of Christ to attain unity of faith and come into the knowledge of Christ.

So as a church our responsibility lies beyond just seeing people getting saved but also to assist believers in their walk with God. It's the responsibility of leaders to administrate this.

3. Ministry to the world: Evangelist / Mercy

The Matthew 28:19 commandment to "make disciples of all nations" shows us how our primary ministry to the world is to bring the lost into the Kingdom of Christ. As the church we are to be "missional" in our approach. In other words, we are intentional about this. We simply cannot exist for ourselves.

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

This is Jesus' mission succinctly defined. He taught us here that we are to be intentional in seeking out those who are unsaved/lost and lead them to Christ.

It's important to know that there might be additional purposes that we can add to the church but these three – **ministry to God; ministry to believers; and ministry to the world** brings good balance to the ministry of a local church. We cannot choose one and place it above the others as this will create a lopsided church.

The nature of the church

The scriptures use a range of metaphors or pictures to describe the nature of the church. Let's look at three of them:

1. The Church as a family
2. The Church as a body
3. The Church as the bride

1. The Church as a family

The church is to be seen as a family, not an organization or institution. See Ephesians 2:19; John 1:12; Romans 8:15,16,29; Romans 9:26; Galatians 4:5,6; Ephesians 3:15; Hebrews 2:11; 1 Peter 4:17; 1 Corinthians 4:14, 15, 17.

See the imagery of family used. Phrases and words such as "...my dear children... father..." and "...Timothy, my son...".

So as the church (its members) we are part of a far bigger family.

- We become members of this family by "receiving Christ" (John 1:12).
- We are adopted into this family by the Spirit of God through his Son, being made joint heirs with Christ through His blood – (Romans 8:15).
- We become heirs through adoption, with full right to all the family inheritance (glorious riches) – Galatians 3:29, Galatians 4:5-6, Galatians 3:29, Titus 3:7, Hebrews 6:17.

Example:

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, 2 older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

So as the family of God we are to be:

- Accountable
- Secure
- Stable
- Mature

2. The Church as the body of Christ

Every believer has a function and should play their part. Every part (person) must be integrated and functioning within their local church. The Scriptures often refer to God's people as being part of the Body of Christ whereby Christ is the head.

1 Corinthians 12:14-26

14 For in fact the body is not a single member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Since I am not a hand, I am not part of the body," it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. 16 And if the ear says, "Since I am not an eye, I am not part of the body," it does not lose its membership in the body because of that. 17 If the whole body were an eye, what part would do the hearing? If the whole were an ear, what part would exercise the sense of smell? 18 But as a matter of fact, God has placed each of the members in the body just as he decided. 19 If they were all the same member, where would the body be? 20 So now there are many members, but one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor in turn can the head say to the foot, "I do not need you." 22 On the contrary, those members that seem to be weaker are essential, 23 and those members we consider less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our unpresentable members are clothed with dignity, 5 24 but our presentable members do not need this. Instead, God has blended together the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may have mutual concern for one another. 26 If one member suffers, everyone suffers with it. If a 6 member is honored, all rejoice with it.

"We are members of His Body. What my body is to me in the same way the Church is to Jesus Christ." – Dudley Daniel.

Ephesians 1:22-23

22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 3:6

"This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Ephesians 4:4

"There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call"

Ephesians 4:12

"...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Ephesians 4:16

"...from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:25

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Ephesians 5:23

"For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Christ is the head of the body.

1 Corinthians 12:27-28

"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Ephesians 1:20-23

"...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that

is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

What Jesus was on earth, we are to do and be.

John 14:12

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

As believers we are the hands and feet of Christ on this earth.

3. The church as the bride of Christ

Ephesians 5:24-33

"24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Christ will come back for his Bride one day! Paul says here that the relationship between a husband and wife refers to Christ and the church. So in the same way we as the church are to be in union with Christ as she is being prepared for His return. Therefore we are to be passionately in love with Him.

See Revelation 19:7,21:2 – just as the bride would prepare herself for that great day, so the church should prepare herself for the return of the bridegroom.

The role of leadership in the church

We can see right throughout the New Testament that where there was a church there was leadership.

Biblical Leadership is always in the context of Local Church (not regional structures):

Godly government and administration – elders.

- Direction
- Discipline
- Direction
- Overseeing and keeping the big picture and the whole picture before the church.
- Leading and guiding.
- Pastoring and nurturing.

So church government means that leaders are in front, overseeing, among, and supportive of the people.

The deacons support the elders of the church in ensuring that church functions.

How we do it at Firebrand

Vision:

Our vision at Firebrand is Jesus. In disciple making, in serving, in preaching, in worship, in nation building.

Mission:

Our mission at Firebrand is to know Jesus, and to make Him known in our community, in our nation, and in the world.

If you would like to be a leader at Firebrand you need to be aligned with Firebrand's vision and mission:

Your life

Your values

Your heart

Prophetic direction

As leaders we always need to keep the vision before us. Over the years we've had many prophecies at Firebrand. You need to have faith for these and continuously pray and trust God for these.

It would be good to become familiar with the prophetic direction God has given us. See the Files tab in the Prophetic Group on the Firebrand Website: **FirebrandChurch.com**

Part Three - CALLING AND QUALIFICATION

What does 'calling' mean at its most basic level?

It's when you are asked by a someone in a position of authority to do a particular task and are then equipped to do it.

Leaders are called not driven

When a leader is driven all kinds of problems arise. We can be driven by many things: the need to be accepted, the need to be credible or popular, and so on. If your motives are not pure you will be driven, and you will destroy yourself and your people.

All leaders fall into either one of these two categories – called or driven.

Hearing the voice of God

John 10:3-5

3 To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

Before touching on the topic of calling it is essential to identify that you need to understand how we hear the voice of God. The best way to hear the voice of God is to be close to Him.

Tips for hearing the voice of God

- Be still
 - Psalm 46:10
 - Luke 10:38-42
- Listen
 - 1 Samuel 3:1-10
- Know the Word
 - Romans 15:4
 - Psalm 119:105
 - Hebrews 4:12
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 -

- Have a clear conscience
 - Psalm 24: 3
 - Proverbs 22:11
- Exercise your gifts
 - 1 Peter 4:10-11

Every believer has a calling and a ministry

1 Corinthians 12:12-21

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body", that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body", that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you", nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

- Everyone is a part of the body of Christ and has a function.
- Every believer needs to hear from God themselves.
- This will affect every part of our lives as believers.

Many Christians do not know their call, and many even battle to hear specifically from God.

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

- Paul worked harder – not him, but the grace of God within him.
- Along with working for God comes challenges and frustration

- Without God's grace, working hard leads to frustration and even legalism.
- With God's call comes grace, then our hard work produces fruit.
- Therefore when we know our call and move into it our work becomes both productive and effective.

Scriptural encouragement

2 Peter 1:10

Be eager to make your calling and election sure.

2 Thessalonians 1:11

Fulfill every good purpose of yours.

Ephesians 4:1

Live a life worthy of our calling.

What will a call produce?

- Confidence
- Faith
- Boldness
- Authority
- Self-Image/Worth
- Motivation
- Purpose
- Destiny
- Kingdom Results

Practical aspects of a calling

- A calling often comes unexpectedly.

It could come long before actual leadership, like it did for David, Moses, and Abraham. God often speaks long time before our calling becomes a reality. God is the author of time. The reason we are impatient is because we are often immature, e.g. telling a child his birthday is coming in few months time – how do they react the next day? We see a mountaintop ahead but the valley is still to be negotiated.

- A call can be requested, or sought.
- God does the calling.

Three ways leaders come into ministry

- Self-appointed (Absalom, Korah)
- Man or organization appointed.
- God appointed.

Analysis of a calling from God

Taken from the callings of:

- Moses (Exodus 3:1 – 4:17)
- Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-13)
- Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-12)
- Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1 – 3:15)
- Paul (Acts 9:1-19)

The following comprises a calling from God: -

1. A Revelation of (and from) God

We can't put God in a box – he will reveal our calling to us in any way and time he chooses, often in an unexpected way. Note how each of these characters below have their own story.

Paul – bright, shining light

Moses – voice of God from a burning bush

Isaiah – a look into heaven (God on His throne, angels, angelic worship)

Ezekiel – an open heaven, four living creatures, the glory of the Lord

Jeremiah – the prophetic voice of God

2. God calls us by name

"Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?" (Acts 26:14.)

3. A clear and definite call

- Moses - Deliver Israel from Egypt (Exodus 3:7-10)
- Isaiah - Warn adulterous Israel of her sin and resulting captivity if they don't repent. (Isaiah 6:8-9)
- Jeremiah - God appointed him over nations and kingdoms to uproot, tear down, destroy and overthrow, and to build and plant. (Jeremiah 1:10)
- Ezekiel - Speak God's words to Israel in captivity (Ezekiel 3:4-9)

- Paul - He is to be God's chosen instrument to take the gospel to the gentiles, kings and Israel, and he will suffer greatly in the process. (Acts 9:15-16)

With each call God looked for someone to send with his message!

4. Counsel: deal with insecurities.

Moses asked: Who am I to go? Who shall I say sent me? (Struggling with authority). What if they do not believe or listen to me? But I have never been eloquent. Please send someone else to do it.

Jeremiah said I do not know how to speak. I am only a youth/child.

5. Encouragement: Not to be afraid.

God encouraged Ezekiel not to be afraid of: them (those to whom he was sent), their words, briars and thorns that would surround him, and living among scorpions

Jeremiah was told by God: "I will rescue you! I am with you!"

6. Equipping and anointing:

God always gives us what we need to complete the call on our life.

- Moses was given Aaron to be his spokesman.
- God's presence to perform miracles.
- God said to Jeremiah the he is watching to see that his word is fulfilled. "I have put My words in your mouth."
- Ezekiel – The Spirit anointed him. "I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint."
- Ananias said to Paul, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit."

Overcoming the obstacles to obeying God's call

(Taken from Charles Swindoll's booklet "Clearing the high hurdles")

The following are hurdles or obstacles that have to be overcome in order to obey God's call on your life:-

Unpreparedness

- Matthew 25:1-13 (The foolish virgins).

Suffering

Hebrews 5:8

"Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered."

There are four areas of suffering that Jesus had to overcome and so must we:-

- Criticism (John 8:41, 48; Matthew 11:19)
- Persecution (John 11:54-57)
- Silence (Matthew 26:39)
- Ultimate injustice – the crucifixion (John 16:33)

What will afflictions produce in your life? Obedience or bitterness?

Reluctance

Romans 10:13-15

13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?[a] And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

To be reluctant means to deliberately resist telling others about God's grace in Jesus. It means purposefully holding back the good news when you know God has sent you, e.g. Jonah.

Matthew 28:18-20

"Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Comparison

John 21:15-22

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my

lambs." 16 He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." 17 He said to him the third time,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you

love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. 18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." 19 (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who had been reclining at table close to him and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" 22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"

Hebrews 12:1-2

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Resistance

Exodus 3:1 – 4:18 as seen in Moses' life.

Remember these three things when you are called to lead:-

- Be sure you are hearing God's voice.
- Be confident in God's power as you obey.
- Be open to God's will regardless of your inadequacies.

Lukewarmness

Revelation 3:15-16

15 "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."

With the Psalmist (below) we need to express fervor for God.

Psalm 42:1-2

"1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

Indifference

Where lukewarmness tests our passion for God, this hurdle tests our passion for the lost.

Luke 19:10

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Where your heart is no longer moved with compassion for the lost, you need reviving from spiritual deadness.

Selfishness

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

Acts 13:1-3

"Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."

God is a "sending" God who has an "apostolic" vision and mission for the church. Your vision needs to fit into His.

Isaiah 58:9-12

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;

you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'

If you take away the yoke from your midst,

the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

10 if you pour yourself out for the hungry

and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,

then shall your light rise in the darkness

and your gloom be as the noonday.

11 And the Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.

12 And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in.

Carnality or Worldliness

Romans 7:14-15; 18-19; 22-24

14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. 15 For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Galatians 5:17

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

- A carnal Christian lacks spiritual growth.

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

"But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,"

- A carnal Christian focuses on the horizontal (and not the vertical relationship with God)

1 Corinthians 3:3-4

"3 for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul", and another, "I follow Apollos", are you not being merely human?"

- A carnal Christian acts like an unbeliever

Our carnality can be seen in our activities, attitudes, associations and appetites.

Confusion

God desires for you to clearly understand His will for your life. We need to be able to discern his will. There are two categories of God's will: (1) *God's determined will* and (2) *God's desired will*.

God's determined will is that which will happen and His desired will is that which He wants to happen.

1. God's determined will (His sovereignty)

Ephesians 1:4, 5

"Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will."

Ephesians 1:11

"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."

Daniel 4:35

*"all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
and he does according to his will among the host of heaven*

*and among the inhabitants of the earth;
and none can stay his hand
or say to him, "What have you done?"*

2. God's desired will

Matthew 23:37

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"

Matthew 26:39 (the test)

"And going a little farther [Jesus] fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'"

The process of overcoming the hurdles and hindrances in our life that hinder us from obeying God's call will develop godly character, and this is God's will.

Part Four - CHURCH LEADERSHIP

There are four levels of authority in the local church: -

- Priests
- Deacons
- Elders
- Apostolic / prophetic team (translocal)

2 Timothy 4:1-5

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."

1 Timothy 3:13

"Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus."

All four areas must discharge all areas of the duties of their ministry and serve well. Let us look at each of these in more detail:

Priests

1 Peter 2:5

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 2:9

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Romans 15:16

"To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

See also: Exodus 19:5-6; Esther 4:14.

God is not just interested in converts, but to see converts disciplined into their full inheritance as the priesthood of all believers. God's prophetic call today is for a mobile and active priesthood, with the wineskins of the past totally removed and our people liberated into "doing the work of the ministry".

Ephesians 4:11-13

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Therefore, leadership has an important role to play in the freeing of God's people and the establishing of the New Testament model of church life.

Deacons

Qualifications

1 Timothy 3:8-13

"8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 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."

God is very particular about those who have any authority or responsibility in the church. These qualifications are not "ideals" to be aspired to - deacons must already possess them! The elders at Firebrand are committed to disciple our leaders and potential leaders especially. We spend time correcting, encouraging and rebuking

patterns of behavior, communication styles, insecurities, and temptations (amongst other things) before we will ordain anyone onto our deacon team.

Moral Qualifications

1. Not double-tongued. vs. 8.
 - a. Their word is their word. They do not say one thing to one person and another to someone else.
2. Not addicted to much wine. vs. 8.
 - a. This is included in their personal habits - not in bondage to anything.
3. Not greedy for dishonest gain (some translations say money). vs. 8.
 - a. Possibly because they will handle finances when assisting others.
 - b. They must not be able to be tempted by money.
4. Blameless. vs. 10.
 - a. They must be above reproach in every area of their life.
 - b. This has to do with motives more than just deeds! They must be an example of godly living.
5. Tested/proved. vs. 10.
 - a. They must not be a novice.
 - b. There must have been sufficient time for them to have been scrutinized.
 - c. Are they a mature servant?

Spiritual Qualifications

1. Dignified vs. 8. (N.I.V. "worthy of respect" KJV: Grave)
 - a. They should inspire the reverence, awe and respect of others.
2. Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. vs. 9. (N.I.V. "Deep truths of the faith")
 - a. What they teach they live - their conscience is clear.
3. Full of the Holy Spirit. Acts 6:3.
 - a. Empowered and motivated by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Not depending upon natural abilities and talents.
4. Full of wisdom. Acts 6:3.

Home-life Qualifications

1. The husband of one wife. vs. 12
 - a. Faithful. Undivided love.

What did 'one wife' mean to these people? Many people had more than one wife and they didn't

have a covenant with them like we do. There would have been an agreement with the wife but it wouldn't have been exclusive. Upon joining the church, however, what were they to do? It wasn't a requirement to be a husband of one wife to be a believer. But to become a leader in the church the husband would have to commit to one of his wives relationally and to the others financially. The result being they were committed and in covenant to one wife, as Jesus is to his church.

At Firebrand we do not believe that divorce is a disqualification for leadership, but how we manage our relationships is paramount to successful and safe leadership in the church, and God hates divorce. If you have been divorced this will come up in discipleship as an opportunity to heal wounds and sharpen character.

Single people are also not disqualified from leadership, but need to prove faithful and pure in their relationships with the opposite sex. We have no rules and regulations for dating at Firebrand, but potential leaders need to exemplify respect, maturity, and sexual purity in how they manage their romantic relationships. As we see in scripture sexual purity, fidelity, and commitment is a mirror for society for the Holiness of God. God's leaders should reflect well.

Some people will be disqualified from leading even though they have superb gifting. Gifting is part of the qualities of a leader, but not the whole qualification. A pure church is important to God. We have to think about how our lives will affect the next generation and the culture of not only our church but our other communities.

2. Ruling their children and their own homes well. Vs 12.

- a. A good father. His children obey him.
- b. Servant leadership
- c. A visionary for the family (that children buy into)
- d. Long term investment – establishing family identity
- e. Believing in your children, encouraging them
- f. Giving the family something to believe in and challenging them

Need

Acts 6:1-7

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who

are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

All leadership roles are subject to the needs of the church, we don't appoint people simply because they are qualified.

What deacons do and who they are are interlinked

- A deacon is not a stepping-stone to eldership. This devalues the office and those in the office. Good sheep aren't promoted to being deacons, and then to elders, etc.
- There is no hierarchical succession in the Kingdom. You are either called or not. The highest thing you can attain to is obeying what you are being called to.
- An office is a duty attached to one's function. If you are a deacon you should be deaconing. Although the term "deacon" is an office in the church, being a deacon is more of a verb than a noun! You cannot have the function/office and do nothing. If you aren't deaconing for whatever reason, then it would be best to step down.

Appointment

- We have only one example in Scripture and that is Acts 6:1-6.
- Here the people were told to choose from among themselves certain men who qualified.
- They were probably already serving without the office having been officially recognized.
- This would have been a "proving time". 1 Timothy 3:10.
- They were then "set in" by the leaders. Acts 6:6.

Ministry

- Work alongside eldership to administrate growth and increase.
- Facilitate cross-cultural ministry (gender, race, language, generational) which involves a lot of proactive discipleship.
- Ensure that the relationships in the Body are healthy.
- Assist in integrating the fringe, fragile and frail.

- Identify and meet the needs of the congregation.
- Release the elders for prayer and ministry of the word.
- Evangelism: those with a burden for the lost.
- Operate in the expression and exercise of your own gifts.
- Operate at your calling level. Captains of 10, 50, 100 or 1000, etc.
- In Acts 6:5 Philip and Stephen were appointed as deacons.
- In Acts 7:1-58 Stephen preached, and in Acts 6:8 he operated in the miraculous.
- In Acts 8:5-13 Philip evangelized, baptized believers, cast out demons, healed the sick, etc.
- The ministry team in any church is 'every believer' – the priesthood of all believers.

Again, as with the priesthood, God is challenging us to free deacons from wineskins of the past and see them liberated into biblical models of function. Becoming a deacon is not to be seen as a stepping stone to eldership. It can be, but it is much more. We must abandon hierarchical mindsets. Deacons are also not just coffee-makers, cleaners, and chair-movers. Everyone in the church is called to serve even in the most menial way, but deacons have a **fathering** part to play in team leadership and discipleship. This is why Peter says they are to be those "*... of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom...*" (Acts 6:3)

- Presiding over worship
- Administer, rebuke and discipline
- Settle disputes
- Provide fatherly oversight

The difference between Deacons and Elders

The only difference in the quoted scriptures above between the qualifications of elders and deacons is that elders are required to teach and that deacons can be both men and women while elders are only men.

There are further differences that relate to their function in the Body. Elders DISCIPLINE, elders SET DIRECTION and elders PROVIDE DOCTRINE; and in this deacons assist and do much more besides.

Part Five - FUNCTIONS

The next two chapters will cover the particular functions that a deacon in the church, and particularly Firebrand, plays. Before we get into the role of a deacon we need to identify the role of an elder so that we can understand how they work together.

Five responsibilities of an elder

1. Ruling

1 Timothy 5:17

"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching."

- a. Oversight of the local church is the responsibility of the elders, not of the apostles or the congregation.
- b. This is difficult because, as a society, we have become averse to authority and 'rule'. Ruling implies something negative, dangerous and undemocratic. However this is not the way the Bible uses the word.

1 Timothy 5:17 (K.J.V) "The elders who rule well..."

1 Timothy 5:17 (N.I.V) "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well..."

2. Teaching

1 Timothy 5:17

- a. While all elders are to rule, not all teach to the same extent.
- b. But they must all be "able to teach". 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9, 2 Timothy 2:2. In order for this to happen the elder must be learning, practicing, and praying.
- c. Preaching and teaching are more the responsibility of the elders than apostles.

3. Equipping others to do the work of the ministry

Ephesians 4:11,12

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

- a. God's intention is for every Christian to be a priest. 1 Peter 2:9 – in other words, we all have responsibility in the Church.
- b. If the believers (the "Saints" or "Priesthood" leave everything to the leaders, we have failed.
- c. Believers are to walk in the balance of their employment and spiritual service.

4. Praying for the sick

James 5:14

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

- a. Anointing with oil is limited to elders.
- b. We should encourage our people to "call for the elders" and the doctor when they are sick.

5. Exhorting others and refuting dissidents

Titus 1:9

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.

- a. Elders cannot always be "Mr Nice Guy". They must sometimes "correct and rebuke" 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15
- b. Elders must sometimes "command" (1 Timothy 6: 17,18)
- c. Elders cannot always rebuke – they must also encourage (2 Timothy 4:2).

Deacons' responsibilities towards the Elders

There are certain responsibilities that the body of saints of each flock (the church members, the sheep of the flock), which includes the deacons, have towards their leaders:

1. Consideration

- a. Hebrews 13:7 - "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith."
- b. Before you make the decision to follow a leader, the scriptures say we ought to "consider" the leader. This is essential as there is a truth in Genesis that says: "each will produce after their own kind." (Genesis 1:24.) You will become like those you follow.
- c. Therefore, the sheep must seek out their leaders – they have been knitted together by God. It's not just up to the leader to connect and make an effort in the relationship!
- d. We consider their life (1 Timothy 5: 12), conduct (Hebrews 13:7) and faith (1 Timothy 5:16) – we must be able to imitate these in our own lives.

2. Submission and Obedience

- a. Christ works through delegated levels of authority. Our attitude towards God's leaders is the visible

expression of our attitude towards God Himself. Submission is an inner attitude. It must be a voluntary attitude and action. Jesus deliberately became a servant. (Philippians 2:5-8).

- b. It is possible to obey without submitting. "sitting down on the outside, but still standing up on the inside."
- c. It is possible to be submissive and respectful and yet not to obey. For example the disciples refused to obey the Sanhedrin's orders to stop preaching about Jesus - Acts 4:19,20; Acts 5:29.
- d. To submit means "to yield or surrender to power or authority".
- e. Obedience - **Hebrews 13:17** "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."
- f. As sheep in Christ's flock we implement what the elders teach, but it is also the responsibility of the flock to evaluate the truth they are taught for themselves.
- g. For a preacher is extremely discouraging to give it your all in the pulpit and be ignored by people simply remaining what they are. It also does not benefit a people to be "*ever hearing but never understanding, ever seeing but never perceiving.*" **Isaiah 6:9**.

3. Loyalty

1 Timothy 5:19

Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

- a. Loyalty and faithfulness are often scarce commodities in the church. As Proverbs 20:6 says, "It is hard to find a faithful man." Even if we feel a leader is not being or doing what God wants, we are warned not to touch God's anointed. 1 Chronicles 16:22, Psalm 105:15.
- b. However, this principle has been abused by many leaders and those scriptures taken out of context, which is something we must acknowledge. The key is relationship and integrity. This doesn't mean we never say or do anything if we feel a leader is out of line. But if we are in a relationship with our leaders, we are able to challenge them and highlight things that concern us. We follow the Biblical pattern – we do not gossip, we do not say things behind their back, we don't stir up division, and we approach our brother first (Matthew 18:15).
- c. We must either "bring an accusation against the leader" (1 Timothy 5:19) in the Biblical way or leave it to God who has His own way of removing a leader who no longer qualifies. You only "get in the way" and cause a lot of unnecessary hurt when you try to be "His little helper". Are you committed to your relationship with your leaders?

4. Commitment

Hebrews 13:17

- a. To commit means "to give in trust; to pledge; to bind oneself."
- b. We need to do this regarding the elders, not in a legalistic way, but as a heart attitude that lets them know we can be depended upon. See 1 Chronicles 12:16-18 for an example of this.
- c. Elders often feel insecure because they do not know whether the sheep will stand with them. Remember, a house divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25).

5. Honor

1 Thessalonians 5:12

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.

6. Affirm And Encourage

Hebrews 13:7

7. Pray For And With

Hebrews 13:7

8. Ensure that they are Adequately Cared for Financially

Hebrews 13:7 - 1 Timothy 5:17 (Remember that the context here is wages – money!)

9. Refresh

2 Timothy 1:16

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

- Friendship
- Resourcing
- Sharing the load
- Good laughter

"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones." (Proverbs 15:30)

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." (Proverbs 17:22)

Part Six - RESPONSIBILITIES OF A DEACON

A healthy deacon team will catapult the church forward. They are not a management team, but a ministry team. Deacons must have executive authority, for they add value to the life of the church. There is no group leader office in the bible (home group leader, small group leader). That is because every group leader is a deacon, but some deacons lead ministry teams or administrative aspects of the church.

Deacons must have sound doctrine and a good theological basis to work from. We lead people using the word of God as the basis of our counsel and advice and NOT from a place of personal opinion.

2 Timothy 2:15

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."

1 Timothy 4:6

"If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed."

Deacons must have a solid understanding of the Word.

2 Timothy 2:16-17

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Deacons need to know the scriptures- what it says and how it fits into context, what the non-negotiables are, and have a firm grasp on the whole counsel of God – (Acts 20:27)

Acts 6:1-8

1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering,

and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.

1. Deacons work in team

- We see in this scripture that a number of them were chosen and they all had to work together. It is essential that all of our motivation comes from working for what is best for the team, for example being prepared to overlook certain things and honor people in different situations by not speaking.
- Working in team it is imperative that you are able to lay down your own vision to embrace that of the team leader.
- Unity is probably the most important thing, and probably the most neglected. It is the place where God commands His blessing (Psalm 133).
- Ephesians 4:3 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. We are encouraged to do whatever it takes to keep the unity within the context of team."
- Another great example of team work is found in Exodus 17:8-16

2. They must be people of capacity and increase

- Deacons are people of growth before they become deacons.
- E.g. Philip, Stephen and Phoebe. None of the elders or apostles did what Philip did.
- Deacons should be able to rise to the level of their capacity. Captains of ten, fifty, hundred and thousand. Allow them to be who they are in God. Don't release good deacons to be elders, if God has called you to deacon then don't accept an invite to elder. Be secure in who God has called you to be.

3. They Disciple People (See Conflict Resolution Chart and Discipleship Questions)

1. They handled cultural differences

- There is only one church! We cannot have racially prejudiced people on our deacon team. We also cannot have gender, generational, language, or culture prejudiced people on our deacon team.
- In this scripture, the primary task was to maintain godly and workable relationships between the Greeks and Hebrews, and not just performing practical, menial and mundane tasks. Deacons are therefore not to be restricted to practical or menial service.

2. They resolve relational conflict and tension

- In most churches elders resolve relational conflict! In the biblical model this is exactly why the deacons were first appointed! Deacons must be relationally proficient.
- Deacons must sort relationships out. Deacons release elders to prayer and the word. Hierarchical thinking exists where people have to always see the elders.
- Deacons must be consistent in character and able to draw people. (This doesn't mean they must be charismatic in personality, only that they can gather people.) Moodiness is not of God. Remember they qualify as a team!
- They are not to be manipulators. Jezebel was a manipulator in the Bible – we are not manipulators! This brings destruction to what God is doing.
- They need to be part of the solution.
- They need to be relationally secure.

3. They must be aware of the needs of the people

- We will only know the needs of our people if we are spending time with them. John 21:15-18.
- When deacons and elders meet, the deacons should make the elders aware of the flock's needs. When elders and deacons work together, the church will soar.
- Identify and deal with the needs.
- At home group, don't just rehash the Sunday meeting! Go over it, by all means, and the preaching series, but also have some fun and use the time to build relationally. Seven deacons took care of 5000 people in Acts!
- Small groups are opportunities for 'dining room' Christianity. Build relationally and wait on God.

4. They must release the elders

- Deacons see that the practical areas and needs of the church are taken care of, ensuring that the leaders can give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.
- This is God's plan and it is a privilege. The elders can then give themselves to prayer and the word. Don't compare deacons and elders, they are different offices.

5. They deal with criticism

- Deacons deal with criticism against a local church, particularly criticism coming against the elders and other leaders. They must be able to help people mature in their relationship with the leaders.

- Matthew 18 is our guideline for the godly resolving of relationships. Never listen to gossip! And – even worse – partake or initiate it! God’s Word brings freedom. Don’t be suspicious of everyone and foster openness and honesty.
- The more honest you are, the more free you are. If we are Biblical we deal with relational breakdown. Deacons must not be co-players in gossip or be spreading bad reports.
- Stop anyone who begins to speak about someone else. “Before you go on, have you spoken to them?... If not then shall we call them up right now?... I’d like you to speak to them this week, I’ll confirm with them at the end of the week.”

6. They spread the Gospel of Jesus

- Heart for the lost to be saved.

7. Operate in their own gifts and personalities

- Hebrews 13:7 says “... Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.” Scripture does not call us to imitate each others lifestyle or personality, only faith.
- Be who God has made you and called you to be. Forget flattery and comparison. We need diversity on a team.

Responsibility during corporate meetings

1. Look for ways to administrate functions. Be pro-active in releasing the elders to prayer and the ministry of the word.
2. Be highly relational, breaking the unfriendly Western culture.
3. Use every public meeting to integrate those on the outside, the fringe and the frail.
Avoid creating cliques!
4. Reach out to the lost.
5. Lead by example. 1 Corinthians 11:1
6. Anticipate in all circumstances. For example in meetings sort out the disturbances, be aware of security.

Personal Responsibility

1. Commit to your relationship with the elders
 - They should not be looking for you.
 - Communicate everything, always.
 - Look to work with them, learn and grow. Make yourself available for this.

- Make yourself vulnerable and available.
2. Study and prepare yourself for where God is taking you.
 3. Remain in a place of accountability.
 4. Constantly work on the excesses of your own human nature.
 5. Look to develop the scope of your ministry and influence.

Specific Function within Firebrand

1. Home Group Leadership

- Discipling / mentoring
- Shepherding. Being intentional. (Matthew 18:10-14, Luke 15:1-7)
 - Love: The basis of our motivation
 - Lead: Lead the people in Gods way, His will and by His word
 - Feed: teaching the word of God
- Teaching: - NOTE: It is not the deacon's authority nor responsibility to introduce new direction or doctrine, or conduct discipline. The elders set these in place. Deacons assist in the execution.
- Reinforcing the apostolic / prophetic foundations of the church. Helping people new to the church to understand the model.
- Re-enforcing what elders have taught and not introducing new subjects (don't working through video series or courses outside elders' knowledge) or direction (like pet subjects). Usually, the message from Sunday can be applied: -
 - What did it mean to you?
 - Were there any aspects you did not understand?
 - How would you apply it personally?
 - What is going to change in your life now that you have heard this message?
 - What action are you going to take?
- The vision and values of the church.
- Praying (1 Timothy 2:1-8, for the nations, for each other, for the church)
- Bringing through the next generation of leaders. Building away from yourself and bringing people through their own challenges. Bring through people with bigger capacity people than yourself without jealousy or resentment.
- Seeking and saving the lost.
- Encouraging and administrating the gifts of the Spirit and the anointing of God.
- Encouraging a lifestyle of worship.

- Being a peacemaker by maintaining relational integrity in the group.
- Be current with the prophetic. (Explain prophetic 'one liners'.)
- Breaking bread
- Showing, growing and imparting hospitality

2. Hosting

- Setup / Teardown
- Welcoming

3. Worship Team Leader

4. Children's Ministry Team Leader

5. Preaching

- In Acts 6:5 Philip and Stephen were appointed as deacons.
- In Acts 7:1-58 Stephen preached, and in Acts 6:8 he operated in the miraculous.
- In Acts 8:5-13 Philip evangelized, baptized believers, cast out demons, healed the sick, etc.

Build people into Jesus! Not yourself! Build them into maturity. They need to learn how to go to Jesus and rely on Jesus, not you.

Some questions to ask yourself:

- Do you carry the apostolic in your heart? Psalm 84:5-6, Isaiah 52:7
- Are you tithing and giving? Are you debt free (or at least have developed a program to get debt free)?
Are you free from the love of money?
- Are you blowing wind in the elders' sails, or are you consumed with your own thing?
- Can you follow this eldership in full submission and obedience?
- Are you carrying the burden of the church with the elders?
- Have you got any undisclosed issues, sins, unforgiveness, or 'skeletons' in your cupboard?
- Have you dealt with a critical attitude and loose tongue?
- Do you see the need to build disciples? Setting a godly example; building away from yourself, and opening doors of opportunity for others.
- Will you protect the elders, releasing them to prayer and the ministry of the word?
- Will you take up the vision and values responsibly, and look for ways to initiate?

- Will you shepherd the flock in submission to the elders and with diligence?