

Leadership and Administration

Detailed Outline

Part 1 of 4

Introduction:

A. A very important role in the church is leadership.

1. Any time you get two or more together, someone is going to lead and someone follows.
2. The church is no exception.
3. Where two or more are gathered in his name, there will be leaders and followers.
4. We want to specifically look at leadership in the church, particularly as it relates to elders.

B. The Bible makes it clear there is a right way of doing leadership and a wrong way.

1. The story of Saul, first king of Israel, should warn us against doing leadership in the worldly kind of way, or in the way that “seems right.”

“Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.” (1 Sam 8:5a–7 NASB)

2. Proverbs warns that leadership, like many things, is not just about doing what seems best.

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” (Prov. 14:12)

There are many churches that have good organizational governance, but they are dead spiritually. Their meetings are all on time, the music is great, capable communicator in the pulpit, the staff is well organized, lots of volunteers know where they fit in, and physical and emotional needs are being met. They are well-organized pseudo-spiritual, social clubs.

3. So we need to carefully consider what God has to say about leadership in his Word.

II. Two Key passages on elder leadership

A. Elders rule

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” (1 Tim 5:17 NASB)

1. *Prohistemi* is the underlying Greek word and it means “to rule, direct.”
2. The NASB, NKJV, ESV and RSV render this “to rule.”
3. The NIV renders it “to direct the affairs of the church.”
4. NET Bible puts it this way: “to provide effective leadership.”
5. One prominent lexicon called the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament says that in the form in which it occurs in the New Testament the word *prohistemi* means “to put oneself at the head” or “to go first.” (TDNT, s.v. *proisthmi*).

6. Metaphorically it means “to lead, conduct, direct, govern.” It can also include the idea “to protect” “to represent” “to care for” “to help.”
7. Taking these senses of the word together, we could say that elders *rule*, that is, to lead the church.
8. Now it is clear that some elders do this better than others, as this verse points out.
9. But, we will look at this more shortly.

B. Elders “manage”

“He [an elder] must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Tim 3:4–5)

1. The same word *prohistemi* is used here as in 1 Timothy 5:17
2. Contextually, the word takes on the sense of “manage,” as most modern translations render it here.
3. Clearly, the idea is that the elder’s leadership includes managing the church.
4. A potential elder’s proving ground is his demonstrated ability to “prohistemi” or to manage his family. If he is faithful in leading his own household (the smaller group), this is a good indication of his ability to lead/manage the church (the larger group).

C. Conclusion

1. Elders are not simply trustees of the church, not just sit on a board making decision.
2. They are certainly not a Christian version of the Sanhedrin.
3. They are not to be the rubber stamp for the pastor.
4. Elders are to be rulers, managers of the church.
5. We are going to use the two primary concepts of *prohistemi*—to rule and to manage—in one package and call it leadership.

Before coming back to these two verses shortly, first we must consider the paradigm of leadership that Jesus taught.

III. A leader among Christians is to be a servant

A. Whatever a leader does, he is to be a servant.

B. Leaders are not exempt from the fundamental principle Jesus gave his disciples:

“And He [Jesus] said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.” (Luke 22:25–26)

C. Biblical leadership is not a means to something else.

1. It is serving the people by providing leadership. The goal is humble serving.
2. A friend of mine put it this way: “Serving is not a path to the top; it is the top!”
3. Whatever leadership means, it is preeminently to humbly serve God’s people.

4. This is not giving lip-service, a superficial veneer or a euphemism for serving.
 5. Illustration: Politicians refer to themselves as “servants of the people” or “public servants.” Many certainly have that perspective, but there are others who are arrogant and seek to make a name for themselves in the history books. They are clearly serving themselves, but still use the description of themselves “public servant.”
 6. Being a humble servant is certainly not something that we can become arrogant over.
 7. Illustration: There’s an old story about a godly man kneeling at the altar, humbly praying. A young man noticed him, was overcome with conviction, and humbly joined the older man on his knees. Then the church janitor saw this, and he too was overcome with conviction and knelt down with the first two. Then the young fellow looked over, noticing the janitor kneeling there, humbly pouring himself out to the Lord. The young man nudged the older man and said, “Look who’s being all humble now!” Humble servanthood does not stroke the ego.
 8. Illustration: Another old saying, “I don’t mind serving others. I just don’t like being treated like a servant!” is probably true of a lot of us. And those who are called to elder-leadership must resist that attitude.
- D. John 13: The supreme illustration of serving is found in John 13, where Jesus took off his outer garments, wrapped a towel around himself, knelt before the disciples, and washed their feet. He did not demand that they wash their feet first before he gave them a ceremonial sprinkling. He actually handled their dust-encrusted, calloused feet with his hands! That’s what serving is all about!

So we need to look carefully at leadership with the eyes of Scripture. That is our next session.