



Biblical Leadership

The role of elders will be taken by the senior leadership team. The role of deacons will be taken by the associate leadership team.

Why Elders?

Crossover is a New Testament church that exists to transform the community through the love of Jesus. We believe the Bible is the ultimate authority on matters of faith, life, and leadership. Through careful investigation of the Scriptures we find a clear pattern for leadership in the church. We believe the most effective leadership for the church is laid out in the Gospel itself.

The Gospel is all about Jesus. He left the throne of God to come to earth to redeem and restore His creation. God has chosen the church as His primary agent to accomplish His redemptive work. If the church is God's tool to accomplish His purpose of seeking and saving His children then the leadership of the church plays an important part in that redemptive story.

The Redemptive Story

Before the creation of the world God was. He existed in three parts, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. This is known as the trinity. God in His existence is communal. God decided to create. He made the world and everything in it. The pinnacle of His creation was man, made in the image of God to live in community and harmony with God. Man was given authority over creation. Man lived in a garden paradise.

Lured by the opportunity to become like God, man rebelled. He rejected God's authority. He rejected his own identity. He destroyed the community he once had with God. God is life. When man rejected God he rejected life and thus became subject to death. This rejection created a separation between man and God on three fronts:

1. Man was now **spiritually** separated from God. In the garden we lived in *harmony* with God. We were connected to Him at our very center. We could know God as He knew us. The rebellion severed our connection to God.
2. Man was now **relationally** separated from God. The *community* we once had with God was destroyed in our rebellion. It was replaced with strife

and division. That division not only affected our relationship with God but our relationship with each other.

3. Man was now **practically** separated from God. We were once able to walk with God and to dwell in His presence. We had *intimacy* with Him. After the fall we were physically disconnected from God. His presence was removed and we could no longer engage in direct connection with Him.

The relationship we broke we are powerless to fix. No amount of traditions, rules, good behavior, or hard work can undo the damage we did. Like Humpty Dumpty we took a fall. No one and nothing on this earth can put us back together again. While we are powerless our situation is not hopeless. Jesus, the second Adam, came to earth to restore that which we broke. He lived a perfect life. Though He was without sin He became the sacrifice for sin. He took our rebellion, our mistakes, our failures upon Himself and paid the price for them all on the cross. His sacrifice was to cover sin once and for all that God's creation could be redeemed and restored to a relationship with Him. Death was not the end. Jesus rose from the dead, conquering sin and death.

After His resurrection Jesus was give authority over everything. Christ became the head of the church. Look at what Paul says in Ephesians:

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 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. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:15-23)

God established the church as His redemptive agent to the world. The church is responsible for the sharing the grace of God with the world. Before He ascended into Heaven Jesus gave His disciples, the founders of His church this command:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20).

At the cross God made the way for reconciliation. The death of Jesus covers our sins. His resurrection is the seal of approval on God's promise to finish His redemptive work and restore His creation. Jesus's mission was to seek and to save the lost. When He ascended to heaven He appointed the church to be the ambassadors of His grace and love. The church is tasked with being the presence of God on earth. The church's mission is to transform the world with the love and the life of Jesus. It is for this reason we labor. It is for this purpose we endure suffering that we may deliver the Gospel of Jesus for the glory of God.

The Leaders in the Gospel

In the earliest stages of its development the disciples were the leaders of the church. After Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41) the church exploded into a movement of faith that would turn the world upside down. The growth continued. The Gospel was preached and lives were transformed. Before long the disciples were no longer able to carry out their calling and tend to the growing needs of a multiplying body of believers. It all came to a head when some of the widows were being neglected (Acts 6:1-6). The needs were real but the disciples couldn't tend them without neglecting what they had been called to do. So they gathered the church together and said:

"It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 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. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 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. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

When the need arose the disciples instructed the church to select qualified leaders to care for the needs of the church. The disciples who were the elders did not try to handle every aspect of the ministry themselves. They appointed a group of men to handle the practical needs of the church so that the elders could focus on ministering to the spiritual needs of the church.

As a result of this new addition two forms of leadership existed in the early church. The first was elders. Their role was to manage the spiritual development of the church. The second were deacons. Their role was to care for the practical needs of the church. It's important to note that these roles do not give anyone the freedom to ignore other aspects of the Christian life. Elders and deacons alike must, as followers of Jesus, be faithful to carry out the task of either office. Elders are not above serving the needs of the church. Deacons are not excused from the responsibility of sharing God's Word whenever God opens that door.

The purpose for the two distinctive roles is to ensure that the spiritual, practical, and relational needs of the church are met without over taxing either group. It allows the elders to focus on what they are called to do. They can study, pray, and teach without having to worry that the sick are being cared for. In the same way deacons can serve knowing that the church is being spiritual led, prayed over, and the God's Word is being taught diligently.

God designed these two types of leadership to ensure that all three needs of man could be met. God's heart is to restore man spiritually, relationally, and socially. To accomplish that goal He gave us elders and deacons.

What it means

Elders can focus on what God has called them to do
Deacons can focus on what God has called them to do
No one is responsible for every single aspect of the church
Both groups can specialize in their calling
There are people in leadership at the church called and equipped to meet every need

What it doesn't mean

Elders and deacons are required to be at every event
Deacons are required to serve at every opportunity
Elders can't serve in the church
Deacons can't teach in the church

The leadership model of the church is meant to support the mission of the church. Having deacons to maintain and meet needs and elders to progress and develop allows the church to effectively carry out the mission of Jesus in reaching the lost while still caring for the needs of the flock and raising up new leaders from among them.

Two Forms of Leading

Now that we understand how leadership is laid out in the gospel we will look at the specific roles and tasks for each position.

The role of the church is to share and show the love of God to the world.

As a general rule...

- X Elders lead in sharing.
- X Deacons lead in showing.

Role of Elders

Elders are shepherds of the flock who lead by sharing the life and love of Jesus. They lead primarily in the Word. By sharing the character of God elders lead the community to surrender to their lives to God and to be transformed by Him. Their role is not to get people to obey them but to follow the Chief Shepherd, Jesus. Through their sharing of God's Word and diligent praying for the flock the elders work to meet the spiritual needs of fallen man. The Elders authority is to shepherd and to rule.

Elders are Shepherds

The clearest expression of an elder's role in leadership is the title 'shepherd' (1 Peter 5:1-2). The term 'pastor' literally means shepherd. This best describes the responsibility of an elder.

One of the most important tasks of a shepherd is to feed his flock. Elders accomplish this task through the teaching God's word. Though there are a many different areas in which elders are called to counsel or instruct God's sheep according to His Word, three primary ones defined in scripture are equipping the saints by teaching God's word (Eph. 4:11-12), protecting the saints by guarding against false teachers and their teachings (Titus 1:9) and, teaching and pastoring their own family (1 Timothy 3:4-5). One of the most significant distinction between an elder and a deacon in their Biblical qualifications is "able to teach". Though deacons are called to be as godly as elders, they are not required to be able to teach.

A shepherd is responsible for protecting the flock. For an elder this means protecting the congregation from false teaching. One of the most common warnings in the New Testament is to beware false teaching. False teachers are commonly referred to as wolves. A shepherd's job is to keep wolves away from the flock. Elders are tasked with the responsibility of refuting false teachers and false teachings (Acts 15:1-35; 20:28-32, Titus 1:9). As elders of Crossover we take this responsibility seriously. This task often comes with pain and difficulty, but we believe that the gospel is worth fighting for. The bottom line is it's God's household and God's rules, not ours. We care more about pleasing God than pleasing people.

A shepherd is responsible for training the sheep. For elders this training comes in two forms: disciple making and discipline. Elders are the spiritual authority of the church. Part of their role is to discipline members when appropriate (Matthew 18:15-17). The goal in discipline and in disciple making is to create and protect unity in the church (1 Corinthians 1:2,10).

A shepherd is responsible for caring for the sheep. At Crossover we believe that looks like doing life together and prayer. All Christians are free to pray. Elders are called to pray. They pray for the needs of the congregation (James 5:14-16) and also for the growth and development of the church. Elders are to serve as the hands of Jesus. Where medicine and doctors can fail God can work miracles. We do not promise that God will or always does work miracles. We believe that He appoints the shepherds of

His flock, the elders, to lead in His work of healing.

Most churches do not ask their elders to know and teach the Bible, protect against false teaching, discipline, and pray for the sick. We are not just looking for qualified leaders to be elders. We want spiritual leaders who are qualified and who care for the congregation. We want the kind of leaders that people want to follow.

Elders are Rulers

Elders don't just shepherd. They rule. Elders lead the church to surrender to God's wisdom and will. In 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and 5:17 God said that the men who meet the character qualifications He established in Scripture be the ones ruling and governing His Church, under His guidance, on the earth. The elders therefore are the men responsible for leading God's church to faithfully follow His Word and carry out His mission.

The bible not only describes who elders are, but it also speaks to how they ought to go about their work as leaders. The Father gives them the instruction to approach leadership with regard to the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

An elder is to lead the church as they lead their own family (1 Timothy 3:4-5). The image is that of a husband and father laying down his life so that his wife and his family can be transformed into the image of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-32; Galatians 4:19). Elders are not to rule as Kings using power for the own benefit but as servants putting the needs of the church above their own preferences (1 Peter 5:1-3; Luke 22:25-27).

The implication is that elders treat the church not as an economic enterprise but rather as a family. Every decision they make and every program they create is under the counsel of God's Word. The mission comes first. The elder serves the congregation through promoting and focusing on the vision and mission of the church.

Elders are more than gifted volunteers. They are called, qualified and faithful men whose lives and service lead the advance of God's kingdom by sharing His power and love.

The Role of Deacons

The Bible reveals to us that the role of deacons in the church is to lead by showing the love and grace of God to others. Deacons are servants in the church who operate with authority as leaders who serve.

Deacons show people how to obey, cherish, and follow King Jesus. Deacons show us through practical displays of the love of Jesus what God is like. They live out His Word and help turn the church into His kingdom. Through their living out the Word of God they meet the practical and relational needs of fallen man.

A deacon's role is less specific than that of an elder. Biblically we deacons doing whatever service is necessary to show the love of God while freeing up the elders to do the work of shepherding and ruling.

Deacons do not just show the love of Jesus. It is equally important for them to teach others how to show it as well. Deacons are the first step in creating a disciple making disciples community.

Deacons are Servant Leaders

While Elders are responsible for glorifying God through the sharing of His Word deacons glorify God through showing His Word. The heart of their ministry is service. Elders teach us what the Word of God means. Deacons show us what it looks like. Their role is to be an example of a life surrendered to Jesus that has been transformed by Jesus.

The Greek term the Scriptures use to name the role of deacon, *diakonos*, translates literally to English as servant. In the Bible a servant was not depicted as a lowly position but as an honorable one. In Matthew 20:28 Jesus says He came "not to be served but to serve." He tells the disciples that greatness in His kingdom comes through service (Matthew 20:25-28). In Isaiah Christ was prophesied to be a suffering servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). Jesus is commonly called a servant (Acts 3:26; Luke 22:26-27; John 13:1-17, Philippians 2:5-7) Just to ensure that we didn't miss it, Jesus tells directly:

"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" (Mark 9:35).

Deacons are Examples

Deacons are appointed based on their character. The first deacons were selected because they had a good reputation, were wise, and lived in close proximity with God. The deacons were not just people from the congregation who could serve. They stood out. They were selected to be trustworthy leaders and faithful servants. Because it is the role of a deacon to show the love of Jesus and to illustrate what it looks like to live out God's Word they should be living examples of what we want to see the church grow into. A deacon is an example that the church believes is worthy of following.

Plurality of Elders

The New Testament demonstrates that the typical practice of the early church was to establish a plurality of elders (Ac. 6:3-6, 14:23, 20:17; 1 Peter 5:1; James 5:14). This is most clearly seen in Paul's instruction to Titus. Titus was a young disciple who joined the team while Paul was in Crete. Paul writes: "This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I

directed you” (Ti. 1:5).

He then proceeds to give Titus a list of 17 elder qualifications. Paul gave a similar list of 15 qualifications to Timothy when he was instructing Timothy in the appointment of local church leaders. (Ti. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7). Paul instructs the leaders in the church to appoint qualified local leaders who could shepherd and care for the flock. In his instruction he directs that they appoint multiple leaders not just a single leader.

Women as Deacons

Our goal is for our leadership structure to be based and built on the Bible. We are committed to practicing church leadership the way God commanded. Our understanding may not be perfect but we want to genuinely follow what we see in Scripture to the best of our ability. As such we establish a plurality of elders who are men. This is not because we believe men are superior to women but because through reading the Bible we see that eldership is a position reserved by God for men.

Deacons on the other hand are different. The question of whether or not women can serve in the office of a deacon comes down to our interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:11. The word that is used is, *gune*, it means wife or woman. If we translate the word to mean wife then 1 Timothy lays out instructions for how the wife of a deacon out to behave. If we translate the word to mean woman then the instructions given are for female deacons.

At Crossover we believe the latter to be true. Here’s why: the expectations given to an elder are greater than those given to a deacon. Early in 1 Timothy 3 Paul gives qualifications of an elder. He gives no qualifications for an elder’s wife. If a position of higher spiritual authority does not have requirements for the character and behavior of the spouse then why would a position of lower spiritual authority? Contextually it makes more sense that Paul is giving instructions for female deacons. Therefore, we believe qualified women can be deacons.

We are committed to appointing qualified and capable men and women to deacon position. We are confident that women can serve in this servant leadership position because we see it in Scripture. While this can a be a heavily debated point we are responsible not to dictate how everyone else does it but to be as faithful as we can be to how God has revealed it to us.

Conclusion

At Crossover our heart is not to create regimented systems and elaborate programs. Our heart is to serve Jesus, glorify God, love people, and transform culture. The reason we take the time to organize and develop positions of leadership is to maximize our

effectiveness. We have been entrusted with the mission of our Lord and Savior. We want to honor Him by being good stewards of His mission. To do so we believe it is important to ensure that what we do is Biblical based, God honoring, and all about Jesus. So we start by applying that goal to our leadership structure.

By Tyler Edwards