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# A model for ministry of church elders in the Inca Union of Seventh-day Adventists

Luna, Luis Miguel, Ph.D.

Andrews University, 1992

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Andrews University

School of Education

# A MODEL FOR MINISTRY OF CHURCH ELDERS IN THE INCA UNION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Luis Miguel Luna

June 1992

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A MODEL FOR MINISTRY OF CHURCH ELDERS IN THE

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A dissertation
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by

Luis Miguel Luna

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Date approved

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ABSTRACT

A MODEL FOR MINISTRY OF CHURCH ELDERS IN THE INCA UNION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

by

Luis Miguel Luna

Chair: Roy C. Naden

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: A MODEL FOR MINISTRY OF CHURCH ELDERS IN THE INCA UNION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Name of researcher: Luis Miguel Luna

Name of degree of faculty chair: Roy C. Naden, Ed.D.

Date completed: June 1992

The Purpose

The purpose of this research was to elucidate the ministry of lay elders as it is suggested in the New Testament and to construct a model for the ministry of local church elders in the Inca Union Mission.

Method

This study was documentary and theological. The primary source was the New Testament, specifically the gospels, the book of Acts, and the epistles. Secondary literature was employed to support the biblical findings of the elders' tasks.

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## Conclusions

In harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures regarding early church organization and leadership, elders are selected by the local church and ordained to function primarily as shepherds, leaders, and teachers in their local communities. Selection by the church is on the basis of character and appropriate spiritual gifts. The proposed model of elders' ministry includes: a selection process, training for specific ministry, organization into a Board of Elders, implementation of ministry, all within a professional pastoral supervision. This model is proposed as the formalization of the process of training modeled by Jesus Christ and the apostles. It is proposed that the implementation of this model will facilitate church growth in two ways: first by slowing the present rates of apostasy in the Inca Union Mission through nurture and second by increasing the effectiveness of outreach with the community.

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CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

The church has been commissioned by Jesus to teach individuals to observe all that Jesus commanded (Matt 28:19,20).[1] Thus, the church is an organization which has a primary responsibility to facilitate the process of Christian education.[2] Through the process, church members are first confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ, then the development of the Christian character begins. Christian education fosters holistic development, spiritually, socially, physically, and mentally, with the goal of bringing lives into the image of Christ. It also provides an opportunity for training, sharing, and outreach in the fellowship of other believers.

According to D. Campbell Wyckoff, the "church is the community of believers dedicated wholly to the service of

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[1]The texts quoted are from the RSV unless otherwise noted.

[2]Christian education is imparted in the home, the church, and the school. In this study, Christian education focuses in the church setting.



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God,"[1] united in worship and service, and "organized to do a job."[2] From the beginning, the organization of the Christian church was an integral part of its growth and maturity. This structure and organization included education, which is "an essential part of the ministry"[3] for it facilitates the transmission of truth through those members who have the necessary gifts provided by the Holy Spirit to teach the truth.

According to James D. Smart, the "church of Christ has a teaching function,"[4] and "the failure to recognize the teaching function of the church has resulted in a misconception of the ministry."[5] He suggested that the educational ministry of the church has been conceived primarily as a function of preachers or pastors,[6] but a more comprehensive view of this subject needs to be developed in which members of the local church congregation are integrated into the educational ministry.

The New Testament records that Christ intended His

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[1]D. Campbell Wyckoff, The Task of Christian Education (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 73.

[2]Ibid., 75.

[3]Charles A. Tidwell, Educational Ministry of a Church (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1982), 31.

[4]James D. Smart, The Teaching Ministry of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 11.

[5]Ibid., 12.

[6]Ibid.

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followers "to teach" the truth. Before His ascension He commanded, "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" (Matt 28:19,20). "It is proper to say that the church has a responsibility for instruction. Ultimately the Great commission is a teaching commission."[1] Also, according to Kenneth O. Gangel, Eph 4:11-16 describes the church in its educational role. "The educational ministry is carried by those who are gifted by God to teach."[2] From Gangel's perspective, "Christian education in the local church needs to be based squarely on biblical concepts,"[3] and similarly Tidwell suggested that "the Bible is the basic book for the educational ministry of the church."[4] Thus, in its educational ministry, the church recognizes that the Bible contains the norms and principles which are at the core of Christian education and suggests the appropriate methodologies to achieve its mission.

The church has been called to teach and preach the

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[1]Kenneth O. Gangel, Leadership for Church Education (Chicago: Moody Press, 1970), 28.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 19.

[4]Tidwell, 16.

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Word: "This is its function."[1] Through these twin functions, the proclamation of the eternal gospel is to go to the world. This is the church's mission, and its structure is to facilitate these vital ministries.

The reality that the church exists with a mission and purpose leads us to ask the question: Who will be the persons entrusted to teach and preach? Who has been gifted to teach and preach? According to the church's initial rudimentary structure as revealed in the New Testament, there were two levels of "ministers": elders and deacons at the local level; apostles, prophets, and evangelists at a broader level (Gal 2:1-10; Act 20:17-35; Phil 1:1; 1 Cor 3:5-9).

## Church Organization Background

### Early Church Organization

The apostle Paul clearly states that the church was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple of the Lord" (Eph 2:20,21). According to this metaphor, Jesus Christ is the principal foundation upon which were laid the apostles and prophets, and finally, the building of the whole church. To change the figure, the apostle Peter called Jesus Christ the "Chief Shepherd" who

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[1]Wyckoff, 75.

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leads the church (1 Pet 5:4; cf. 1 Cor 12:12), which implies that the apostles functioned as undershepherds.

Paul asserts that James, Cephas (Peter), and John "were reputed to be pillars" (Gal 2:9) in the church at Jerusalem. It is important to note that in most cases Peter is recognized as a primary apostle, but primary in the sense of service (2 Pet 1:1). From its beginning, the church was strongly influenced by the preaching and teaching of Peter and John (Act 3:1, 4:1,13). They took the initiative to fulfill the responsibility given by Jesus, of "teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Act 4:2). In those days most of the believers were Jews, and it was not difficult for them regularly to assemble for worship in the synagogues. From the biblical record, it seems clear that after Jesus, the apostles were the original leaders/teachers of the church.

As the church grew, it became necessary to include others in the organization. In an initial step, "seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" were elected to collaborate with the apostles (Act 6:1-6). They functioned not only in the "daily distribution" but also, according to the book of Acts, taught, preached (Stephen and Philip), and baptized (Philip) (Act 6:8-15, 8:4-40).

As a result of the preaching of the Word by the disciples, the church "throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear

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of the Lord and in comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied" (Act 9:31). It was the initial rapid church growth which created the necessity of a supervisory role by the apostles. For example, Peter traveled to encourage the believers in Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea (Act 9:32, 36, 10:1,24).

A study of the book of Acts and the epistles shows that the apostle Peter worked primarily among the Jewish believers, and Paul among the Gentiles. Paul notes that he "had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised" (Gal 2:7). In this way ethnic and regional missionary work were accomplished.

The church at Antioch became a center for the proclamation of the gospel to Gentiles. There Barnabas and Paul preached to great multitudes (Act 11:25-26). At the direction of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas, acting as apostles, went to the Gentiles to share the gospel of salvation (Act 13:46,47; cf. 2 Tim 1:11). The fact that they were itinerant apostles created the need for permanent supervision by local church leaders after the apostles left. Thus, in their journey, they appointed elders in each church (Act 14:23), demonstrating to early believers a basic church organization for the continuation and preservation of the work in all local churches.

It is also evident that Paul and Barnabas functioned

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as apostles, shepherds, and teachers. Barnabas taught at Antioch (Act 11:22-24) and "went to Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a large company of people" (Act 11:25-26). He accompanied the apostle Paul in his first missionary journey (Act 13:1-14:28), and both Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (Act 14:23). Barnabas took Mark with him in his journey to Cyprus (Act 15:39). Because of the extent of Paul's work, he enlisted other workers who functioned as itinerant leaders and evangelists. For example, Paul took Silas (Act 15:40) and enlisted Timothy (Act 16:3) and later Titus (2 Cor 8:23). He traveled to each church in certain regions to teach, nurture, and strengthen the believers (Act 18:23).[1]

From this early church history, it may be implied, as already stated, that church organization functioned administratively and educationally at two levels: at a broader level by the apostles, and at local level by locally appointed and ordained elders. The church in its initial organization was led by the apostles who acted by the influence of the Holy Spirit in appointing local elders who

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[1]Also, Silas and Timothy went to Macedonia (Acts 18:5); later Paul sent Timothy and Erastus to the same place (Acts 19:22). Titus went to Corinth (2 Cor 8:7,23). Timothy went to Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:6). Paul stayed at Corinth one year and a half teaching the Word of God (Acts 18:11), and at Ephesus two years and three months (Acts 19:10,8).

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in turn instructed the believers in their local congregations.

## Contemporary Church Organization

Can we apply this pattern of dual function from the early church organization to our contemporary church structure? It would seem appropriate to elucidate the function of local elders as it is presented in the New Testament and to seek to apply these principles to today's church. To this purpose, this study focuses primarily on local elders and attempts to explore their functions and qualifications. The topic raises several questions; for example, Who were the elders? What were their qualifications? Who were the teachers of the local New Testament church? What was the relationship between the functions of the elders of the early Christian church and the elders of the Jewish synagogues? Is there any relationship between the work of today's elders and the instruction in Eph 4:11-13 of the apostle Paul to the early church's elders? The answers to these questions may suggest ways in which modern elders can accomplish a biblically-based ministry.

Today, professional pastors and teachers are assigned to local areas to perform multi-faceted ministries. In preparation, they usually receive undergraduate, and sometimes graduate training. However, this study suggests that according to the biblical record, local non-

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professional elders elected by their own congregations (Phi 1:1; 1 Thess 5:12) originally performed important ministries at the local church level.

In the New Testament local church officers were called "bishops" (Phil 1:1), however, today the name is generally used to denote professional church leaders. Even though this usage become formalized long after the writing of the New Testament, the term still defines the nature of local elders' functions. Significantly, both Protestant and Roman Catholic exegetes are in relative accord concerning the ministry of the New Testament elders/bishops.

According to the Roman Catholic Code of Canon Law:

> Bishops are constituted pastors within the church so that they are teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship and ministers of governance.
> By the fact of their episcopal consecration bishops receive along with the function of sanctifying also the function of teaching and of ruling.[1]

The Code of Canon Law recognizes the exercise of pastoral duties within the office, and the bishops are responsible for the ministry of the Word, catechetical formation, and visitation.[2]

The Lutheran church places "bishops, ministers, [and] pastors on the same level" thus rejecting all

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[1]The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary, ed. James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green, and Donald E. Heintschel (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 319.

[2]See Canon 383, "The Bishop as a Pastor"; Canon 386, "The Bishop as a Teacher"; and Canon 396, "Obligation of Visitation." Code of Canon Law, 326-328, 333-335.

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hierarchical distinctions.[1] "The reformers regarded 'visitation' as the specific function of bishops."[2] Their office is definitively identical with the ministry of the Word.[3] From the Presbyterian perspective, four types of officers are elected by the congregation--the pastor, ruling elders, deacons, and trustees.[4] The lay ruling elders are the persons "responsible for the conduct of the ministry of the entire congregation."[5]

Both Roman Catholic and Protestant writings describe professional bishops/elders as responsible for pastoring, teaching, preserving sound doctrine, and visitation. A problem in the Roman Catholic church is that bishops function with a presupposition of a dichotomy between clergy and laity. While in Protestant churches there is no such presupposition, functionally local church elders rarely minister as described in the New Testament.

There appears to be a belief or at least practice in many churches that local lay elders have a very limited ministry. Thus, Charles Hodge suggested that there has been

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[1]Hans Martin Mueller, "Bishop," The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church (1965), 1:311.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Consider Your Ministry: A Manual for New Officers of the United Presbyterian Church (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, The United Presbyterian Church, 1963), 12.

[5]Ibid., 13.

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a lack of emphasis in the development of the responsibilities of the elders because of the emphasis on the preacher as a pastor system.[1] Marvin Mayer, who has made an important contribution to the understanding of elders in the New Testament, wrote that if we are going to follow the pattern of the New Testament teaching on elders, some significant changes are necessary.[2] At the professional level, according to Kenneth Holderread, a connection between seminary training and the reality of church guidance is missing. Although he stresses a radical view, his concern is legitimate when he said that a "pastor can not be an elder until maturity has developed with the person's life."[3] Accordingly, a time for maturation is necessary so the pastor can be adjusted as a real elder.[4]

## Elders' Education

From Gerald W. Gillaspie's viewpoint, the problem is that seminaries are not providing adequate training

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[1]Charles B. Hodge, "The Eldership" (M.A. thesis, Harding College, 1953), 7.

[2]Marvin Edward Mayer, "An Exegetical Study on the New Testament Elder" (D.Th. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1970), 189.

[3]Kenneth O. Holderread, "The Role of Eldering and the Christian Community," Brethren Life and Thought 24 (1979): 208.

[4]Ibid.

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concerning the lay ministries of the church.[1] After he finished his project, Gillaspie concluded that the "church is not effectively being served by its lay eldership."[2] Thus, from his perspective a major consideration of elders' training should be undertaken by seminaries, local church leaders, and pastors.

Considering the concern of the authors mentioned above, there does appear to be a problem elucidating how church elders can accomplish their functions. Referring to lay ministers, the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual states that "the [lay] elder must be prepared to minister in word and doctrine,"[3] so that he may teach.

> The elder should, in counsel with the minister, carry much of the pastoral responsibility, visiting the church members, ministering to the sick, and encouraging those who are disheartened. Too much emphasis cannot be placed on this part of an elder's work.[4]

Because of the obvious need for ministers and lay elders to work closely together, it is important to define first the work of the professional ministry. According to Richard Niebuhr,

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[1]Gerald Whiteman Gillaspie, "Development of an Elder's Ministry in Immanuel Baptist Church (Baptist General Conference) Waukegan, Illinois" (D.Min. project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1980), 5-7.

[2]Ibid., 13.

[3]Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1986), 57.

[4]Ibid., 58.

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> The answer is that it is undefined. There is no agreement among denominational authorities, local officials, seminaries, professors, prominent laymen, ministers or educators as to what it is or should be.[1]

If there is a measure of uncertainty about the duties of the professional ministry, one might expect the same to be true of the local lay elders. For this reason, this study returns to the Bible to explore local lay officers' ministry in local congregations.

## Statement of the Problem

The last instruction of Jesus Christ to the church was to make disciples, to baptize, and to teach them (Matt 28:18-20). The first accessions to the Christian church came as a direct result of the apostles' endeavors throughout Judea, Samaria, Asia, Greece, and Rome (Act 2, 8, 10, 13-24). Sudden church growth after Pentecost brought the need for organization (Act 6:1-7; 15:1-35; Titus 1:5). Since most of the apostles and the early believers were of Jewish background, the book of Acts seems to suggest that the pattern of the synagogue was followed in early church organization.

It appears that Paul and his helpers ordained elders in each new congregation (Act 20:17-21). From the evidence in the New Testament, the local church functioned under the direction of lay bishops and deacons (Phi 1:1). This

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[1]H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aim of Theological Education (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 51.

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reality caused the apostle Paul to give instructions regarding their responsibilities (1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17). The lay church elders also participated in the decision-making process of the church (Act 15:6-35).

In the tradition of New Testament times, lay elders are often defined as leaders and overseers of the local church (Act 20:28). However, some elements often seem to be lacking in this description, especially the educational ministry of lay church elders. While professional pastors have been trained to lead, preach, teach, and nurture, lay elders have not. Thus, it seems that the instruction and training of lay elders in such ministries is largely overlooked. Should the lay elders be responsible for the such ministries in the local church? This study will attempt to establish that they should, based on the model of church organization in the New Testament.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to elucidate the multiple responsibilities of the lay elders as it is presented in the New Testament and to construct a model for the organization and training of local church elders in the overall ministry for the church. To this end, this study explores the teachings of Jesus Christ contained in the gospels, the epistles of the apostle Paul, the writings of Luke, and the church organization and needs in Perú upon which to build a model for the training and work of church

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elders in the Inca Union of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

## Basic Assumption

### Priesthood of All Believers

A basic teaching of the New Testament is the issue of the priesthood of all believers. The apostle Paul, using the human body as an illustration, declares that the church is the body of Christ (Eph 1:23, 5:30; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 1:18). This means that all members who have been reconciled, justified, and baptized in Jesus Christ, are united and integrated in the church as an organic body in which they participate. Thus, each part of the body is very important, "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" (1 Cor 12:12). Thus, when the church is compared to a human body it implies not only that there are many parts but also that each part performs its appointed function. In this sense, all members of the body are vital to the harmonious development of the whole church.

The apostle Peter helps us to understand one function of the church body in the context of the royal priesthood. Writing to the exiles of the dispersion (1 Pet 1:1) he invited the believers to "come to him [Christ], to the living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built

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into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood" (1 Pet 2:4-5). In other words, the church is not only the body of Christ, but, to use another metaphor, also the building of God edified by Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:6-8) in which every part of the building functions to preserve the integrity of the whole, the spiritual house of all believers. Peter also called the members of the church "a holy priesthood" (1 Pet 2:4). All believers are called and separated by God to serve as priests.[1] Peter's declaration of the holy priesthood indicates a direct access to God's mediation and intercession.

In 1 Pet 2:9a, the apostle develops this idea more fully. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." Thus, the members of the body of Christ are not only a "holy" priesthood, they are also a "royal" priesthood, a special people called by God to become members of His kingdom. It is important to note that by the merits of Jesus Christ, our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-28, 5:6, 6:20), Christians received the title "royal priesthood" and by the acceptance of His sacrifice and salvific ministry here on earth, they will reign with Christ receiving the royal title in heaven as a recompense in the final victory (Rev 1:5, 20:4-6).

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[1]All the ministries of the priesthood in the sanctuary were fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Heb 7:1-28, 10:10-14) and only in Christ do Christian believers have a real mediator (1 Tim 2:5).

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In 1 Pet 2:9 the apostle Peter is referring to the Word of the Lord to the people of Israel when He declared, "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Exod 19:6). Peter's declaration signifies that the function that Israel was first called to fulfil, now is to be achieved by the Christian church. The church is a chosen people called with a purpose to "declare the wonderful deeds of him [Christ]" (1 Pet 2:9). Therefore, the priesthood of all believers is related to their ministry for Jesus Christ. The promise given to Israel is fulfilled in the Christian church, the body of Christ, in which all the members participate as a royal priesthood.

Also, the apostle Peter declares that the church is the people of God. An analysis of the text reveals that there is no dichotomy between priesthood and people; rather all people are members of the royal priesthood. All of them are called and chosen by God. They are a people who together compose the body and the building of Christ. Their title recognizes that they have been called for a purpose. In this context, the priesthood of all believers is connected with the mission of the church. The last part of this verse defines this important mission: "that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9b). This is

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the mission of the people of God who are called "priests."[1] Thus, when Peter speaks about the people of God, he means the chosen people, God's very own people called to fulfill a mission. In the development of this task, there is no hierarchy among or dichotomy between or superiority of some members of the body (1 Pet 2:9; cf. Matt 18:15-20), but a diversity of spiritual gifts that enables each to edify the church of God (Eph 4:11-13).

The church is the body of Christ and through the empowering of the Holy Spirit all members can participate in the building and maturing of the church (1 Cor 12).

## Importance of the Study

Elders need a model as they seek to perform their ministry in local congregations in harmony with the professional ministers, each strengthening the other. This study is needed so that elders may be appropriately selected, trained, organized, and enabled to function in the local churches. This study is also needed so that pastors may be encouraged to perceive elders as fellow workers in their ministry and facilitate the nurture and outreach of the church in fulfillment of its mission.

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[1]Also, the apostle Paul instructed regarding the mission of every believer: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18).

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## Delimitations

This study is rooted in the New Testament and the needs of the Inca Union Mission organization, but addresses only the functions of church elders and their supervising professional pastors. The focus is first on early church history as detailed in the book of Acts, and on the instructions of the apostle Paul in his epistles then the development of a contemporary model. Professional ministers are considered only as they facilitate the work of local church elders in church congregations.

The purpose of this study is not to describe the theological meaning of church authority or church organization, or the differences between the hierarchical, congregational, and presbyterian models. The primary focus is on how church elders can accomplish their responsibilities in their local congregations.

## Definition of Terms

**Bishops:** (ἐπίσκοπος) Those also called "elders" who function as overseers, supervisors, and teachers in a specific local church.

**Deacons:** Local church officers responsible for specific aspects of church life such as caring for the poor and visiting the members.

**Elders:** (πρεσβύτερος) A term equivalent to the term "bishops" and meaning local lay church officers who also function as overseers, shepherds, and teachers.

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**Christian Education:** Christian education is a process by which persons are confronted and transformed by the gospel, and nurtured within the church. It is the process through which humankind is restored to the image of God, an image distorted by sin. It is one arm of God's restorative effort and is therefore a redemptive activity. In the fullest sense of the word, Christian education is redemption. As a result, it seeks a balanced development between the social, spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of people in all of its activities and through their total lives.

## Outline of the Study

Chapter 1, the introduction, includes the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, basic assumptions, definitions, importance of the study, and delimitations. Chapter 2 considers hermeneutical presuppositions, methodological procedures, and the eldership literature review.

Chapter 3, entitled "Educational Ministry of the Church," is divided into three major themes: the example of Jesus Christ, the instructions of the apostle Paul, and the nature, function, and qualifications of the church elders. Chapter 4 proposes a model for church elders, notes their responsibilities, and describes how they can accomplish their tasks. Chapter 5, the conclusion, includes the summary, implications and recommendations.

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CHAPTER 2

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Since this study is based primarily on the New Testament's information about elders and church organization, hermeneutical presuppositions are first presented as the frame of reference for the inquiry.

## Hermeneutical Presuppositions

### God Reveals Himself in Scripture

Although the thoughts of God are infinitely higher than man's (Isa 55:8,9), He took the initiative to reveal Himself to humankind so we can experience salvation (John 17:3). God reveals Himself "in many and various ways" through the prophets,[1] "but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son," Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1,2) which means that Christ is the supreme revelation of God.

In the Old Testament, God specifically instructed Moses that He would communicate through dreams and visions and by a close encounter with Moses "mouth to mouth" (Num 12:6,7). According to the Scriptures, in these meetings God

[1]"Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).



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sent information that was vital for man's salvation. "Man does not live by bread alone, but . . . man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut 8:3). God reveals words which must be taught, obeyed, and transmitted from generation to generation (Deut 6:6-9). In addition, the Word of God is perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true (Psalm 19:7-10), and "will stand for ever" (Isaiah 40:8; cf. Deut 29:29).

Clear evidence that God communicates information to His prophets is expressed in the experience of Samuel when "the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord" (1 Sam 3:21). Another example is revealed by the prophet Isaiah who declared, "The Lord of hosts has revealed himself in my ears" (Isa 22:14a), and immediately the information was delivered (Isa 22:14b). The same demonstration is manifested when God revealed a mystery "to Daniel in a vision of night" (Dan 2:19) and Daniel declared through inspiration, "he reveals deep and mysterious things" (Dan 2:22). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul also indicates that the mystery of Christ was made known to him by revelation (Eph 3:3-4; cf. 1 Tim 3:16) because it pleased God to reveal His Son to Paul so he could preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal 1:16). Therefore, this special revelation is a dynamic encounter between God and man in which God transmits His Word expressed in human language.

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The Scriptures tell us that God took the initiative to reveal Himself to the prophets (Exod 3:12; 1 Sam 3:21; Isa 6:9; Ezek 2:4-5; Amos 7:15). This implies that the Bible is not merely a human document but is indeed the Word of God. God Himself has communicated in the Scriptures; therefore, the Bible contains the revelation of God expressed and transmitted in human language.

### All Scripture Is Inspired by the Holy Spirit

Connected with the issue of revelation is the concept of inspiration, a process by which God communicates His eternal truth. Writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul declares, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:16,17). It is important to note that the apostle Paul emphasizes "all scripture," suggesting the authority of the Old Testament and implicitly the New Testament. Also, the words "inspired by God" show their divine origin; according to Paul they "are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15).

The apostle Peter also emphasizes this truth, indicating that "first of all you must understand this, that no prophecy is a matter of one's own interpretation" (2 Pet 1:20), "because no prophecy ever came by impulse of man" (2

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Pet 1:21a). How did this process occur? The answer is in the second part of verse 21: God-inspired "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." Thus, the process of inspiration is in the mind of the prophet and not in the words themselves. The Scripture gives evidence that the process of inspiration is in the person. Jesus Christ points out the same truth when He asserts that David himself was inspired by the Holy Spirit (Mark 12:36).[1] The Holy Spirit revealed and helped in the process of transmission to the mind of the prophet (2 Pet 1:20-21). This implies that the prophet also worked in the framework of his own cultural and linguistic background in presenting the truth (Luke 1:1-4).

In synthesis, God not only revealed truths but also trusted the prophets to transmit His Word through the influence of the Holy Spirit, who acted upon the mind of the person so the infinite truths could be transmitted in human language. Moreover, although this human language is imperfect (1 Cor 13:9,12; Rom 11:33), the Word is from God. Therefore, the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit cannot be separated because the Holy Spirit is both the author and revealer of the biblical truths necessary for human salvation (2 Tim 3:15) which will be accepted and followed in the life of the believers (Josh 1:7,8; Ezek 33:30-33; John 14:15).

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[1]See also Act 28:25; Heb 3:7; 9:8.

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## Authority of the Scriptures

It is clear in the Scriptures that the biblical writers received divine revelation. The Scriptures declare on many occasions that the prophets received information in visions from the Lord. For example, "the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz" (Isaiah 1:1), "the words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel" (Amos 1:1), "the oracle of God which Habakkuk the prophet saw" (Hab 1:1) and "this is the vision which the Lord has shown to me" (Jer 38:21). The prophets expressed this in different ways, but the source is the same--they received their revelation from God. The message came directly from the Lord--it was not the prophet's opinion.[1]

Jesus Christ recognized the continuing authority of the prophets in the Scriptures when He constantly referred to them in the words "It is written" (Matt 4:4,7,10; 11:10; 26:24)[2] and He identified the Old Testament as the Word of God (Mark 10:5, 12:36). He said, "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17; cf. Matt 28:18-20). According to the disciple John, "his testimony is true" (John 21:24). Thus from Jesus Christ's perspective, the entire Scripture is authoritative as the

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[1]See also Jer 1:1,2,9; Ezek 1:3; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Ezek 2:4; Isa 7:7; Gal 1:12.

[2]The apostle Paul (Rom 9:13; Gal 3:10,13) and the apostle Peter (1 Pet 1:16) used the same expression.

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Word of God. Old and New Testaments are inseparable because both testify to the ministry of Jesus Christ (John 5:39). This unity and continuity is emphasized in the words, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb 1:1,2).

In addition, the apostles regarded their messages as authoritative. For example, writing to the Thessalonians the apostle Paul declares that they should accept the message "not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God" (1 Thess 2:13). In the same way, writing to the church at Corinth, he says: "If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord" (1 Cor 14:37).[1]

In summary, we recognize the whole Bible, the sixty-six books from Genesis to Revelation, as the revelation of God for the salvation of human beings, transmitted by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and as an indispensable standard for faith and life. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

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[1]See also 2 Thess 3:14; 1 Tim 4:6; 2 Tim 1:13,14.

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## General Principles of Interpretation

To study the Bible requires spiritual preparation. Since it was through the influence of the Holy Spirit that the Word of God was revealed, believers today must pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit to comprehend the Scriptures (John 14:16; 16:13,14; 1 Cor 2:10-14). Thus, important steps of personal preparation to study the Scriptures include prayer for illumination, dependence on the Holy Spirit, faith, and a humble spirit (John 14:26; Prov 3:5).[1]

Christian believers must approach the Scriptures with faith[2] and in the humble spirit of a learner who seeks to hear and to understand what the Bible is saying. We should be willing to submit all presuppositions, opinions, and conclusions of reason to the judgment and correction of the Word itself (1 Cor 2:1-6). The intent of God is that mankind use reason to its full extent but under the frame and authority of the Scriptures. With this attitude, the

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[1]Since understanding the Scripture can come only through the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit, the psalmist gave an explicit example when he prayed, "Praise be to you, O Lord; teach me your decrees" (Ps 119:12, NIV). "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law" (Ps 119:18). "Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders" (Ps 119:27). "Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight" (Ps 119:35).

[2]Faith in this case involves belief in His Word found in the Scriptures and trust in Him as a personal Savior and Lord (Gen 15:5,6; John 8:28-30, 31-32; 20:31; 11:23-27).

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Bible student may come directly to the Word, and with careful study come to understand the essentials of the plan of salvation.

Another important principle of interpretation is that the Scripture is its own interpreter. This principle is illustrated when Jesus Christ explains to the disciples on the walk to Emmaus the nature of His suffering ministry. "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27; cf. 1 Cor 2:13; 2 Pet 1:20). Also, when the apostle Paul went to the Jewish synagogue at Beroea, Luke reports that the Jews were "examining the scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Act 17:12). They did not give priority to consulting with the rabbis, or their tradition, or philosophy--they examined the Scriptures. This statement implies that to understand doctrinal truths, the Christian must compare Scripture with Scripture and the entire testimony of the Scripture, seeking to harmonize in a coherent way what the Bible says. Thus, the Bible remains the standard for doctrinal teaching and ethical conduct.

The above principle leads us to enunciate the importance of the context to clarify the meaning of the text in biblical interpretation. Also, to grasp the meaning of the biblical statement, historical, cultural, and contextual issues must be considered. The purpose of Bible study is

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not only to understand certain biblical statements, but also to ascertain how these statements are related to words, sentences, units, and the Bible as a whole.[1]

## General Methodology

This study is documentary and theological. The primary source is the New Testament, specifically the gospels, the book of Acts, and the epistles. The example of Jesus Christ as educator and the instructions of the apostle Paul to the early Christian churches are both considered to illuminate the educational ministry of the church. In addition, the functions of church elders from the biblical perspective are analyzed. The purpose is to elucidate the multiple responsibilities of the elders and to construct a model of how elders can function in contemporary congregations. Secondary literature is employed to support the biblical findings of the elders' task.[2]

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[1]Gerhard F. Hasel, Understanding the Living Word of God (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1980), 110-234.

[2]In the frame of biblical interpretation and the philosophy of Christian education, there is no distinction between sacred and secular. All life is sacred, "all activity is for the glory of God" and involves the "whole person" (Deut 6:5). J. Ottis Sayes, "The Biblical Basis for Christian Education," in Exploring Christian Education, ed. A. Elwood Sanner and A. F. Harper (Kansas City, Missouri: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978), 36. See also Arthur F. Holmes, All Truth Is God's Truth (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 16-30. "The biblical perspective is that all truth is God's truth. As such, the distinction between secular and sacred truth is a false dichotomy. All truth finds its source in God as the Creator and Originator." George R. Knight, Philosophy and

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The work of Sakae Kubo and Leona Running gives a valuable procedure for biblical interpretation.[1] In harmony with its findings, the words πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος will be studied in context, especially the address at Miletus to the elders of Ephesus (Act 20:17-28), the instructions of the apostle Paul to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5), and the exhortation of the apostle Peter (1 Pet 5:1).

## Review of Eldership Literature

This section considers literature that explores the following topics: eldership in the Presbyterian church, bishops in the Roman Catholic church, elders in the Seventh-day Adventist church, the meaning of the terms πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος, functions and responsibilities, the origin of eldership and the historical background, the elders and church organization, qualifications, and elders and spiritual gifts.

### Eldership in the Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian literature has been examined because it

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Education (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1980), 161. In this study, secondary sources are employed to corroborate and elaborate the teachings related to elders' functions as they are found in the Scriptures.

[1]Sakae Kubo and Leona Running, "Tools of Biblical Interpretation," in A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Committee, 1974), 265-273. See also Gordon D. Fee, New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 25-116.

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emphasizes the ministry of the presbyters in church organization and because it has produced most of the available literature regarding elders. From the Presbyterian perspective, there are both ruling and teaching elders. Since this belief has been questioned, it is necessary to understand the New Testament function of church elders and to explore how spiritual gifts were related to their ministries.

The study of church government in general and church elders in particular was promoted by the Presbyterian Church as early as the first half of the last century. In 1832, Samuel Miller issued a book titled An Essay on the Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder in which he asserted that the essential character of the elders is their ruling function.[1] Through his book, there is a distinction between "ruling" and "teaching" elders, although he admitted no difference in authority.[2] Miller considered that elders functioned in two groups: teaching and governing, but his preference seems to be for the authority of the ruling elder.[3] Contrary to Miller, Thomas Smyth

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[1]Samuel Miller, An Essay on the Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Education, 1832), 1.

[2]Ibid., 2.

[3]Ibid., 56-59.

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contended that there is no difference between ruling and teaching elders.[1]

Based on his understanding of the instructions of the apostle Paul, John McKerrow understood there to be only two kinds of officers in the local church: the elders and the deacons.[2] He agreed with Miller's two classes of elders: the ruling elders, and those who work in the Word and doctrine,[3] but no distinction between them.[4] From McKerrow's perspective, the primary duty of the elder is to rule, which was understood to include the functions of overseeing the church, feeding the flock, and watching for souls.[5] In an address delivered to the Presbytery of Tombeckbee, Mississippi, in 1860, Ebenezer Thompson Baird reiterated that the New Testament recognizes the responsibilities of elders to rule and teach.[6] Thus, Presbyterian history records assertions concerning church organization in which there is a distinction between

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[1]Thomas Smyth, The Name, Nature, and Functions of Ruling Elders (New York: Mark H. Newman, 1845), 34.

[2]John McKerrow, The Office of Ruling Elder in the Christian Church: Its Divine Authority, Duties and Responsibilities (Edinburgh: William Oliphant & Sons, 1846), 13.

[3]Ibid., 14.

[4]Ibid., 77.

[5]Ibid., 159-160.

[6]Ebenezer Thompson Baird, An Essay on the Pastoral Duties of Ruling Elders (Columbia, South Carolina: Southern Guardian Steam-Power Press, 1860), 1, 7.

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teaching by the pastor and ruling by the lay elders.[1]

Lawrence R. Eyres contended that "God alone makes elders, and the church's duty is to discern which men God has given to the church for teaching and ruling,"[2] and further that the terminology "ruling and teaching elder" is unfortunate. Eyres stated:

> It is readily admitted that "all elders rule"; but the second part of that saying--and some elders teach--is not accurate. Paul tells Timothy that a bishop (elder) must be "apt to teach." And this applies to all elders without distinction.[3]

For Eyres, it is unrealistic to separate the teaching from the ruling work of elders.[4] In keeping with his ecclesiastical heritage, he concluded from 1 Tim 5:17 that the elders have three basic functions: teaching, praying and ruling.[5]

Contrary to the Presbyterian view of eldership and supporting Eyres' view, John Zens contended that there is no distinction between ruling and teaching elders. It "must be

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[1]According to McKee, this view is considered as a result of Calvin's interpretation of 1 Tim 5:17 in which he referred "two kind of elders," who fulfill two kinds of tasks, that is, those who 'labor in the Word of God' and those who 'preside.' Elsie Anne McKee, Elders and the Plural Ministry (Genève: Librairie Droz S.A., 1988), 101.

[2]Lawrence R. Eyres, The Elders of the Church (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1975), 7.

[3]Ibid., 14.

[4]Ibid., 18.

[5]Ibid., 61-63.

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stressed that elders rule by teaching the Word, and that Christ has ordained to rule His churches by the process of teaching."[1] Because there is such a diversity of gifts among the elders, the congregation should discern how these gifts may best be used for maximum edification.[2]

Bishops in the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic church uses the word ἐπίσκοπος to identify the monarchical system of bishops who, they claim, receive their authority by apostolic succession.[3] Thus, bishops are hierarchically organized under the authority of the Pope and are over the presbyters, deacons, and brethren in its dioceses.

According to the Roman Catholic historical perspective:

> It is evident from the writings of St. Ignatious of Antioch, at the beginning of the second century, that the episcopacy was considered the centre of the foundation of the local churches. The bishop is surrounded by the college of priests; they are his council; and the deacons help in the combined mission.[4]

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[1]John Zens, "The Major Concepts of Eldership in the New Testament," Baptist Reformation Review 7 (1978): 30.

[2]Ibid., 31.

[3]"That the bishops are the successors of the apostles in their (inheritable) office is Catholic dogma." Karl Rahner, Bishops: Their Status and Function (Helicon, Baltimore: A Challenge Book, 1963), 19.

[4]Paul Anciaux, The Episcopate in the Church (Dublin: Gill & Son, 1965), 41. See also Thomas Bokenkotter, Essential Catholicism (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1986), 263-264.

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It is important to note that the concept of apostolic succession was not formally explained until the end of the second century.[1] Moreover, Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that the sacrament of ordination expresses the "hierarchical principle of the church"[2] which is structured as the "episcopate, the presbyterate and the diaconate."[3] Therefore, not only does the Roman Catholic bishop have ecclesiastical authority, but he also has been assigned a sacramental character.

Despite the monarchical system, a bishop is "inspired by this supreme law: to save the souls that are confided to his care, as sheep to a shepherd and for whom he must give an account to God."[4] In other words, bishops have a pastoral responsibility for their congregations. In Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church reestablished its early belief regarding the pastoral function of the bishops. On the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," Vatican II

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[1]"It is generally recognized that by the time of Irenaeus (circa. A.D. 185) the monarchical episcopate with its threefold ministry of bishop (ἐπίσκοπος) elders (πρεβύτεροι) and deacons (διάκονοι) had well-nigh universally replaced what is often considered an earlier organizational pattern of a twofold ministry of bishops or elders (that is, bishops-elders) and deacons." Kenneth A. Strand, Three Essays on Early Church History (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Braun-Brumfield, 1967), 9.

[2]Anciaux, 45.

[3]Ibid., 46.

[4]Preparatory Reports Second Vatican Council, trans. by Aram Berard (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 142.

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clearly recognized that the bishops are successors of the apostles[1] and stated that Jesus Christ "willed that their [the apostles'] successors, namely the bishops, should be shepherds in His church even to the consummation of the world."[2] Moreover, the Synod taught that "by divine institution bishops have succeeded to the place of the apostles as shepherds of the church."[3] Thus, it is clear that despite the hierarchical organization, bishops must act as shepherds of the flock.

Contrary to the official Roman Catholic church dogma, some Roman Catholic exegetes are of the opinion that the New Testament does not support the threefold hierarchical structure, neither the use of the word ἐπίσκοπος in the singular. For example, J. J. O'Rourke, after analyzing Phil 1:1, concluded that the term ἐπίσκοπος "cannot have the later technical meaning attached to the monarchical episcopate."[4] In addition, because the terms ἐπίσκοπος and πρεβύτεροι are interchangeable and because of the plurality of ἐπίσκοπος in a local community, O'Rourke

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[1]The Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter M. Abbott (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 38.

[2]Ibid., 37.

[3]Ibid., 40.

[4]J. J. O'Rourke, "Bishop," New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967), 2:585.

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concluded that this explanation excludes the monarchical concept of the term.[1]

The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches issued a document on "Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry" in which it stated that the New Testament "does not describe a single pattern of ministry"[2] which is not necessarily in harmony with the context of the book of Acts and the writings of the apostle Paul. However, they acknowledged that:

> In the early instances, where threefold ministry is mentioned, the reference is to the local eucharistic community. The bishop was the leader of the community. He was ordained and installed to proclaim the Word and preside over the celebration of the eucharist.[3]

From Raymond Brown's perspective, "the presbyter-bishops described in the NT were not in any traceable way the successors of the twelve apostles."[4] It is for this reason that O'Rourke suggested that the apostolic succession "must be based on oral apostolic tradition going back ultimately to Christ."[5]

However, based on the biblical data (Act 20:17,28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1; 5:17; Titus 1:5,7), there is no

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1982), 37.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Raymond E. Brown, Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflection (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), 72.

[5]O'Rourke, 2:585.

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evidence of a distinction among ἐπίσκοπος and πρεβύτεροι and therefore there is no evidence for a monarchical threefold ministry. The New Testament pattern of local church officers is twofold, that is, the elders-bishops and the deacons.

Although there is disagreement among Roman Catholic theologians regarding the nature of the monarchical episcopate, and although there is no biblical evidence for its existence, it is admitted that bishops inherited the pastoral work that the apostles accomplished; therefore, they function as pastors, teachers, and leaders.[1]

Elders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Historically, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has recognized that the model for church government is contained in the Scriptures. For example, writing about the development of the Seventh-day Adventist organization, Andrew Gordon Mustard suggested that the majority of its leaders during 1844-1881 supported the opinion that "the New Testament provided the only legitimate pattern of church organization."[2] Certainly both Old and New Testaments

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[1]See for example the Code of Canon Law 375; The Code of Canon Law, 319.

[2]Andrew Gordon Mustard, James White and the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Organization 1844-1881 (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1987), 220.

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provide the foundation for the understanding of local and universal church organization.

The SDA Church Manual recognizes that the representative form of government prevails in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.[1] In other words, its form of government is not episcopal, papal, or independent, but representative. Because of the implication that the representative system portrays, Walter and Bert Beach cautioned that

> The use of non-Christian models, be they from business or government or other organized aspect of society, must be strictly controlled. The church must ever return to the New Testament concepts of spiritual gifts and ministry and to the models God revealed to the Old Testament church.[2]

Who are the elders from the Seventh-day Adventist perspective? In the context of the New Testament as the authoritative source for local church organization, J. N. Loughborough stated that the terms "bishops" and "elders" were used to characterize the same office and were applied to the local church organization.[3] He referred to Titus 1:5-7 and Act 20:17, 28 to demonstrate that the terms are

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[1]Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (Silver Spring, Maryland: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1990), 38.

[2]Walter Raymond Beach and Bert Beverly Beach, Pattern for Progress: The Role and Function of Church Organization (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 46.

[3]J. N. Loughborough, The Church, Its Organization, Order, and Discipline (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1907), 68.

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interchangeable.[1] Therefore, elders were considered as leaders of the local church community.

From Oliver Montgomery's perspective, elders are assistants of the ordained minister.[2] The idea of the New Testament in the early church, was that the elders were the legitimate and fully responsible leaders of the local church. Broader leader-evangelists, individuals who appointed the elders, functioned in similar fashion during their temporary stay in local communities. Thus, their position was not one of rank, but rather a cooperative ministry according to the gifts they possessed. For this reason, Montgomery suggested that "the minister is responsible to the conference committee, and serves the church as a conference worker. The elder is responsible to the church and the church board."[3]

There were some contradictory statements regarding who the elders were. For example, Tim Crosby considered that the terms elder, bishop, or presbyter, and pastor denote "essentially the same office (Act 20:17,28; 1 Peter

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[1]Ibid., 129.

[2]Oliver Montgomery, Principles of Church Organization (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1942), 161.

[3]Ibid., 165.

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2:25; 5:1-5) one that corresponds more to the present-day pastor than the local church elder."[1] It seems that there has been some confusion regarding the roles to be played by the Adventist minister, who represented the broader church organization, and the elder as minister in the local church, who performed most of the same functions as the professional ministers. More in harmony with the New Testament perspective, J. Adams Stevens stated that "the office of elder is the highest office in the gifts of the church."[2] Stevens gave the elders the full responsibility of the evangelism and spiritual supervision of the community. Therefore, "the church elder should direct the members of the church in a well-planned effort to present the truth to all the people within the territory of the church as rapidly as possible."[3] In the context of its shepherding ministry, Carl Coffman contended that elders should be organized as a board of elders to visit, teach, and nurture in homes.[4]

The 1990 edition of the S.D.A. Church Manual stated that "if a pastor has not been provided by the conference or

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[1]Tim Crosby, "The New Testament Church: Was It Hierarchical or Congregational"? Adventist Review, February 14, 1985, 5.

[2]J. Adams Stevens, The Officers of the Church and Their Work (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1922), 20.

[3]Ibid., 22.

[4]Carl Coffman, "The Elder's Guardianship Program," The Ministry, April 1975, 42, 43.

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mission, the office of elder ranks as the highest and most important."[1]

> Under the pastor and in the absence of the pastor, the local elder is a spiritual leader of the church and is responsible for fostering all branches and departments of the work.[2]

In this context, elders are defined as the spiritual leaders of the congregation. Their responsibilities include visitation, outreach, worship, leadership, spiritual mentorship, and church administration.[3] The SDA Church Manual stated,

> In a case where the conference committee assigns an ordained minister to labor as a pastor of a church, he should be considered as the ranking officer, and the local elder as his assistant. Their work is closely related; they should therefore work together harmoniously.[4]

Since the "pastoral work of the church should be shared by both"[5] in harmony with the New Testament pattern, and since elders "in counsel with the minister, carry much of the pastoral responsibility, visiting the church members, ministering to the sick, and encouraging those who are disheartened,"[6] they should be considered as partners in

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[1]SDA Church Manual, 57.

[2]Ibid., 58.

[3]North American Division Church Ministries, "The Ministry of the Elder" (Washington, D.C.: NAD Church Ministries, 1988), 5.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

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ministry without any allusion to hierarchy or ranking. As Montgomery stated, elders are responsible to the local church and ministers are responsible to the conference.[1] Both ministers and elders are responsible for shepherding, visitation, nurturing, and teaching because they were elected and ordained by the church to fulfill these ministries in harmony with the qualifications and gifts they possess.

## The Meaning of the Terms

The terms πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος are used in the New Testament to describe the role and functions of local church elders. Smyth concluded that the term πρεσβύτερος in the writings of the apostles means the same as pastors and bishops.[2]

Seventh-day Adventists J. N. Loughborough, Moses Hull, and M. E. Cornell published an article in the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald in which they expressed the view that the words bishop, pastor, and overseer are interchangeable terms.[3] In their view, eldership is designated by the three terms πρεσβύτερος, ἐπίσκοπος, and

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[1]Montgomery, 165.

[2]Smyth, 38.

[3]J. N. Loughborough, Moses Hull, and M. E. Cornell, "Conference Address," Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, October 15, 1861, 156.

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ποιμήν.[1] In 1874, George I. Butler, president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, wrote a series of articles about church government. He also considered that ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, while different words, signify the same office.[2]

According to Charles Hodge's thesis, both terms refer to the functions and duties of elders.[3] And in the words of Grover C. Brewer, each word represents "some particular phase of his office, work or duty."[4] Thus the terms may best be understood as indicating function rather than authority. However, Donald Parsons thought that "elder" is a title of respect for those who function in the leadership ministry.[5]

A new perspective was considered by Mayer in his dissertation in which he stated that the term πρεσβύτερος is

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[1]Ibid. The same view is expressed by John William McGarvey, A Treatise on the Eldership (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: DeHoff Publications, 1950), 10-18. A reprint of the edition of 1870.

[2]George I. Butler, "Thoughts on Church Government. No. 5," The Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath, September 1, 1874, 85. See also Morrison Meade Davis, The Eldership (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), 2-7; and Herbert E. Winkler, The Eldership (Nashville, Tennessee: Williams Printing Company, 1950), 25.

[3]Hodge, 25.

[4]Grover Cleveland Brewer, The Model Church (Nashville, Tennessee: Gospel Advocate Co., 1957), 27.

[5]Donald E. Parsons, "The Elder" (M.Th. thesis, Phillips University Graduate Seminary, 1967), 28.

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employed as a title and ἐπίσκοπος as a function,[1] in this way giving no place for any hierarchical designation. Differing from Mayer, Joseph E. O'Neal integrated the three terms πρεσβύτερος, ἐπίσκοπος, and ποιμήν considering them a description of one function of the elders.[2]

In addition, Eugene P. Heideman, discussing the long controversy between the Episcopal and the Presbyterian traditions, asserted that the New Testament provides no basis for differentiation between bishop and elder. Furthermore, the "same evidence suggests that the ἐπίσκοπος and the πρεσβύτερος in the New Testament were neither the bishop nor the elder who is known in the church today."[3]

Using terms more updated to our modern times, Gerald W. Gillaspie suggested that "feeding" and "oversight" (1 Pet 5:2; 2 Tim 4:1-2) could be translated as "education" and "administration,"[4] words that convey the idea of management, leadership, and Christian education in the contemporary church. In Leonard H. Hillstrom's view, two

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[1]Mayer, 44.

[2]Joseph Edward O'Neal, "The New Testament Elders: A Basis for Criticizing and Renewing the Elders Today" (M.A.R. thesis, Emmanuel School of Religion, 1985), 54, 55.

[3]Eugene P. Heideman, Reformed Bishops and Catholic Elders (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 116.

[4]Gillaspie, 11.

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ideas emerge from the term "elder": the idea of an older person and the idea of authority.[1]

In synthesis, although there is a variation in the interpretation and meaning of the terms, the words ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος are names scholars believe apply essentially to the same person in the local church without any hierarchical prerogative but rather are descriptive of function. Thus, πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος refer to the same group and the terms are used interchangeably.[2] A more elaborated study of the words πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος will be considered in an analysis of the book of Acts in chapter 3.

## Functions and Responsibilities

There is a fairly wide agreement regarding the basic functions of church elders. For example, McKerrow suggested that the qualifications of the elders inherently describe their functions.[3] The elders' responsibilities are first found in the meaning of the word ἐπίσκοπος which means "overseer," a "person who has a definite function or a

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[1]Leonard H. Hillstrom, "The New Testament Teaching on Church Elders" (D.Th. dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1980), 29.

[2]Alexander Strauch, Biblical Eldership (Littleton, Colorado: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1988), 130.

[3]McKerrow, 148.

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fixed office within a group,"[1] and also indicates the idea of superintendent, guardian, and bishop.[2] The meaning of the word ἐπίσκοπος may also be understood in the meaning of the verb ἐπίσκοπέω, which has a similar meaning. It signifies "look at, take care, see to it, oversee, and care for."[3] The etymological meaning of the word ἐπίσκοπος gives evidence that this term connotes the idea of a function responsibility rather than hierarchy.

According to Baird,[4] Clarke,[5] and Herbert[6] the term ἐπίσκοπος describes the function of church elders. The more recognized passages from Scripture that detail their functions are Act 20:17,28,[7] 1 Pet 5:1-4,[8] and Rom 12:8 together with 1 Cor 12:28 and 1 Tim 5:17, all of which have been emphasized by the Reformed church.[9]

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[1]William F. Arnt and F. Wilburg Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 299.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., 298-299.

[4]Baird, 6.

[5]Clarke, 17, 19.

[6]Herbert, 50, 51.

[7]Clarke, 17.

[8]Hillstrom, 64.

[9]McKee, 39-114.

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**Leadership**

Among the clear functions attributed to elders is overseeing the church,[1] which seems to be the basic function of all New Testament elders.[2] This overseeing included the corporal spiritual interests of the church[3] and the religious life of the believers.[4] McKerrow believed that the primary and most essential duty was ruling, which included overseeing and feeding the flock.[5] Even though there is a general recognition of the idea of overseeing as a function, the practical application of this principle and how this task may be accomplished is seriously lacking in the literature.

**Pastors and Teachers**

Complementing the above idea, Baird suggested that pastoral duties also belong to the elders.[6] Mayer provided evidence for this responsibility when he connected Eph 4:11 with the elders' responsibilities. The term ποιμήν

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[1]McKerrow, 61.

[2]Mayer, 122.

[3]Elisha Yale, Eldership in the Church of God: Inscribed to the Congregational Church in Kingsboro, N.Y. (Albany: E. H. Pease & Co., 1852), 11.

[4]Voeltzel, 123.

[5]McKerrow, 159-160.

[6]Baird, 5.

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suggests the spiritual function of a shepherd.[1] If it is linked to the qualification "apt to teach" and the other instructions in Eph 4:11, then the elders also function as teachers[2] who worked "to edify and to build up the church by imparting the truth."[3] From Davis' perspective, "teaching is one of the highest, most honorable, and most important phases of the work of the eldership."[4] From Wecks' viewpoint, there are three areas that characterize elders' teaching duties: grasping the Word of God, encouraging others with the Scriptures, and using the Word of God to refute those who teach false doctrine and error (Titus 1:9).[5]

How did Eph 4:11 come to be applied to the function of lay church elders? In 1845, Thomas Smyth began his work The Name, Nature, and Functions of Ruling Elders by quoting Eph 4:8-16, and emphasized the organization of the early church. In his work, Smyth strongly promoted the idea that

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[1]Mayer, 32.

[2]Miller believed that all the elders in the apostolic church were official teachers. Miller, 53.

[3]O'Neal, 86.

[4]Davis, 7. See also Hodge, 48 and O'Neal, 120.

[5]John C. Wecks, "Leadership Structure for the Local Church" (D.Min. project, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1985), 74-75. The above statement is also sustained by McKerrow, McGarvey, Powers, and O'Neal, who believed that elders should work in defending the truth against heresy. McKerrow, 149; McGarvey, 26; Powers, 173; O'Neal, 82.

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the phrase "pastors and teachers" in Eph 4:11 corresponds to the functions of the elders.[1] According to him, Christ provided the office of pastors and teachers who were presbyters or bishops.[2] But the context of Eph 4:11 teaches that the apostle Paul is instructing the believers in Ephesus to use their gifts to edify the church body. It is probable that the elders were selected as leaders in the local congregation because they already possessed specific gifts of the Spirit. If this was the case, then elders may have functioned in a variety of different ministries.

From McGarvey's perspective, the evidence to link Eph 4:11 to the function of elders or overseers is found in Act 20:28 in which the apostle Paul exhorted the elders of Ephesus "to be shepherds of the church."[3] Supporting McGarvey's viewpoint, Albert Deveny believed that the word ποιμήν in Eph 4:11 is better translated "shepherds" (Matt 25:32; Heb 13:20, 1 Pet 2:25, and John 10:1-8).[4] Hillstrom's dissertation also alluded to the above interpretation when he said that "local church leaders are

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[1]Smyth, 1, 2.

[2]Ibid., 3.

[3]McGarvey, 18. See also Joseph Barber Lightfoot, The Christian Ministry (London: Macmillan & Co., 1901), 21.

[4]Albert Lewis Deveny, The Church and Its Elders (Austin, Texas: Van Boeckmann-Jones Co., 1941), 74. This is the only occasion in the New Testament where ποιμήν is not translated shepherd (cf. Matt 9:36; Mark 6:34; Matt 25:32; 26:31; Mark 14:27; Luke 2:8; John 10:2,11,12,16; Eph 4:11; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25. KJV, RSV, NIV).

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identified as shepherds (or pastors) in Eph 4:11, Act 20:28, and 1 Pet 5:2."[1] Considering the arguments that connect Eph 4:11 to the elders' ministry, it seems that they are following the frame of reference of John Calvin and the Reformed tradition where the "single most important biblical text establishing the ministries of the church is in Eph 4:11-12."[2] From McKee's point of view, what is really new in the Calvinist interpretation of Eph 4:11 is the perspective in which apostles, evangelists, and prophets are temporary, and pastors and doctors (teachers) are permanent.[3]

**Instruction, Visitation, and Nurture**

Another function mentioned in the literature included visitation and nurture. David Dickson suggested the inclusion of a district as a territory of work and the ordinary visitation of their members.[4] According to Baird, "elders should visit, systematically and regularly, the members of the church;"[5] therefore, "they should visit the

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[1]Hillstrom, 79. See also O'Neal, 50.

[2]McKee, 133.

[3]Ibid., 158, 159.

[4]David Dickson, The Elder and His Work (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication), 16-33.

[5]Baird, 9.

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people at their homes."[1] In this connection, a special duty of the elders is the religious instruction of the children[2] and preparation of youth for baptism.[3] Thus, elders should care for the spiritual interest of all the flock.[4]

In synthesis, combining the categories of Deveny,[5] Hodge,[6] Brewer,[7] Mayer,[8] Hillstrom,[9] Proyen,[10] Mink,[11] Wecks,[12] and Small,[13] five important categories of elders'

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[1]John S. Watkins, A Hand-book for Ruling Elders (Richmond, Virginia: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1895), 21.

[2]"The elder will see that children of his district are getting portions of the word of God and the truth of the shorter Catechism into their mind and heart, and that they, as well as their parents, are regularly at church and understand the sermons." Dickson, 35-36.

[3]Baird, 12.

[4]Watkins, 29. See also Edward Grubb, Eldership: A Definite Service (London: Headley Brothers, 1934), 8.

[5]Deveny, 125.

[6]Hodge, 91.

[7]Brewer, 38-47.

[8]Mayer, 128, 138.

[9]Hillstrom, 153.

[10]Dirk Van Proyen, "Elder Leadership Enrichment and Development" (D.Min. project, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985), 136.

[11]Mink, 43-56.

[12]Wecks, 67.

[13]Gerald G. Small, "The Ministry of Oversight: A Manual for Development in the Qualifications for Elders as Given in 1 Tim 3:1-17 and Titus 1:5-9" (D.Min. project, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1981), 21.

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functions emerge. Elders are: (1) shepherds, (2) overseers, (3) leaders, (4) teachers, and (5) governors. Their work is facilitated by being faithful[1] and by being examples to the flock.[2]

## Origin of the Eldership and Historical Background

McKerrow suggested that the eldership institution is a divine ordinance.[3] His view that church organization is of divine origin[4] may be accepted because it was Christ who created the visible church (Matt 16:13-20). According to McKerrow, the apostles acted by divine authority when they followed the instructions of Jesus Christ and ordained elders in every church.[5] A view that has merit is his belief that the instructions for church organization were given under the influence of the Holy Spirit and were used not only in those times but also may be used in succeeding ages[6] and applied to any churches[7] or denominations. It seems reasonable to assume that the New Testament's teaching

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[1]O'Neal, 90.

[2]Ibid., 103.

[3]McKerrow, 76.

[4]Ibid., 7-9.

[5]Ibid., 9,10.

[6]Ibid., 15. McKerrow supports this view quoting 1 Tim 3:1, 3:5; 4:14; 5:17,19; 5:3-16; 5:20.

[7]Ibid., 12.

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about the universal and local church organization (Matt 28:18; Eph 1:22,23; Col 1:18; Eph 5:30; Matt 16:18-19; John 15:16; Act 20:17,18; Titus 4:14; 5:22) is based on principles that are still valid.

Hodge believed that the authority of the elders came from God and not from the congregation. He made clear that this authority is in the plurality of elders and not in the single elder,[1] an idea that has far-reaching implications in the development of local leadership. Although he considered the origin of the institution to be divine, he suggested that the elders are appointed by both God and man.[2] This latter statement is amplified by Parsons in his masters thesis, "The Elder," in which he suggested that the responsibility and authority of elders have two dimensions: (1) vertical through the χαρισμα of God, and (2) horizontal through the recognition of these gifts by "the church and the appointments of the apostles, or evangelists, and/or church congregation."[3] A contemporary opinion is offered by Carl Coffman, a Seventh-day Adventist, who believed that although the local elders are chosen by the church

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[1]Hodge, 23-24.

[2]Ibid., 75.

[3]Parsons, 28.

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nominating committee, they are in a very real sense called by God, through men.[1]

Eyres contended that "God qualifies men with spiritual gifts, but the church must learn how to recognize those men so qualified."[2] In other words, spiritual gifts are given to all members of the congregation including elders who, to lead effectively, need to have a consciousness of their giftedness.

From the sources analyzed, the notion of eldership came from the Jewish synagogue or the Old Testament.[3] The early church's dramatic growth created the need for a more elaborate church organization.[4] From Miller's perspective, "it was almost natural to establish the Christian church following the model of the synagogue."[5] McKerrow agreed that the apostles followed the patterns and institutions obtained from the Jewish synagogue.[6] Early Christians understood the synagogue method of governing the members because it was the only form of government with which they

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[1]Carl Coffman, "Position or Responsibility," Ministry, January 1975, 19.

[2]Eyres, 8.

[3]Miller, 48,49; Watkins, 10.

[4]McKerrow, 3.

[5]Miller, 50.

[6]McKerrow, 57.

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were acquainted.[1] Most of the sources consulted regarded the Jewish synagogue as the model for the establishment of the eldership in the initial Christian church.

In 1930, Clarke, discussing the origin of the episcopate, mentioned that the meaning of the word ἐπίσκοπος in the LXX is the proper setting to understand the use of the word in the New Testament (especially Ezekiel, chapters 33-34).[2] He pointed out that this view had influenced the redaction of Act 20:26-36 where ἐπίσκοπος is equivalent to "watchmen."[3] According to him, the πρεσβύτερος has the historical background of the *zĕquēnim* and therefore their historical role as judges and teachers of the Torah should be considered.[4] Commenting on the historical development of Christian elders, he presented in chronological order the development of the Christian ministry. In his view, Jesus Christ was the first Shepherd and Bishop of the flock; after His resurrection the apostles received that same

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[1]F. R. Earle, The Eldership (Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1871), 14, 15.

[2]W. K. Lowther Clarke, "The Origins of Episcopacy," in Episcopacy Ancient and Modern, ed. Claude Jenkins and K. D. MacKenzie (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1930), 4, 5. Also Mayer is of the opinion that the idea of overseer is a close antecedent from the LXX literature to indicate the function of ἐπίσκοπος. Mayer, 31.

[3]Clarke, 4, 5.

[4]Ibid., 6. See also Rene F. Voeltzel, "Le Régime Presbytérien Synodal et le Nouveau Testament," Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses 39 (1959): 122.

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responsibility which they delegated to local church elders.[1]

There is much agreement among the many authors examined that the ministry of Christian eldership was patterned on the Jewish synagogue. However, A. E. Harvey disagreed, pointing out that "there is not an *institution* in the Old Testament time which could be regarded as the forerunner of the Sanhedrin or of the Christian presbyteriate."[2] He suggested that "synagogue-elders provide at best a shadowing model for the Christian presbyters,"[3] and that the title "elders" in the early Christian church may have been in memory of Num 11 or because they were in fact "old."[4]

Although the synagogue is frequently suggested as the historical antecedent for the initial Christian church organization, William Telfer is of the view that neither the nomenclature nor the exact offices were reproduced in Christian communities because elders were chosen to perform distinctly Christian functions.[5] And similar to Clarke's view of the historical development of the elders, Telfer added that the local πρεσβύτερος became a successor of the

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[1]Clarke, 35.

[2]A. E. Harvey, "Elders," The Journal of Theological Studies 25 (1974): 320.

[3]Ibid., 325, 326.

[4]Ibid., 326-329.

[5]William Telfer, The Office of a Bishop (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1962), 27.

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apostles by filling the gap that they left.[1] Even though it is important to understand the historical background to the development of the office, Powers thought that, considering church organization today, it is more important to understand the patterns in the New Testament church.[2] As Hillstrom suggested, the apostles supported the institution of church elders as a model that carried the sanction of Jesus Christ. "The revelation did not contain any other model."[3]

In synthesis, there are different ways to acknowledge the historical background of church elders: the Old Testament's older leaders, the functions of the *zĕquēnim* in the LXX, the synagogue elders, and the New Testament model of church organization.

## The Elders and Church Organization

The ministry of church elders is intimately related to church organization. Elders operating in the local church organization which is part of the universal church body, implies a relationship with higher church officers.

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[1]Ibid., 41. Commenting on the same topic, Raymond Brown believed that the presbyter-bishops took up where the apostle Paul's helpers left off, being responsible for the continued care of churches founded by the apostles. Brown, 35.

[2]Powers, 166.

[3]Hillstrom, 48.

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**Universal and Local Elders**

Some of the authors consulted viewed the initial church as having two levels as referenced in chapter 1. McKerrow suggested that apostles, prophets, and evangelists are universal and extraordinary, and pastors, teachers, helpers, and government are exercised in the local church.[1] Although from a biblical perspective it seems that the evangelists functioned in both levels, his two categories of officers are significant because McKerrow took the construct from the initial New Testament church organization. The same two-level categories were presented in an article by J. N. Loughborough, Moses Hull, and M. E. Cornell. They thought that apostles, evangelists, elders, pastors and deacons should be divided into two classes: (1) those who hold their office by virtue of a special call from God, namely the apostles and evangelists, and (2) those who function in the local church, namely elders, bishops, pastors and deacons.[2] Clarke, recognizing these two categories of church organization,[3] pointed out that both levels functioned in the general sense as teachers.[4]

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[1]McKerrow, 54.

[2]Loughborough, Hull, and Cornell, 156.

[3]Clark, 18, 19, 22.

[4]Clarke, 37.

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**Elders' Organization**

Elders must be organized in order to work efficiently. Considering the contemporary church context, Davis suggested that "they should have a simple organization consisting of a president and a secretary,"[1] which would contribute to the performance of their responsibilities.

From Parsons' perspective, the elder's office in the New Testament has two patterns, one through the ministry of the πρεσβύτερος in the Christian Jewish congregation, and the other in the work of the ἐπίσκοπος in the Gentile church.[2] He arrived at this conclusion because of the difference between the church functioning in Jerusalem and the church functions mentioned in the pastorals.[3] However, the χαρισμα of God united both systems.[4] Since the terms πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος are considered biblically interchangeable, Parsons' position is not in harmony with the context of the initial church organization in the New Testament (Act 20:17, 28).

Contrary to the two-pattern ministry of Parsons, Harvey concluded that the church "did not exhibit a uniform pattern of church order in all places to which the gospel had been carried during the first century or so of its

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[1]Davis, 34.

[2]Parsons, 28.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., 33.

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existence."[1] In addition, Herzog suggested that the ministry was functional and adaptable;[2] therefore, the search for ministry in the New Testament should not be for a permanent and timeless pattern but for a variety of patterns.[3] Again, Herzog's view is contrary to the position that the New Testament church functioned under a defined pattern.

**A Plurality of Elders**

Almost unanimously, the literature suggested a plurality of elders in the local church.[4] Erich G. Jay suggested that following the initial church organization, πρεσβύτερος/ἐπίσκοπος formed a college in local churches.[5] A plurality of elders in a local church implies that the authority and function of elders were restricted to a

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[1]Harvey, 331.

[2]William R. Herzog, "The Origins of the Ministry in the New Testament," American Baptist Quarterly 3 (1984): 125.

[3]Ibid., 126.

[4]Miller, 51, 52. Smyth, 38, 39. McKerrow, 60. Watkins, 12, 14. Winkler, 43. Hodge, 22-23. Mayer, 190. D. Edmond Hiebert, "Selected Studies from 1 Peter. Part 4: Counsel for Christ's Under-Shepherds: An Exposition of 1 Peter 5:1-4," Bibliotheca Sacra 139 (1982): 331. George W. Knight III, "Two Offices (Elders/Bishops and Deacons) and Two Orders of Elders (Preaching/Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders): A New Testament Study," Presbyterion 11 (1985): 6. McKee, 172.

[5]Erich G. Jay, "From Presbyters-Bishops to Bishops and Presbyters," Second Century 1 (1981): 160.

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particular local church.[1] "How many should be in each congregation, depends on circumstances,"[2] which implies that there was more than one elder in the congregation.[3]

From John Zens' point of view, the reasons for this plurality included the fact that Jesus alone is the final Pastor over each saint (1 Pet 2:5,6; 5:4) and because Christ is the head of the church (Rev 2:1-3:22).[4] Moreover, it is not practical for one person to shepherd an entire good-sized flock.[5] Therefore, a "plural leadership system is the most effective and desirable one."[6]

## Elders' Qualifications

A sensitive area in a discussion of elders is the debate over their Christian qualifications to conduct their appointed function. These qualifications describe not only ministry, they include their internal lives, total personhood, family, and Christian character. The traditional inventory of these qualifications is found in the epistles written by Paul to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

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[1]Ed Glasscock, "The Biblical Concept of Elder," Bibliotheca Sacra 144 (1987): 75.

[2]Davis, 29.

[3]McKerrow, 77-80.

[4]Zens, 28.

[5]Ibid., 29.

[6]Hillstrom, 212.

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There is a tendency to classify these qualifications so that they can be studied systematically. For example, McGarvey suggested that the instruction of the apostle Paul can be distributed in six natural divisions: experience, reputation, domestic relations, character, habits, and intellect.[1] Mayer separated them into seven categories: general, moral, mental, personality, domestic, Christian experience, and reputation.[2] Hillstrom's categories are divided into personal, spiritual, moral, and mental qualifications.[3] All these categories may be useful to study elders' qualifications, but in the context of the doctrine of man presented in the Scriptures, the whole life of elders should be considered.

Robert Mink presented a unique interpretation of these qualifications which suggested that they should be described as ideal qualifications, ideal Christian character, ideal family, and ideal leadership.[4] From this perspective, one would expect a difference between the reality and the ideal presented by the apostle Paul.

Strauch described five elements of biblical

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[1]McGarvey, 53-66.

[2]Mayer, 56.

[3]Hillstrom, 125-152.

[4]Robert M. Mink, "The Development of a Handbook to Enable Elders of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ to Fulfill Their Office" (D.Min. thesis-project, The Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985), 57-79.

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eldership to be emphasized: humble servant character, share oversight, non-clerical structure, Scriptural qualifications, male leadership, and congregational submission.[1]

Although Strauch's categories are a useful contribution to evaluate an elder's Christian character and function, they should be subservient to the theological frame of reference of the entire Bible. Thus, when elders' qualifications are discussed, they must be connected with their work and their personal lives.

O'Neal considered that the selection of elders in the early church came on the basis of character and not necessarily professional competence.[2] David Dickson agreed that "the usefulness of an elder will depend in the long run more on his *character* than on his gifts and knowledge."[3] From a biblical perspective, character[4] and gifts should not

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[1]Strauch, 12, 13.

[2]O'Neal is of the opinion that the apostle Paul "spoke of ethics, reputation, habits, emotional and spiritual maturity. Academic and professional competence, though easy to evaluate, are not the chief concern of Paul in choosing men to be elders." O'Neal, 115.

[3]Dickson, 10, 11.

[4]"The qualifications of elders contained in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim 3:2-7 lay special emphasis upon Christian Character." Watkins, 65. "The main emphasis to ordain elders should be in personal and moral, rather than theological." Mayer, 193. "The person who is appointed as elder must have a Christian character." Powers, 175. "The usefulness of an elder will depend primarily on his character." William Rowan Barron, "A Balance and Comprehensive Approach for Training the Ruling Elders Of

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be divided; they should be integrated in the Christian life. Although Christian character is indispensable in church leadership, biblical and theological education are important elements for church growth.

According to some sources consulted, teaching is a primary activity among the functions of the elders. Thus, "apt to teach" "means skillful in imparting instruction in Bible knowledge;"[1] that is, they must not only know what to teach, but how to teach it.[2] Brewer contended that every Christian is to be a teacher, but the ἐπίσκοπος is to be apt to teach, that is, gifted as a teacher,[3] and O'Neal added that the elders should be willing to be a teacher of the practical duties of the Christian life.[4] Therefore, it follows that church elders will have a good knowledge of the

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Sequoya Hills Presbyterian Church, Knoxville, Tennessee" (D.Min. project, Columbia Theological Seminary, 1983), 14. "These qualifications clearly emphasize the character of the person rather than his educational achievements." Glasscock, 73, 74.

[1]Davis, 13.

[2]William Coe Harris, Shepherds of the Flock of God: The Responsibilities of the Christian Elder in the Church Government Planned by Jesus (New York: Exposition Press, 1967), 60.

[3]Brewer, 32.

[4]O'Neal, 86.

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Word of God[1] and the highest respect for the authority of the Bible.[2]

In addition to Christian character and teaching abilities, G. Butler believed that they also must be "examples of the flock" because "the elder is the man supposed to be the best qualified to do this work of any in the church."[3] From Albert Deveny's viewpoint, elders are men "whose lives fit or closely approximate the model."[4]

Virtually all the authors cited concluded that elders must be men of spiritual maturity[5] and spiritual leaders in their own families. Hillstrom described this qualification as fidelity and devotion within the marriage relationship, and the management and control of their families.[6]

Literature reviewed published between 1832 and 1988 either ignored or said little about women elders in local congregations. Many contemporary authors flatly rejected the idea. For example, Deveny believed that "women never have served and may never serve a congregation as elders

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[1]Dickson, 8.

[2]Barron, 16.

[3]Butler, September 8, 1874, 92.

[4]Deveny, 51.

[5]Dickson, 7. See also Barron, 12.

[6]Hillstrom, 139-148.

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with the sanction of Almighty God."[1] Powers presented three evidences to support his view that there were no women elders in the church: 1. He argued that the apostles all were men. 2. There is a specific reference to man, not woman, in the discussion of the qualifications in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. 3. Women in the New Testament, compared to men, are mutually role exclusive.[2] He concluded his argument by saying:

> The fact that the New Testament does not ever refer to women as elders is not coincidence but a reflection of a clear and deliberate policy in the New Testament Church, and one that was specifically intended to be normative[3]

Strauch concluded his discussion by suggesting that "the New Testament is emphatic [that] only spiritually and morally qualified men can be elders."[4] According to much of the literature, women have no role in the eldership ministry of the church.

On the other hand, there is a recognition of the important role of women in the home and/or church in a much smaller body of literature. For example, reports made to the World Council of Churches from every country and continent stressed the paramount importance of the influence

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[1]Deveny, 53. Similarly Eyres suggests "an elder must be a man." Eyres, 26. See Zens, 33.

[2]Powers, 176.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Strauch, 167.

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of Christian women in their homes.[1] It is important to note through these reports that many churches around the world have defined the distinctive role of women in the home ministry.[2] According to these reports, the historical cause for a recognition of this emphasis for women came in the dissolution of convents as a result of the Reformation. This brought to an end a significant female ministry in the church and a corresponding new emphasis on the home.[3] However, the Council expressed gratitude that the Reformation gave to the church the emphasis "on the sanctity of the Christian home and on the priesthood of all believers,"[4] and they made an appeal for a restudy of the role of women in church history.[5]

In the same document, the World Council of Churches emphasized that both men and women are children of God. Therefore, they believed that the full realization of the church would only be accomplished when both men and women contributed in full responsibility through their gifts in church ministry.[6] In the context of the World Council of

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[1]Life and Work of Women in the Church (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1948), 14.

[2]Ibid., 11-13.

[3]Ibid., 19.

[4]Ibid., 20.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., 68.

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Churches report, Kathleen Bliss recognized that women have always taken their place in the church through the education of the youth and the care of the sick, poor, and aged.[1]

In another study, the Board of Managers of the United Women concluded that:

> most of the churches that excluded women from authoritative bodies admit that there is no constitutional or doctrinal reason for this attitude, but they submit quite a list of non-theological factors against women's participation in this work.[2]

From a more exegetical and theological viewpoint, some authors noted that women played a prominent role in the early church.[3] For example, Jean Daniélou believed that the New Testament placed women in ministry that was incorporated in the whole church. Thus, women functioned as missionaries (Rom 16:1-6; Phil 4:2; Eph 6:22) and prophets (1 Cor 11:4-5; cf. 14:34-35),[4] and Christian history of the first centuries shows that they served in worship and teaching.[5] Aida B. Spencer recognized in the New Testament a record of many women overseers who have been overlooked: the Elect Lady,

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[1]Kathleen Bliss, The Service and Status of Women in the Church (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1952), 13.

[2]Carolyn P. Blackwood, How To Be an Effective Church Woman (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 18.

[3]Russell C. Prohl, Women in the Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 69.

[4]Jean Daniélou, The Ministry of Women in the Early Church (London: Faith Press, 1961), 7-9.

[5]Ibid., 7. See also Georgia Harkness, Women in Church and Society (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1972), 61-72.

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the Elect Sister, Phoebe, Euodia, Prisca, and possibly also Stephana, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Chloe, Lydia, Mark's mother, Nympha, and Apphia.[1]

Contrary to Spencer, Samuele Bacchiocchi believes that though women ministered in the church in a variety of vital roles including that of prophets, there is no indication that women served as pastors/elders/bishops.[2]

From a sociological perspective and based on the idea of the "spiritual family" of Mark 3:31-35, Iris M. Yob suggested that:

> The most radical advances were modeled in the ministry of Jesus: He accepted women as disciples, students of theology, evangelist, witnesses of the resurrection, touchable when Rabbinic law declared them unclean, and free of the injustice of double standards in matters of morality.[3]

Although it is true that Jesus Christ accepted women as disciples, (e.g. Martha and Mary), Yob presented her argument from a sociological viewpoint rather than from the context of the gospel itself. However, her view of women as members of the kingdom of God is valid because indeed "in the kingdom of God, Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and

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[1]Aida B. Spencer, Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry (New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 109.

[2]Ibid., 61. See also Vern Sheridian Poythress, "The Church as Family: Why Male Leadership in the Family Requires Male Leadership in the Church," in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, ed. John Piper and Wayne Gruden (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 233-247.

[3]Iris M. Yob, The Church and Feminism: An Exploration of Common Ground (Englewood, Colorado: Winsen Publications, 1988), 7.

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female were to have equal access to the grace of God."[1] It is recognized that the apostolic church included women as integral members in the life and mission of the church.[2] Women's ministry and participation in early church history cannot be denied.

**The Eldership of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has made clear the important role of women in both the home and in the church. For example, at the 1973 Annual Council, the General Conference took an action regarding the primacy of the married woman's role in the home and in the family.[3] The Council also voted that "continued study be given to the theological soundness of the election of women to local church offices which require ordination."[4]

Clearly the Council emphasized the priesthood of all believers which includes the ministry of women. As article six stated, it was intended that the action would provide a

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[1]Ibid., 24.

[2]Samuele Bacchiocchi, Women in the Church: A Biblical Study on the Role of Women in the Church (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Biblical Perspectives, 1987), 61.

[3]"Actions of General Interest from the 1973 Annual Council-2," Review and Herald, December 6, 1973, 18.

[4]Ibid.

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biblical foundation for the election of women as local church elders. The 1974 Annual Council voted to reaffirm paragraphs 4, 5, and 7 of the Annual Council 1973, but it was decided that no move should be made in the direction of ordaining women to the gospel ministry and recommended that "division committees exercise discretion in any special cases that may arise before a definitive position has been adopted."[1]

In April 3, 1975, the General Conference Committee voted regarding the role of women in the church. At that time, there was not an official biblical or theological position regarding women elders. The General Conference Committee recognized in 1975 "the primacy of the married woman's role in the home and family, as repeatedly emphasized in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy."[2] They also voted:

> 5. That in harmony with the spirit and intent of paragraph 3 of the Annual Council 1974 action (pages 12-14) the greatest discretion and caution be exercised in the ordaining of women to the office of local elder, counsel being sought in all cases by the local conference/mission from the union and division committees before proceeding.[3]

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[1]General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C.), 1974 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee, General Actions, October 9-17, 1974, Loma Linda, California, 12-14.

[2]General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C.), Minutes of Meetings of the General Conference Committee, Spring Meeting, of April 3, 1975.

[3]Ibid.

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The vote reveals considerable tentativeness about of ordination of women as elders in the local church but does not reveal whether the hesitation was in reality on theological or sociological grounds. But the door was opened for appointment and ordination of women as church elders and became de facto church policy and practice. It is important to note that although church elders have only local jurisdiction, they are ordained to this ministry. Thus, the appointment of local female elders introduced the "ordination of women" into the Adventist church. In subsequent years the debate has focused primarily on women's ordination to the gospel ministry, rather than ordination as elders.

A more elaborate set of actions for the election and ordination of women's elders was voted in 1984. The General Conference Committee reaffirmed the 1975 action regarding the "Role of the Women in the Church"[1] and voted:

> 2. To advise each division that it is free to make provision as it may deem necessary for the election and ordination of women as local church elders.
>
> 3. To suggest that the following guidelines be used in the selection and ordination of women as local church elders:
>
> > a. The concept should be carefully examined, discussed, and properly accepted in the local church level.

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[1]General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Washington, D.C.), 1984 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee, General Actions, October 9-18, 1984, Washington, D.C., 56.

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> b. If a church contemplates such an action, the entire matter should be discussed and approved by the conference committee after the conference administration has sought counsel from the union leadership. The negotiation between the church and the conference should occur in advance of the final decision and vote by the local church.
>
> c. The action to elect and ordain a women as a local church elder must not be taken unless a clear consensus exists that the ministry of a woman elder is desirable and even essential to the consensus of the church that a women elder will be respected as a spiritual leader and soul-winner. The church should also express its belief that there are dimensions of spiritual service and counsel which cannot be properly fulfilled by a male elder.
>
> d. A clear majority of the voting members of the local church must be in favor of the action.
>
> e. Whatever the decision of the church, it should result in unifying the members and not to be a source of divisiveness or alienation.[1]

These actions gave to the world divisions the clear option to elect and ordain women elders in their territories and to put in the hands of the local churches the prerogative to discuss and to vote women eldership by majority vote. Interestingly, nothing was said about the theological or biblical foundation for women elders in the church. Therefore, the issue of women's election and ordination as church elders has tended to be decided by local authorities on the basis of consensus, not biblical or theological grounds.

In the October issue of Ministry magazine, Roger Dudley reported the events of the Women Mission Conference

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[1]Ibid.

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which met at Andrews University, July 11-15, 1984.[1] According to Dudley, women "spoke with appreciation of the recent developments that have seen women serving as elders in local congregations."[2] According to him, the Conference "did not attempt to push women into the professions but affirmed the validity of God's call to service in the home as well as in the church and the workplace."[3]

In relation to women's election and ordination, the editors of Ministry magazine suggested that the actions taken in 1975 "open the way for ordination of deaconesses and of women as local elders."[4] But, they admitted that the most important question was whether this had been a policy decision rather than a theological one.[5] Since the basis for ordination should be constructed from the Scriptures and implemented by church policy, it was proper to say that the decision should be theological.

In addition, there was a discussion as to whether this was a sociological or theological issue.[6] Russell Staples suggested that "ordination not only confers the

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[1]Roger Dudley, "Women of Mission," Ministry, October 1984, 18-19, 29.

[2]Ibid., 18.

[3]Ibid.

[4]"Ordination of Women," Ministry, March 1985, 23.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Roger L. Dudley, "Ordination of Women: A Question of Status or Function," Ministry, October 1985, 19-21,28,29.

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right to preach and perform the sacraments; it also elevates to a position of authority in the church."[1] Contrarily, Dudley was of the opinion that "Jesus taught that leaders are to be servants (Mark 10:42-45). Yet ordination is widely *perceived* as giving authority, and it is the perception that determines the status."[2]

The debate on the issue of women's roles in the church continues. However, this study focuses primarily on the function of church elders and on a model to be constructed to help the church elders in their important ministry of the church. To the degree that churches have recognized and appointed women elders who function as leaders in local congregations, this study will endeavor to clarify their important role along with men's in the edification of the church.

## Elders and Spiritual Gifts

Another aspect of local church elders is the idea that elders function according to the gifts given by the Holy Spirit. For example, Smyth suggested that elders acted according to their spiritual gifts (1 Thess 5:12, 1 Tim

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[1]Russell Staples, "To Ordain or Not," Ministry, March 1987, 15.

[2]Dudley., 28.

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3:4,12)[1] and Voeltzel mentioned that although there is no reference to the names πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος in the list of spiritual gifts, it is possible that the ministries implied by these titles (1 Cor 12:8-10, 27-30; Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:11-12) were exercised by the elders (cf. 1 Cor 12:28), as well as by the apostles, prophets, doctors, and other specialists.[2]

Mayer was more specific in his interpretation when he said that elders participated in all functions--shepherds, overseers, teachers, and governors--to a certain extent but specialized in certain ones according to their spiritual gifts of teaching, preaching, and governing.[3] In other words, there is a diversity of gifts among elders in terms of how each person functions.[4] For this reason, Gillaspie thought that the "assignments of ministries must be according to spiritual gifts, and it is imperative to teach the concept of spiritual gifts in the local congregations."[5] Although there seems to be a relationship between spiritual gifts and elders' function, he concluded his study by suggesting that there is not enough desire, from his Baptist perspective, to link leadership with

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[1]Smyth, 45. See also McKerrow, 81.

[2]Voeltzel, 123.

[3]Mayer, 152.

[4]Zens, 31.

[5]Gillaspie, 14.

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spiritual gifts.[1] As Arthur E. Sundstrom suggested, there is not an adequate study that relates the responsibilities of the elders to their special gifts;[2] therefore, the biblical grounds for the ministry of elders must be reexamined.[3]

## Elders' Performance

The literature has little to say regarding the methodology by which elders can perform their responsibilities. Rather, there is an emphasis on exegesis and theological interpretation on the nature, functions and responsibilities of local church elders. McGarvey was the first to consider the matter of how the duties of elders may be accomplished. He explained briefly how to be examples, shepherds, overseers, and teachers.[4] He thought that elders should learn how to discharge these various functions of their office.[5]

There is a positive disposition in the literature to the notion that elders must receive adequate training and

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Arthur E. Sundstrom, "The Personality as Gift: A Process by which Elders Discover Their Particular Ministries" (D.Min. thesis-project, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1980), 6.

[3]Thomas F. Torrence, "The Eldership in the Reformed Church," Scottish Journal of Theology 37 (1984): 508.

[4]McGarvey, 29-48.

[5]Ibid., 33.

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preparation to exercise their work. It is important to note that elders should acknowledge their spiritual gifts so that through this discovery and development they may function properly in harmony with the whole church body. But should this training be in relation to the gifts that each local elder or leader already possesses, or should the training ignore this factor in favor of ecclesiastically appointed functions? According to Brewer, every local church should always be developing and training men by making them elders[1] which may suggest that training is more important than giftedness.

Clinton Shankel suggested that the church should train elders as leaders, counselors, and preachers, but he gave no reference to their giftedness. Although his project was designed to train elders, there is only a brief biblical reference as to how biblical eldership should function. Shankel developed the view that both Old and New Testaments contain information regarding the nature, function, and responsibilities of church elders.[2] According to him, "where there are well qualified local church elders in the churches, there is a good spiritual atmosphere, stability of

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[1]Brewer, 63.

[2]Clinton Shankel, "Field Test of an Instructional Program for Local Church Elders," (D.Min. project, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 1974), 3-32.

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faith, and growth."[1] In other words, as Deveny thought, as soon as the elders understand their functions, they become the best guarantee of a strong, spiritual congregation.[2]

**Summary**

The review of the literature showed that there has been a continuing interest from 1832 to the present to elucidate the nature, function, and responsibilities of local church elders. In the nineteenth century, the trend was to describe the function of elders from the perspective of ecclesiastical church organization. For example, the Presbyterian church believed in a double office of teaching and ruling elders.

Beginning with the twentieth century, more exegetical and theological viewpoints were developed to explain the meaning of elders. The literature is almost unanimous that the terms πρεσβύτερος, ἐπίσκοπος, and ποιμήν refer to function rather than office. Also, some of the authors contended that the study of the elders' function should be related to the teaching of spiritual gifts.

When the present reality of local church leadership and the teachings of the New Testament are compared, it appears that there is a need to reevaluate the function of church elders. Most authors reviewed described elders as

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[1]Ibid., 3

[2]Deveny, 77.

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shepherds, pastors, overseers, and teachers, but little was said about the method of accomplishing their task.

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CHAPTER 3

## EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

The study of the educational ministry of the church as a function of the church elders entails the examination of the ministry of the church which becomes the context for the local church elders' function. This chapter develops the theological foundation for church organization in its teaching and nurturing functions. Therefore, the following topics are considered: God as a Teacher of Israel, the Messiah as Teacher in the Old Testament, the Ministry of Jesus as Teacher. It also includes the teaching ministry in the apostolic church, and the local and broader church leadership.

The educational ministry of the church has its foundation in the Scriptures in general and the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ in particular. A study of the educational ministry of the church today makes necessary a analysis of the educational ministry in the Old and New Testaments and especially the ministry of Jesus Christ.[1]

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[1]The study of the ministry of Jesus Christ as a Teacher presupposes that He was God incarnate (John 1:1,14) the Messiah sent by God for the salvation of humankind.



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**God as Teacher of Israel**

In the Hebrew educational philosophy, God was recognized as the ultimate Teacher (Job 36:22). The Psalmist prayed imploring God for understanding and teaching of His statutes and precepts (Ps 119:26,27). "He who chastens the nations, does he not chastise? He who teaches men knowledge, the LORD, knows the thoughts of man, and they are but a breath" (Psalm 94:10,11). Clearly God is presented as the ultimate Teacher of Israel.

God chose the prophets to communicate His truth. For example, God told Moses that he would become a teacher of His people Israel (Exod 4:12,15). In this way, Moses became a prophet and teacher of Israel. He represents a unique and prominent prophet because "there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses" (Deut 34:10). In general, he functioned as a servant (Deut 3:23), intercessor (Deut 9:25-29), and teacher (Deut 5:1-5; 22-33; 6:1-3).[1]

The religious education of the Hebrew families was

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[1]Another example that portrays God as Teacher is manifested by King David (Ps 25:4,5,8-10). Although the people of Israel received the revelation of God through the prophets who taught them the Word of the Lord, sometimes they rejected the teachings of the Lord. Jeremiah describes those prophets in this way: "They have turned to me their back and not their face; and though I have taught them persistently they have not listened to receive instruction" (Jer 32:33). Even though Israel disobeyed, God continued communicating with His people, revealing truths; in other words, He continued being the Teacher of Israel. The same truth is also recognized by Jesus Christ when He said, "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father **taught** me" (John 8:28).

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centered in the home. The Word of God was not only to be taught but also to be lived through the process of modeling (Deut 6:5,6). These precepts were to be internalized in the minds of the children (Deut 6:6,8,9; cf. Jer 31:33; Deut 11:19). It was explicitly stated that it was the responsibility of the parents to teach their children and children's children the acts of God in Horeb (Deut 4:9-10, 14).[1]

## Priests

Besides their work at the temple and instruction in their homes, the priests were responsible for the religious instruction of the people.[2] The priests were supposed to be teachers. The Levites received the blessing of Moses not only to offer sacrifice but also to teach the people their meaning (Deut 33:10). Aaron and his descendants were entrusted to teach the Law (Lev 10:11). Therefore, the priests received their permanent teaching function by inheritance.

During the time of the reign of King Jehoshaphat,

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[1]Both father and mother were responsible for Christian education (Prov 1:8).

[2]"Scholars agree that the teaching function of the priest constituted a major part of his activity. It was not just something he did occasionally, nor was it arbitrary with his inclination. It was his job, and an important one." Leon James Wood, "The Relationship of the Priests and Prophets in Pre-Exilic Israel as to Their Respective Teaching Functions" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1963), 151.

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the King sent his princes together with the Levites and priests who "having the book of the law of the Lord with them; they went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people" (2 Chr 17:7-9; cf. 2 Chr 15:3,4). Also, during the reign of King Josiah, after the discovery of the Book of the Law, he "appointed the priests to their offices" (2 Chr 35:2) and referred to the Levites as those "who taught all Israel and who were holy to the LORD" (2 Chr 35:3). The prophet Ezekiel declared that the priests "shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean" (Ezek 44:23). Unfortunately, the priests at the time of Micah were in apostasy and were denounced for their sins (Mic 3:11).[1] Thus, among the early religious educators of Israel, the priests were responsible for both the sacrificial services and the teaching of their meaning to the people.[2]

## Prophets

Other important agents in the religious education of the people of Israel were the prophets (1 Sam 10:5, 10; 19:20; 2 Kgs 2:2-7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1-7). For example,

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[1]"Its heads give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for hire, its prophets divine for money" (Mic 3:11). The prophets denounced the corruption of the priests (Hos 6:9; 4:6-9; 5:1; Mic 3:11; Zeph 3:4).

[2]Charles Foster Kent, The Great Teachers of Judaism and Christianity (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1911), 42-48.

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Samuel stood at the head of Israel as prophet and religious reformer (1 Sam 7:3; cf. 7:5,6). During an era in which the central sanctuary was lying in ruins and the entire country was under the sovereignty of the Philistines, Canaanite idol worship appears to have spread like a plague through Israel. "Against this background, the reform activity of Samuel cannot be praised highly enough."[1] The message of Samuel was received and changes were made. The people did away with Baal and Ashtaroth, cleansed the land, and renewed their covenant with Yahweh. Then Israel once again was spiritually ready for war (1 Sam 7:3-14).

Thus, Samuel went about the country exercising the functions of judge, prophet and priest. In this context, Samuel established the schools of the prophets.[2] One of these was in Ramah, his ancestral home (1 Sam 19:19-24). Others were later established at Gilgal (2 Kgs 4:38), Bethel (2 Kgs 2:3), and Jericho (2 Kgs 2:15-22).

In the recruitment of the students, Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and

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[1]Claus Schedl, History of the Old Testament (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1971), 32.

[2]"The schools of the prophets were founded by Samuel to serve as a barrier against the widespread corruption, to provide for the moral and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the future prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors." Ellen G. White, The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1958), 593.

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industrious. These were called the sons of the prophets. According to Edmond Jacob, "the recruitment of the sons of the prophets was made by spiritual affinity and not by bond of blood."[1] Thus, we find Samuel year by year undertaking missionary circuits around Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, calling together great assemblies of the people of Israel and organizing missions, which would make it possible for all Israel to hear the preaching of revival (1 Sam 12:21,22).

From the earliest times, prophets had been recognized as teachers divinely appointed and called by God to proclaim a message of reform and restoration (Isa 6:1-13; Amos 7:10-17; Jer 1:4-10; Ezek 1:1-2:15). In the highest sense, the prophet was one who spoke by direct inspiration and communicated to the people the messages he had received from God. Among the outstanding messages of the prophets were the demands for justice, kindness, and humility (Mic 6:8; Amos 5:23-24; Isa 1:16-17). Their mission included the message of reproof and of turning to God and the Torah (Isa 30:8-10; 2 Kgs 17:13; cf. Isa 8:16,17). The prophets claimed a reform in social (Amos 4:1; 3:9,10), moral, and religious practices (Hos 6:1-3; Mic 6:1). In summary, the

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[1]Edmond Jacob, Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), 239.

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prophets were divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God.

## The Elders of Israel

The book of Exodus explicitly shows that the elders were the leaders of Israel (Exod 4:29-31). God instructed Moses, "Go and gather the elders of Israel together,and say to them, the LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me" (Exod 3:16).[1] They also were commissioned by God to go to the king of Egypt (Exod 3:18) and were called to listen to Moses at Sinai (Exod 19:7). It is clear that there were two groups of leaders, Moses and Aaron who represented the people before God, and the elders of Israel who were the people's representatives who transmitted Moses' instructions (Exod 12:21-28; 19:7).

Jethro's advice was followed by Moses who chose "able men from all the people, such as fear God, men who are trustworthy and who hate a bribe" (Exod 18:21). Those men were required to have certain qualities of character in order to function as leaders of the people. How did this

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[1]"The elders of Israel" (v.16) were the heads of various families (6:14-15-15,25; 12:21; Num 2) or tribes, each having one or more to preside or rule." Walter C. Kaiser, "Exodus," The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Regency Reference Library, 1990, 2:322. "The elders were not necessarily men of great age, but those who were recognized as leaders by the people." "Exodus," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), 1:511.

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structure function? Moses "shall teach them the statutes and the decisions, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do" (Exod 18:20). In other words, the elders became agents and teachers of the Word of the Lord (Deut 31:9; cf. 27:1).

Among the rulers of the people were the seventy elders (Exod 24:1) who also experienced the presence of the God (Exod 24:9,10). Those seventy elders received the Spirit of the Lord in order to continue with their administrative and religious work (Lev 4:15; 9:1). The ordination of the elders through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a confirmation of their calling and ministry responsibilities (Num 11:16-17,25).

It is clear that the elders of Israel were mature persons chosen from among the people and called by God to rule, together with Moses, the people of Israel. They were responsible for judging, teaching, and interceding for the congregation (cf. Deut 1:9-18). It is probable that the elders in the early Christian church utilized the same principles that have been used in Israel. At that time, Hebrew Scriptures were recognized as the authoritative Word of the Lord.[1]

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[1]The Jewish elders "traced their descent of succession from Moses's appointment of the seventy elders in the wilderness (Num 11:16ff; cf. Josh 24:31; Judg 2:7; and especially M. Ab. I.1)." M. H. Shepherd, "Elders in the New Testament," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (1962), 2:73.

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**The Messiah as Teacher in the Old Testament**

The Scriptures present not only God as the Teacher of Israel but also the eschatological Messiah as the Teacher of Israel.[1] The title Messiah is "first and foremost an eschatological concept,"[2] having "place among all the other Christological titles."[3] From Rainer Riesner's perspective, the Old Testament presents the testimony of the Messiah as the Teacher of Israel.[4] Thus, Deut 18:15-19 is considered a messianic prophecy that describes the coming of a prophet like Moses. Moses acted as teacher (Deut 4:5; 31:22), revealer of the future (Lev 26; Deut 28; 29; 30), and judge (Exod 18:15; Judg 4:4,5); the future Messiah would also come as teacher, revealer, and judge (Isa 2:3-6).[5] It is clear now that all these prophecies pointed to Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel.

The nature of the Messiah and His mission are outlined in Isaiah 11:1-4, which implies that in order to

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[1]The escathological promise of the Messiah is found in 2 Sam 7:12-16, where God promises David that his kingdom would last forever.

[2]Oscar Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), 111.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Rainer Riesner, Jesus als Lehrer (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Paul, Siebeck, 1981), 304.

[5]David L. Cooper, Messiah: His Nature and Person (Los Angeles, California: David L. Cooper, 1933), 64-65.

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accomplish His mission, He would function as Teacher (cf. Isa 30:20). In the context of Zion as the center for the knowledge of the LORD, Isaiah declared, "and many people shall come, and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa 2:3). Thus, combining the promises of Isaiah 2:1-4 and 11:1-4, it is clear that one aspect of the mission of the promised Messiah was teaching.

## Jesus the Messiah-Teacher

Jesus Christ was sent by God to fulfill His mission as the Messiah of Israel. The first words of Matthew, Mark, and Luke explicitly show Jesus as the Messiah of Israel (Matt 1:1; Mark 1:1; Matt 1:16; Luke 2:10,11). Thus, Jesus Christ is not only a Teacher, He is primarily the Messiah of Israel who functions as a Teacher in the fulfillment of His mission.

The first disciples approached Jesus calling Him "Rabbi" (John 1:38). After meeting Jesus (John 1:38,39), Andrew told his brother Peter, "We have found the Messiah" (which means, "Christ") (John 1:41). Interestingly, from the beginning of His ministry both titles ραββί and Μεσσίας

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are assigned to Jesus in the same pericope.[1] From another perspective, Jesus referred to Himself as the Messiah predicted in Deut 18:15-19 when He declared, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). In the New Testament, it was Philip who said, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote" (John 1:45).

In His dialogue with the woman of Samaria (John 4:7-38), the first impression of the woman was that Jesus was a prophet (John 4:19). When Jesus presented to her the nature of true worship, the women recognized that indeed the future Messiah was entrusted to show the true doctrine of worship. On this occasion, He acknowledges His function as the Messiah, although regularly He did not show it publicly.[2] The woman said to Him, "I know that the Messiah is coming

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[1]The word ῥαββί is an "honorary title for outstanding teachers of the law." Arndt and Gingrich, 733. This title is used by Matthew, Mark and John where Jesus is called ῥαββί (Matt 26:25,49; Mark 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45; John 1:49; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8). Interestingly, Jesus forbade His disciples to accept this title as a self-designation (Matt 23:8). According to E. Lohse, the title ῥαββί in Judaism can be used for the prophet Elijah, the Messiah, and God. E. Lohse, "ῥαββί," TDNT (1968), 6:691.

[2]"The Synoptic Gospels show that normally He did not make such a public claim; on the contrary, He urged His disciples to say nothing about it" (Matt 16:20; Mark 8:29,30; Luke 9:20,21). Merrill C. Tenney, "The Gospel of John," The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 9:56. "Jesus showed extreme reserve toward the title Messiah." Cullmann, 126.

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(he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things" (John 4:25). Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he" (John 4:26). The answer of the woman was based on her messianic hope that the Samaritans had seen in Deut 18:15,18, and they referred to Messiah as the Taheb which means the *Returning One*, or the *Restorer*.[1] In this dialogue, Jesus Himself is recognizing that He is the promised Messiah.

Moreover, John the Baptist sent his disciples asking about the promised Messiah. "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt 11:2,3). The answer of Jesus was eloquent. He showed John that He was fulfilling the Old Testament promise of the predicted Messiah. As the Messiah, He functioned as healer, teacher, and preacher (Matt 11:4-6). The most evident manifestation of Jesus as the promised Messiah is given by revelation when Peter declared, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Matt 16:16). "Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ" (Matt 16:20). Therefore, when the ministry of Jesus Christ as Teacher is considered, it is necessary to have in mind first His ministry as the promised Messiah.

The Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees called Jesus διδάσκαλος (Matt 22:16,24,36), but refused to call Him

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[1]"John," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953-57), 5:941.

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Messiah (Matt 22:43-45). On the other hand, His disciples and friends recognized Him as the true promised Messiah (John 11:27). According to John, "these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Here is the great difference between Jesus Christ and the other Scribes. This was the explanation of Nathanael, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel" (John 1:49).

## Jesus the Messiah-Servant

The idea of the Servant of God is presented in the Old Testament and used as a title for the whole community of Israel, of certain individuals, and of the ebed Yahweh.[1] First of all, the title is designated to the people of Israel (Isa 41:8,9; 44:1,2). In both references, the idea of servant is connected with the idea of a "chosen people." This implies the fact of the identity of Israel, a special people, chosen to be servant of the Lord. According to Richards & Hoeldtke, "what is important for us is to realize that to be named 'servant' is to be recognized as one whom God has shaped with special care and to whom He is personally committed."[2] Thus, being servant of the Lord

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[1]See "Jesus the Suffering Servant of God." Cullmann, 51-82.

[2]Lawrence O. Richards and Clyde Hoeldtke, Church Leadership (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Ministry Resources Library, 1980), 103.

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means to belong to Him and to be obedient to His commandments.

In addition, certain biblical persons are referred to as servants of the Lord. For example, after the liberation of the people of Israel from the Egyptians, Moses stated that the people of Israel "believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses" (Exod 14:31). In another time, the Lord called Moses "my servant" (Num 12:7) to whom the Lord spoke "mouth to mouth, clearly." And questioning the accusations of Miriam and Aaron, the Lord declared, "Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num 12:8). Thus, when the Lord called Moses "servant," it connoted the idea of the dependence of a spiritual leader in communion with the Lord, one who is entrusted with a responsibility to the Lord in favor of His people.[1]

The most important prediction of the servant of God was fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. "The 'Servant of God' is one of the oldest titles used by the first Christians to define the faith in the person and

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[1]King David is also called servant of the Lord who will save the people of Israel from the Philistines (2 Sam 3:18). Later in the reign of Solomon, the prophet Ahijah referred to David as a servant chosen by the Lord who kept His commandments and statutes (1 Kgs 11:32,34,36,38). The prophet Elijah prayed to the Lord at Mount Carmel, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word" (1 Kgs 18:36; cf. 2 Kgs 9:36; 10:10).

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work of Christ."[1] In the book of Isaiah the ebed Yahweh is presented as a chosen servant that redeems His people (Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). Clearly, the prophet is explaining the mission of the Servant of the Lord who is the Redeemer of Israel.[2] The Gospel according to Matthew recorded that many followed Jesus, and "he healed them all, and ordered them not to make him known" (Matt 12:15,16). And Matthew, acknowledging the promises of the Old Testament, declared by inspiration, "This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles" (Matt 12:17,18; cf. Isa 42:1).[3] Thus, clearly Jesus Christ acted during His ministry as a 'Servant of God.'

The most important truth about Jesus as the Messiah Servant of God is presented in the act of Jesus Himself in giving His life for the world (John 3:16). He had the conviction that His life and mission was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53 (John 4:25,26; Matt 16:16,17,20; cf. Matt 8:17;

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[1]Cullmann, 51.

[2]The servant of God is described also as the Messiah promised in Ezek 34:23; 37:24; Zech 3:8.

[3]Luke also presented Jesus Christ as the holy servant of God (Act 3:13; 3:26; 4:27,30).

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Luke 22:37). He clearly presented the teaching of His death, resurrection, and second coming (Mark 8:31; Matt 16:27; cf. Matt 17:22; Mark 9:30-32).

During His last travel to Jerusalem, Jesus Christ reminded His disciples about His death. It is important to note that the word σταυροῦν is used by the apostle Matthew to express His sacrifice (Matt 20:18,19; cf. Matt 26:2). The major witness of His sacrifice is Jesus Himself when He declared, "For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).[1] He was explaining the fulfillment of the ebed Yahweh of Isaiah 53 through His own sacrifice. Therefore, when church organization and ministry are discussed, it is important to have in mind the mission of Jesus as the Messiah and His pattern of ministry through service, humility, and sacrifice.

## The Ministry of Jesus as Teacher

### Jesus the Servant

Jesus Christ acted as a servant-teacher and taught the same principle to His disciples. For example, in the instructions to His disciples, He explicitly declared that "you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher (διδάσκαλος), and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in

[1]See also Ps 49:7-9; Mark 14:14; 1 Tim 2:6; Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:7-12.

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heaven. Neither be called masters (καθηγηταί), for you have one master (καθηγητής), the Christ" (Matt 23:8-10). The word καθηγητής means not only teacher, but also leader.[1] In this context, Jesus is teaching the disciples about their relationships with one another as leaders. The emphasis is not on the title "rabbi" but the fact that one could not be superior to another. Since all were on the same level, they should all be called brothers. Jesus Christ specifically instructed the twelve about their relationship with one another (Mark 9:35; Matt 18:3,4; cf. Matt 23:12). The leaders of the early church established their church organization upon the principles of service, humility, and love.

Thus, Jesus taught the servanthood principle and how it may be accomplished. When James and John asked Jesus to sit at His right and left hand in His glory (Mark 10:35-40), the ten were indignant (Mark 10:41). Then Jesus taught, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant (διάκονος), and whoever would be the first among you must be slave (δοῦλος) of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for

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[1]Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 1:123.

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many" (Mark 10:42-45). Also, after washing the disciples' feet He taught a practical lesson of the servant leader (John 13:13,14; 13:16). "A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40; cf. John 15:20). In the context of the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ taught His disciples, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:25,26). Thus, the leader in the Christian community is one who serves others to help them grow and mature spiritually.

## Jesus the Teacher

The ministry of teaching was one of the most prominent functions of Jesus Christ in the Gospels.[1] He was recognized as Teacher by Himself (John 13:13; Matt 23:8),

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[1]Rengstorf, 2:139. "It is the unanimous witness of the Gospel tradition and redaction that one of the prominent functions of Jesus during his public ministry was teaching (Matt 4:23--the Markan parallel in 1:39 uses the word "preaching") and that despite his lack of formal training (Mark 6:2-3; cf. John 7:15) he was correctly recognized as a "Rabbi" (Mark 12:14; cf. John 3:2)." Robert H. Stein, The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 1. Although Harvie Branscomb considered that Jesus' call was not to be a teacher but to bring his people into the kingdom of God, he admitted that the "proclamation of the kingdom involved necessarily exhortation, warning, explanation, and instruction. Teaching thus became one of the primary aspects of His work." Harvie Branscomb, The Teaching of Jesus (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1931), 96,98.

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the disciples (Luke 11:1; Mark 4:38; Luke 21:7), and the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees (Matt 22:15,16; 22:23,24; 22:34; John 3:1,2).[1] It is important to note that the word διδάσκειν connotes primarily the idea of education of the whole person and the intellectual process of instruction.[2] Throughout the Gospels, the teaching ministry of Jesus is presented performing the wholistic process of restoration of the person (Matt 4:23). Therefore, in the Synoptics and John, Jesus Christ is recognized as διδάσκαλος[3] or rabbi in that teaching was a prominent aspect of His activity. As Teacher,[4] Jesus came to communicate the genuine message of God and to lead people to accept it.[5]

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[1]To understand the background of the Pharisees and Sadducees, see Gershom Bader, The Encyclopedia of Talmudic Sages (London: Jason Aronson, 1988), 21-33; Irvin M. Zeitlin, Jesus and the Judaism of His Time (New York: Polity Press, 1988), 11-37.

[2]Rengstorf, 2:137-141.

[3]The word διδάσκαλος appears 59 times in the New Testament, 12 in Matthew, 12 in Mark, 17 in Luke, 8 in John, 1 in Acts, 4 in Philemon, 3 in Timothy, 1 in Hebrews, and 1 in James.

[4]"As Messiah, his main function was to proclaim the reign of God, and this inevitably involved a great deal of teaching. But he was not merely a Teacher. Those who see him as nothing more than a great teacher miss the main point of the Gospels. He was first and foremost not a teacher but Messiah, the 'anointed one,' the one sent by God to proclaim the good news of the reign of God." Edward W. Bauman, The Life and Teaching of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), 125.

[5]In the Gospels, the term "teacher" is sometimes applied to other leaders such as John the Baptist (Luke 3:12) or Jewish religious authorities (Luke 2:46; John 3:10).

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How did Jesus Christ perform as Teacher? One of the characteristics of His ministry was that He had compassion for people (Matt 14:14). He had the ability to provide for their needs.[1] Mark specifically declared that He had compassion "because they were like sheep without a shepherd (ποιμήν); and he began to teach many things" (Mark 6:34), among them, the meaning of the "kingdom of God" (Luke 9:11) and bringing rest to the soul (Matt 11:28; cf. Isa 55:1-3). According to the apostle John, He is the good Shepherd (ποιμήν) who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11; cf. Isa 40:11). Thus, although the idea of the shepherd is mentioned only on a few occasions, the idea of Jesus Christ who functions as shepherd is explicitly and implicitly mentioned to portray the ministry of Jesus throughout the Gospels.

Another important characteristic of His teaching was that it took place in the familiar surroundings at that time. He used the settings already established in Judaism. For example, He taught in the synagogues on Sabbath (Matt 4:33; Mark 1:21), in "all the cities and villages" (Matt 9:35; Luke 4:15,31) on sabbath days (Luke 6:6; 13:10; John 6:59), in the temple (Matt 21:23; John 7:14-16,28; 8:2,3; 18:19-21), beside the sea (Mark 2:13), and from a boat (Luke 5:3). He taught in every place where He went. In other

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[1]See John M. Price, Jesus the Teacher (Nashville, Tennessee: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1946), 39-41.

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words, teaching was performed formally and informally where the people were, in the framework of the whole life situation.

The Sermon of the Mount is an example of Jesus' teaching ministry in a natural environment (Matt 5:1,2). In His closing declaration, Jesus made a direct call to hear and to do (Matt 7:11-27). In other words, the truth is not only presented so that they may understand but also to indicate how to act according to the truth received. Jesus presented the principle of learning by doing, which is the true meaning of the teaching ministry of Christ (Matt 7:24). This is one of most important methods of teaching: teaching by living, doing, and example.

Matthew recorded that Jesus Christ "went about all Galilee, teaching (διδάσκων) in their synagogues and preaching (κηρύσσων) the gospel of the kingdom and healing (θεραπεύων) every disease and every infirmity among the people" (Matt 4:23). People in the synagogues "were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:21,22; John 6:47,48,59; cf. Luke 4:15). As a result, "great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan" (Matt 4:25). Thus, Jesus used the synagogues because they constituted the normal setting for the study of the Torah and social relations.

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On another occasion when He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, Jesus healed a woman who "had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years" (Luke 13:10), demonstrating that His ministry included the restoration of the whole person (cf. Matt 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56; Matt 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11). His ministry of teaching went together with His ministry of healing. As a result, the Pharisees opposed Him, but "all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him" (Luke 13:17). The ministry of Christ presents the fundamental truth about Christian education which involves the development of the whole person, physical, mental, social and spiritual (cf. Mark 9:14-29; 10:46-52).

Another important place where Jesus taught was the temple. Jesus declared in the temple, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12,20). Luke stated that He was "teaching (διδάσκων) daily in the temple" (Luke 19:47). And during the last week of His ministry, "every day he was teaching (διδάσκων) in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet" (Luke 21:37). The temple was the center of community worship and signified an opportunity to reach people with the truth of the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ used public encounters to accomplish His mission.

Although some wanted to follow Him (Matt 8:19), He

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intentionally called others as His disciples. For example, He said to Philip and Matthew "Follow me" (John 1:43; Matt 9:9). After Matthew was called and while Jesus was in his house (Mark 2:15), the Pharisees asked, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners (ἁμαρτολῶν)" (Matt 9:11)? Jesus' answer shows the real meaning of the Torah and the prophets, "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt 9:13; cf. Mic 6:6-8).[1] On another occasion the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, "This man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:1,2). Jesus Christ answered the Pharisees' accusation by telling them the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (Luke 15:3-32). Thus, another important characteristic of His ministry is His association with the common people.

Jesus not only was associated with the common people, He also reached religious leaders of Israel. Nicodemus came to him at night saying, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him" (John 3:2). And Jesus used this opportunity to tell him that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes

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[1]"'Sinners' may include common folk who did not share all the scruples of the Pharisees." D. A. Carson, "Matthew," The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Regency Reference Library, 1984), 224. See also Rengstorf, 1:324-325.

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in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Initially, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were secret disciples of Jesus (John 19:38-39).

Jesus Christ intentionally chose twelve disciples to be the basic foundation for the continuation of His ministry and the organization of His church (Matt 10:1-11:1; 16:16-20; cf. Eph 2:20). In the context of the mission of the twelve, Jesus instructed His disciples how they should minister to others. He used two words to illustrate their mission, μαθητής and δοῦλος. "A disciple (μαθητής) is not above his teacher (διδάσκαλος), nor a servant (δοῦλος) above his master; it is enough for the disciple be like his teacher, and the servant like his master" (Matt 10:24,25). In other words, Jesus Christ connected the idea of disciple/teacher with the idea of servant/master, which explains the way they might perform their mission. At the same time, Jesus Christ tells them to follow His example (Matt 10:38,39; cf. Phil 2:7,8). Thus, it was the intention of Jesus that from the beginning of the church's organization, the apostles would follow the same servanthood pattern, that is, the elected and appointed leaders of the church would fulfil their ministry and mission by being disciples and servants of the Lord.

Jesus Christ taught by the example of His own life. On one occasion the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1b). This

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was because the disciples had seen Him praying (Luke 11:1a; cf. Mark 1:35). On another occasion before His sacrifice in the upper room, He taught them the lesson of humility and service by washing their feet (John 13:14,15). He taught the lesson of love by His own sacrifice and life (John 15:12-14). Thus, He taught the truth and at the same time by the example of His life the truth was manifested.

Finally, women were not excluded from His ministry. Mary and Martha were among His followers (Luke 10:38-42) and John recorded that Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 11:5). Mary had been forgiven for her many sins (Luke 7:37,47; cf. John 11:1,2). She earnestly listened to the teaching of Jesus (Luke 10:38,42). Martha also was aware of His teachings. In the context of the resurrection of Lazarus, when Jesus Christ asked Martha if she believed that He is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25,26), Martha answered, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world" (John 11:27).[1]

After His resurrection, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9). In this encounter, "Jesus said to her, 'Mary.' She turned and said to him in Hebrew,

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[1]For a detailed study of the two women friends see David A. Redding, Lives He Touched (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), 36-45.

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'Rabboni!' (which means "Teacher")" (John 20:16). Mary Magdalene and the other Mary received instructions from the angel of the Lord to "go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you" (Matt 28:7), which they did (Matt 28:8). Finally, after the ascension of the Lord, when the disciples returned to Jerusalem, "all these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Act 1:12-14).

## Jesus' Use of the Scriptures

Another important characteristic of Jesus' ministry was His extensive knowledge of the Scriptures. He explicitly taught that He came not to abolish the law (Torah) and the prophets, "but to fulfil them" (Matt 5:17). He gave to His listeners the spiritual meaning of the Torah so that through His teaching about it they were illuminated with a new meaning. In the Sermon of the Mount, six times Jesus Christ said "but I say to you" (Matt 5:22,28,32, 34,39,44). All of these sayings were taught in the context of obedience to the Law of God (Matt 5:19). For example, Jesus showed His obedience to the regulations of the law when he cleansed a leper (Matt 8:4; Lev 14:3,4).

He claimed that the promises written by Moses were being fulfilled in His mission as the Messiah sent by God (John 5:43,44). Jesus Christ explained to the Jews, "Do not

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think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me" (John 5:45,46). After His resurrection, on the walk to Emmaus He taught two of His disciples, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). And in the context of the great commission, He said to His disciples, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).[1] He also commanded them to teach the future disciples to observe all that He commanded His disciples (Matt 28:20), in other words, making His instructions as authoritative as the Old and New Testaments.

Sometimes He quoted passages of the Hebrew Scripture. For example, teaching about the origin of the marriage institution, He asked to the Pharisees, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matt 19:4), and then He mentioned Gen 2:24, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become

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[1]Jesus Christ recognized the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God, all of it being fulfilled in Him. He referred to Moses, who wrote the Torah (Matt 8:4; 19:8; 23:2; Mark 7:10; 12:26; Luke 24:44; John 3:14; 5:44-46; 6:32; 7:19,22,23), Daniel (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14), David (Matt 22:43-44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42), and Isaiah (Matt 13:14,15; 15:7-9; Luke 4:17-19).

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one flesh" (Matt 19:5). On another occasion, He referred to the ten commandments when the young ruler asked about eternal life (Mark 10:17-20).

He also referred to the Old Testament using the phrase "it is written (γέγραπται)." Jesus used the Scriptures to overcome the temptations by the devil. Jesus answered Satan, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matt 4:4; cf. Deut 8:3; Matt 4:7,10). The same expression is found when He cleansed the temple a second time. Jesus declared, "It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you make it a den of robbers" (Matt 21:13).

He rebuked the traditions of the elders and scribes, declaring that they had rejected the commandment of God in order to keep their tradition (Mark 7:9-13; cf. Isa 29:13). From Jesus Christ's perspective, the rabbis had "neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others" (Matt 23:23; cf. Mic 6:8). He asked a lawyer who wanted to know how to inherit eternal life (Luke 10:25), "What is written in the law? How do you read" (Luke 10:26). Jesus Christ congratulated the lawyer for his wise answer, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). He

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taught that He was the bread of life (John 6:35). He said, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). Because they murmured among themselves, Jesus Christ declared, "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me" (John 6:45; cf. Isaiah 54:13).

## Authority of Jesus as Teacher

After the Sermon of the Mount, the "crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority (ἐξουσίαν), and not as their scribes (γραμματεῖς)" (Matt 7:28,29). Two important points are mentioned by Matthew: Jesus Christ has authority, and His authority is not as that of the scribes. The scribes were teachers and scholars of the Jews' law of both written and oral tradition (Matt 2:4; 15:1,2,6; Matt 23:1,2).[1] They were accused by Jesus Christ as those who "made void the word of God" and were "hypocrites" (Matt 15:6; 23:13-36). The task of the scribes to teach the law was of primary importance, for it was the goal of these teachers to acquaint every Jewish person with the law. The pupil's first duty was to commit to memory the many hundreds of traditions which had accumulated from the scribes'

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[1]See Anthony J. Tambasco, In the Days of Jesus: The Jewish Background and Unique Teaching of Jesus (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 53-63.

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interpretations of the Law. The second duty required of pupils was to teach others exactly as they had been taught.

The Pharisees and Herodians recognized Him as Teacher of truth (Matt 22:15,16). This texts show not only that Jesus Christ is a Man of integrity who teaches the Word of God in accordance with the law, they also suggest that indeed He teaches the truth and at the same time He is the truth as a person (John 8:40,44,45,46; 16:7; 18:38). He not only taught with authority, He was the source of authority (Matt 10:1). "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me'" (Matt 28:18). He "has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matt 9:6). Becoming a disciple from a Christian perspective means to have not only knowledge of the truth but also knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ as Savior and Messiah.

## The Great Commission

It is important to note that until the end of His ministry Jesus claimed His teaching ministry (Matt 26:55). After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His eleven disciples giving instructions about the continuation of His church. Jesus said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has 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 (διδάσκοντες) them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with

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you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:18-20; cf. Mark 16:15,16). The disciples were entrusted with the mission that Jesus came to fulfill. They were to continue the teaching ministry showing the world that Jesus was the Messiah, the Redeemer of the World.

The great commission which established that they must teach to observe the commandments of the Lord, also included His style and pattern of leadership and teaching. The disciples would accomplish their ministry by following the example of their Teacher through their lives, following the same principles of compassion, servant service, brotherhood love, and the wholistic approach for teaching the believers. They must follow the instructions of Jesus in their ministry, demonstrating their ability in personal testimony and in group relations in the synagogues, in the temple, and in any place where they went. They must teach by both saying and doing.

### The Teaching Ministry in the Apostolic Church

After the great commission, Luke described the growth of the Christian church and the teaching ministry of the apostles in the book of Acts. As a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the apostles taught by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was the promised Messiah who was resurrected. Following the example of their Master, Peter and John taught at the temple, "in the portico called

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Solomon's" (Act 3:11; 4:1,2). They were dynamic in carrying out Jesus' command (Matt 28:19-20). As a fruit of their ministry in the temple, the apostle Luke recorded that "the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul" (Act 4:32,33). Thus, at this early stage, the apostles witnessed at the temple of Jerusalem (Act 1:8) where they continued for a while (Act 5:12). "At this point emancipation from the community of Israel took place only very slowly."[1] They taught the people at the temple "at daybreak" (Act 5:21,25) and as a result they "filled Jerusalem" with their teaching (Act 5:28).

Besides the temple, the other place of evangelization was the home (Act 5:42). The early believers met in houses where families gathered together for teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord. "Primitive Christianity structured its congregations in families, groups, and houses. The house was both a fellowship and a place of meeting"[2] because certainly "the house and family were the smallest natural groups in the total structure of the congregation."[3] The home can still be a center for teaching and preaching the Word of God.

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[1]Gottlob Schrenk, "ἱερόν," TDNT (1965), 3:246.

[2]Otto Michel, "οἶκος," TDNT (1965), 5:130.

[3]Ibid. "Religious institutions not only function like families, they also contain families. Indeed, they often derive their very structure from families." Edwin H. Friedman, Generation to Generation, Family Process in Church and Synagogue (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985), 195.

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As the church continued to grow, the apostles fulfilled their ministry by teaching the Word of the Lord. They organized leaders for the daily distribution of material needs so that they could devote themselves "to prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Act 6:4). Church grew required further organization. First were the twelve, then the early church and the apostles appointed the seven for the ministry of the poor (Act 6:1-7). The common explanation regarding Acts 6:1-7 is that the seven were the source for the deacons office; however, a more elaborate analysis of the text and meaning of the word διακονία shows a different view.

Certainly the ministry of the tables implies a service of love, administration, and organization (Act 6:1) but it did not exclude the ministry of the Word as is seen in the case of Stephen and Philip. Although the seven were responsible for the service of the widows and the poor, they also ministered the Word of the Lord.[1] Both the twelve and the seven function under the same pattern of διακονεῖν (Act 6:1,4).

Similarly, the apostle Paul acknowledged to the elders at Ephesus that he received his διακονίαν from the Lord (Act 20:24; cf. 1 Tim 1:12; Eph 3:7). In the report that Paul gave to James and the elders of Jerusalem, he

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[1]Stephen preached the Word of the Lord (Act 7:1-53) and Philip preached, taught, baptized, and is a called evangelist (Act 8:4-8; 8:26-39; 21:8).

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ministered among the Gentiles as a work of διακονίας (Act 21:17-19). In addition, the apostle Paul also declared in the context of the purpose of the spiritual gifts that the leaders of the church were responsible for the instruction of the believers in the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12) which implies that every member would become a minister.

The apostle Paul addressed, in his letter to the Philippians, both the bishops and deacons of the church (Phil 1:1). Both words, deacons and bishops, were used in the context of their function. Moreover, Paul instructions to Timothy manifested a close relationship between the elders and the deacons of the church. Deacons appears after bishops and the qualifications for their ministries comprise some similarities (1 Tim 3:8-13).[1] Therefore, it is probable that the name "deacons" embodied a series of ministries in the local church (cf. Matt 25:42-44) and were those who collaborated with the elders in taking care of the local church. From a biblical perspective, apostles, evangelist, elders, and deacons functioned as διακόνους of the Lord.

It is clear that the ministry of the apostle focused on the proclamation of the Word of the Lord. Luke records that in Samaria Peter and John taught the word of the Lord

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[1]The apostle Paul called also Timothy διάκονος (1 Tim 4:6).

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(Act 8:25). When Peter preached to Cornelius at Joppa, he recognized his mission as a minister of the Word and taught that Christ commanded them to preach to the people, and "to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead" (Act 10:42). This was the primary activity of the apostles, preaching and teaching the Word of the Lord, faithful to the Lord's instructions.

### The Teaching Ministry of the Apostle Paul

Through the ministry of the apostle Paul, it is possible to grasp other principles of the educational ministry of the church. The book of Acts records that after his conversion (Act 9:1-19) "for several days he was with the disciples at Damascus" (Act 9:19). And in the synagogues immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying, "He is the Son of God" (Act 9:19,20). In other words, from the beginning of his ministry, Paul was interested in visiting the synagogues as a method of fulfilling his teaching ministry. The fact that there were many synagogues in the Diaspora and the people were familiar with their function made it reasonable for him to follow this method.

As a result of the ministry of the disciples among the Greeks at Antioch (Act 11:19-21), Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch (Act 11:25,26) so that they could continue the teaching of the Word at the first church established after

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the church in Jerusalem.[1] "For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a large company of people, and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians" (Act 11:26). Thus, through the direction of the Holy Spirit Barnabas and Paul were designated to the ministry of the Word to the Gentiles and were appointed to serve among them. "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off" (Act 13:2,3).

> Not that they could by this act qualify Barnabas and Saul for the work to which God had called them; but by this means they acknowledged their recognition of the divine call and declared their fellowship with the two men, who were thus not only called by God but commissioned by the church.[2]

At that time the growing church made evident the need for further organization beyond the twelve.

## Paul's Ministry in the Synagogues

Throughout the book of Acts it is clear that Paul traveled together with other co-workers teaching the Word of God among the Gentiles. There were some important

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[1]Frederick F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids, Michigan: B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 274.

[2]Ibid., 294.

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characteristics in their mission. They first visited all the synagogues to teach the gospel to the Jewish community. For example, "when they [Paul and Barnabas] arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogue of the Jews" (Act 13:5). Similarly, at Antioch of Pisidia, during the Sabbath "they went into the synagogue and sat down" (Act 13:14). As a result, many Jews and those converted to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas and begged them to continue their teaching the next Sabbath, which they did (Act 13:42,43). "The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God" (Act 13:44). Therefore, in his early missionary ministry, the apostle Paul and his helpers used the synagogue as a center for evangelization because they were accustomed to its structure and function.

After they reached the Jews, they also turned to the Gentiles because this was their mission (Act 13:45-47). "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region" (Act 13:48,49). Although their ministry focused on the Gentiles (Act 13:47), they followed the same method: first they visited the Jews in their synagogues and then turned to the Gentiles (Act 14:1,3).

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## Visitation and Supervision of Churches

Another important characteristic of their ministry was their interest in visitation. They were continually caring for the spiritual nurture of the local congregation. For example, when they preached the gospel at Derbe where they made many disciples, "they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Act 14:21,22). It was in this context that they appointed (χειροτονήσαντες) elders (πρεβυτέρους) in "every church, with prayer and fasting" (Act 14:23). Their visitation made them realize of the need for local leaders in those churches.

Again, on their second missionary trip, after the council of Jerusalem, they made plans for visitation of the local congregations. "And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, Come, let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are" (Act 15:36). After Paul and Barnabas were separated to visit different regions, Paul and Silas "went on their way through the cities" (Act 16:4a), presenting "the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem" (Act 16:4b). As a result, "the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in number daily" (Act 16:5). In addition, on

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Paul's third missionary tour, after spending some time at Antioch, "he went from place to place through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples" (Act 18:23).

From this examination, it may be concluded that their pastoral function included visitation which connotes caring for the flock. Paul and his fellow workers traveled around the local churches in the cities strengthening, nurturing, organizing and teaching the Word of the Lord. It is clear that this constitutes a rudimentary model of church organization. In local churches the elders were responsible for the spiritual life of the local congregation. The apostles and their helpers evangelized and visited local congregations throughout some regions or districts, supervising and nurturing local congregations. In other words, there were both local and universal elders who took care of the churches.

## The Council of Jerusalem

In the middle of his book, Luke describes the first council of the Christian church. A problem arose regarding the circumcision of Gentiles. "But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved'" (Act 15:1). These Jewish believers wanted to continue practicing the rituals taught by Judaism and the Law. The "law of Moses" had been the spiritual and moral

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standard for Jews people for generations, and certainly circumcision was not forbidden by Jesus Christ. It was regarded as a sign of the covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:10-14). Through Jesus Christ the promises of the New Covenant were fulfilled (Jer 31:31-34), and baptism became the experience and sign for the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, Savior and Redeemer (Rom 6:1-14). It is probable that Jewish believers at Jerusalem still were practicing the rite of circumcision.[1]

The rite of circumcision became an issue because those who supported the circumcision of the Gentiles were proposing it as a step to obtain salvation; otherwise, they said, "you cannot be saved" (Act 15:1). They were emphasizing the means of salvation through an exterior sign of "works of the law" (Gal 2:16) and not through the merits of Christ. For this reason, "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them" (Act 15:2a). The apostle Paul's position was clear: "A man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of

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[1]Many Jews thought circumcision was necessary for true conversion to Judaism for the male. Scot McKnight, A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 78-89.

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the law shall no one be justified" (Gal 2:16). Therefore, justification comes only through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After discussing the issue in the local church, "Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question" (Act 15:2b). There are important implications in this statement. Originally the church was constituted by Jewish believers; through the work of the disciples and apostles the church grew also in Gentile areas. As the church grew to become a universal, not only a national or local, church, theological and structural problems arose for the apostles.

There was the desire to preserve the unity of the church. For this reason, the church at Antioch did not act independently, but decided to send representatives together with Paul and Barnabas to the Jerusalem church, recognizing the leadership of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem (Act 15:2,4; cf. Gal 2:9).

> There they were to meet delegates from the different churches and those who had come to Jerusalem to attend the approaching festivals. Meanwhile all controversy was to cease until the final decision should be given in general council. This decision was then to be universally accepted by the different churches throughout the country.[1]

Their method of debate (Act 15:7-21) gives us some

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[1]Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 190.

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guidance as to how the church ought to settle discrepancies. Luke recorded that "there had been much debate" (Act 15:7). There was much discussion, and maybe disagreement, but in spite of this they arrived at an agreement. In a certain way, this was a compromise with the Christian Jews who supported the circumcision, but they listened to the leaders of the church. First, they listened to Peter who had reported his ministry among the Gentiles (Act 10:34-48; 15:7-9), pointing out that "we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (Act 15:11). Next, the assembly "listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles" (Act 15:12). Finally, James summed up the reports, indicating that the salvation of the Gentiles was also in the plan of God (Act 15:16,17; cf. Amos 9:11).

After they arrived at a decision, "it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas" (Act 15:22). The letter clearly stated, "It has seemed good to us, having come to one accord" (Act 15:25). "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity" (Act 15:28; cf. Lev 17:9; 18:6-30; 17:15; Gen 9:4; Lev 17:10-14). The Gentiles were excluded from

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circumcision. They included in their decision the observance of rules and ethical conduct for the peace and progress of the church, as it indeed happened during the apostles' following missionary trips (Act 15:30,31; cf. 15:32).

Through the council two levels of organization were clearly visible. The council operated under the leadership of the apostles (James, Peter, and John), and the whole church was present through their representatives. In other words, the structure of the church was formulated from both universal and local perspectives. Interestingly, the elders participated in the decisions (Act 15:2,4,6,22,23).

## Ministry of the Apostle Paul at Thessalonica

The book of Acts records that the apostle Paul visited Thessalonica in his second missionary trip. Following his earlier approach, he went first to the synagogue of the Jews (Act 17:1). Three important steps were followed during his teaching at the synagogue. Luke tells us that for "three weeks he argued with them from the scriptures" (Act 17:2). The word διαλέγομαι connotes the idea of conducting a discussion rather than a disputation.[1] The second step was "explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead" (Act 17:3). As a result, "some of them were persuaded

[1]Gottlob Schrenk, "διαλέγομαι," TDNT (1964), 2:94.

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[convinced], and joined Paul and Silas; as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women" (Act 17:4).

Among the earliest letters that the apostle Paul wrote were the letters to the church at Thessalonica. These letters give illuminating ideas about early church organization. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1) addressed the brothers and sisters as those who had received the word "in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thess 1:5).[1] They recognized that they had "been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts" (1 Thess 2:4). The Thessalonians accepted the word of God "not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess 2:13).

The apostle Paul recognized that he was called by God to fulfill his mission. How did Paul and his fellow workers accomplish their ministry? Because of his calling,

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[1]"Paul continued, even in his absence, to nurture the churches he had founded and shaped. First Thessalonians provides us with an excellent opportunity to observe how he did so. The letter reveals his sensitivity to the psychological and social conditions of his converts, particularly their distress and sense of isolation, their feeling that he had abandoned them after forming a community around himself, and their feeling of inadequacy in their new faith. Paul responds to their needs in three ways: by sending Timothy as his emissary, by writing the letter, and by directing them to continue among themselves the nurture he had begun." Abraham J. Malherbe, Paul and the Thessalonians (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 61.

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the apostle Paul had responsibility for nurturing and encouraging the church. Using an illustration from the care of the mother to her children, he said, "But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children" (1 Thess 2:7). Using another figure, he declared "for you know how, like a father (πατήρ) with his children (τέκνα), we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you" (1 Thess 2:11). The apostle Paul was using family relations and affiliations to illustrate the relationship of church members and their leaders.[1] This is not only an illustration, but also a model for the members and leaders of the church.[2]

Second, Paul wanted them to remind them of the "instructions" (παραγγελίας) through the Lord Jesus (1 Thess 4:2). These "instructions" connote the idea of teaching with authority, a command that must be followed. These instructions include a life of holiness (1 Thess 4:3-8), exhortations concerning love and work (1 Thess 4:9-12), and the message of the resurrection and the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thess 4:13-18). In other words, Paul was teaching with authority when he gave "instructions" to the church of Thessalonica. In his second letter, the apostle

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[1]See also 1 Cor 4:14,15.

[2]"Personal attention and individual encouragement were characteristic of the apostles." Joseph A. Grassi, The Secret of Paul the Apostle (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 78.

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Paul stated, "And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things which we command" (2 Thess 3:4).

The apostle Paul also instructed the brothers and sisters to "respect those who labor among you and are over (προϊσταμένους) you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (1 Thess 5:12,13). The idea of προϊστημι may suggest the idea of the officials who rule and care for the church. It is probable that Paul was referring to the ministry of the elders in his letter. From Reicke's perspective, "according to the context the task of the προϊστάμενοι is in large measure that of pastoral care, and the emphasis is not on their rank or authority but on their efforts for the eternal salvation of believers."[1] The same word is used to describe the family qualifications of the ἐπίσκοπος when Paul instructed Timothy, "he must manage his own household well" (1 Tim 3:4). Therefore, it is probable that "those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you" (1 Thess 5:12) were the elders who take care of the local congregation.

Finally, the apostle Paul reminded the members, to "stand firm and hold the traditions (παραδόσεις) which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess 2:15). There was a period between the ministry of

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[1]Bo Reicke, "προϊστημι," TDNT (1968), 6:702.

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Jesus Christ and the writing of the apostles in which the gospel was transmitted orally. However, when Paul spoke of παραδόσεις he may have been referring to his Christian teachings that he taught during his missionary trips and later in his letters. For example, the apostle Paul stated, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us" (2 Thess 3:6). Writing to the church of Corinth the apostle also declared, "I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you" (1 Cor 11:2; cf. 1 Cor 15:1,2). Oral tradition was the first stage in the proclamation and teaching of the Lord's instructions.

## Ministry of the Apostle Paul at Corinth

At Corinth, the apostle Paul followed his early approach visiting first the synagogue and later the Gentiles. "And he argued in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks" (Act 18:4). "When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus" (Act 18:5). In that city Paul "stayed a year and six months, teaching (διδάσκων) the word of God among them" (Act 18:11).

In the letters to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul

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showed that he was indeed spiritually responsible for the care of the church. In the instruction concerning unity, he appealed to them as a pastor. "I appeal (παρακαλῶ) to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10).[1]

In his writings, he also suggested a systematic approach in teaching doctrine. Certainly the members at Corinth did not grow up as was expected by the apostle Paul (1 Cor 3:1-3). When he visited the synagogues, he probably presented the message in such a way that he went from the simple to the complex, expecting that as they grew in maturity, they would be able to understand more complex aspects of the doctrines. As apostle to the Gentiles, he grasped the spiritual potential of the believers.

## Ministry of the Apostle Paul at Ephesus

Paul in his second missionary tour visited Ephesus. "And they [Priscilla, Aquila, and Paul] came to Ephesus, and he [Paul] left them there; but he [Paul] himself went to the synagogue and argued with the Jews" (Act 18:19). On his third missionary tour, he returned to Ephesus and at this time he started his teaching in the synagogue but decided to

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[1]According to Schmitz, παρακαλῶ "is a kind of formula to introduce pastoral admonition." Otto Schmitz, "παρακαλέω," TDNT (1967), 5:799.

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move to the house of Tyrannus (Act 19:8-10). Because of his previous work organizing local churches (Act 14:23), it is probable that during those years the apostle Paul also organized the church in the same pattern. The clear evidence is shown when he called the local elders at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus. "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders (πρεβυτέρους) of the church" (Act 20:17). He reminded the elders of his teaching ministry. He stated, "teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Act 20:20,21).

The other purpose of the visit of the elders to Miletus was to give them final instructions regarding their ministry. "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock (ποίμνιον), in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (ἐπισκόπους), to care for (ποιμαίνειν) the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son" (Act 20:28). From the analysis of the Greek, it is clear that the elders were the shepherds or pastors of the church at Ephesus. They must "be alert" and follow the example of the apostle who "for three years . . . did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears" (Act 20:31).

Writing to the church at Ephesus in the context of the unity of the church (Eph 4:3-6), he presented the ministry of those called to work for church edification.

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"But grace (χάρις) was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift (δωρεά)" (Eph 4:7). "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists[1], some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11,12). Early in his epistle he mentioned that the church was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Eph 2:20).

Is there a relationship between the "pastors and teachers" and the elders in Act 20:28? Was Paul implicitly pointing out in Eph 4:11 the nature of the ministry of the local church elders? In Miletus, the elders (πρεσβυτέρους) are called overseers (ἐπισκόπους), they were the same group of leaders who took care of the local church. In the letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul addressed the church in general which included their elders. Being the leaders of the church, obviously the elders at Ephesus (for who else could there have been to lead the church on a day-to-day basis) were made very conscious of the instructions of the apostle.

The terms "pastors and teachers" can be also translated "shepherds and teachers." The word ποιμένας is translated "pastors" only in Eph 4:11. In other examples,

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[1]Timothy was in the category of evangelist (2 Tim 4:5).

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the Greek word is translated "shepherd" (Matt 9:36; 25:32; 26:31; Luke 2:8; John 10:2,11,12,16; Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25). It is important to note that the verb ποιμαίνω indicates the actions of tending the flock by the elders (Act 20:28) and the same function is indicated in Eph 4:11 (cf. Luke 2:8).

In addition, elders were also responsible for teaching the Word of the Lord and preaching and were considered to be doubly worthy if they fulfilled their ministry (1 Tim 5:17).[1] Since the apostle Paul was focusing on the edification and maturity of the whole church body (Eph 4:12-16), it is evident that through the ministry of teaching, the members of the church would mature in Christ and in their knowledge of doctrine (Eph 4:14,15). Therefore, it seems clear that the elders as "shepherds and teachers" of the flock were also responsible for equipping

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[1]When the apostle Paul wrote the epistle, it is probable that Timothy was still at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). "Perhaps, therefore, we may find a parallel to this present conjoining of the duties of pastor and teacher in Paul's reference in 1 Tim 5:17 to those elders who do not only rule well but who also 'labor in the word an teaching.' Though we have insisted, and still do, that in Eph 4:11 Paul is not speaking of the apostles, etc. as 'officials' in the church, and though the elders of 1 Tim 5:17 *are* likely considered as officers, we do believe that the two passages cited are parallel in emphasizing the *teaching* aspect of the work of the elders and pastors respectively." Edwin D. Roels, God's Mission: The Epistle to the Ephesians in Mission Perspective (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, 1962), 191.

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"the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).[1]

Having in mind the elders' qualifications that are described by the apostle Paul (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), especially "an apt teacher," it is clear that they were elected by the local congregations because of the character and gifts they already possessed and were chosen to contribute in the edification of the body of Christ through the ministries in which they were qualified.[2]

In summary, "Pastors and teachers" refers to the

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[1]"I fully agree. What we have here, accordingly, is a designation of *ministers of local congregations*, "teaching elders (or overseers)." By means of expounding the Word these men *shepherd* their flock. Cf. Acts 20:17,28; also John 21:15-17. They cannot do so properly without love for Christ." William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967), 197; "Yet it is clear that 'pastors' (that is, 'shepherds'), who are called to 'tend' God's flock, do so in particular by 'feeding it,' *i.e.* by teaching. Perhaps one should say that, although every pastor must be a teacher, gifted in the ministry of God's Word to people (whether a congregation or groups or individuals), yet not every Christian teacher is also pastor (since he may be teaching only in a school or college rather than in a local church)." John R. W. Stott, God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 163-164.

[2]It is important to note that the apostle Paul is interested in the functioning of the whole church body. In this context, every part of the body has a function to fulfill. In addition, their a variety a gifts in every member of the local church. Thus, broader and local church leaders were responsible for the church growth and edification; and in order to fulfil their task, they helped the members to discover their gifts and abilities so that every member had an important function to fulfill for the ministry and edification of the church.

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same group of leaders[1] and it is probable that the apostle Paul was referring to the function of the local church elders.[2] All of these leaders, both general and local, were called and elected to edify and equip the members of the church "for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12). In other words, it may be inferred that the local church elders were not only supervisors and shepherds of the local churches, but also managers, leaders, and teachers of their local congregations. It is evident that the elders were elected because they had these qualifications and gifts.

### The Apostle Paul as Servant of the Lord

Another important characteristic of the apostle Paul's ministry was his constant claim to be a servant or slave of the Lord. For example, explaining to the church at Corinth regarding the status of Apollos and himself, he declared "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each" (1

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[1]According to Eph 4:11, it is probable that all pastors are to be teachers, though not all teachers are to be pastors. Daniel B. Wallace, "The Semantic Range of the Article-Noun-Kaí-Noun Plural Construction in the New Testament, Grace Theological Journal 4 (1983): 83.

[2]"The two terms 'pastors (shepherds) and teachers' denote one and the same class of men. They are the men who 'tend the flock of God' and care for its well being, showing other Christians by precept and example alike the path of Christian faith and life (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28). They are the same people as are else where called elders and bishops, one of whose qualifications is being 'apt to teach' (1 Tim 3:2)." Frederick. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Ephesians (London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 1961), 85,86.

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Cor 3:5). Here the apostle Paul is using the word διάκονοι to illustrate that Apollos and he were servants of the Lord and of the church (2 Cor 6:4; cf. Col 1:23). In this sense, he is following the example of the Master as One "who serves" (Luke 22:27). The apostle Paul became διάκονοι by the grace and will of God to teach the Word of the Lord (Eph 3:7; Col 1:25,28). The apostle Paul not only considered himself a servant of the Lord, but also one of the "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:1). He is the ὑπηρέτης, the helper, servant, or assistant of the Lord and at the same time the οἰκονόμος, that is, the administrator and manager of the church. Thus, it is important to note that leaders of the early church--local and general--functioned in the context of the ministry as servants of the Lord.

Writing to the church at Philippi, he mentioned "Paul and Timothy, servants (δοῦλοι) of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:1). Since Paul is not only writing to the church but also to the bishops and deacons of the church, his instruction to "do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves" (Phil 2:3) may be applied to the elders. For this reason, Paul also taught that they must follow the humility of the Lord "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:6,7). For Paul, Jesus Christ is the center of his message. "For

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what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4:5).

Paul was not only a servant of the Lord, he was also a servant of the church. "I thank him who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to his service" (1 Tim 1:12). "For this I was appointed a preacher and apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Tim 2:7). "For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher" (2 Tim 1:11; cf. Rom 15:16).

## Local and Broader Church Leadership

As was stated earlier, the early church organization was structured in a twofold way: the broader church organization having the apostle Paul and Timothy as their representative ministers, and the elders as responsible for the local church leadership and ministry.

### Multichurch Leaders

Paul was included in the category of multichurch leaders. Through the instructions that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy, some basic principles for the universal ministry of the church may be understood. It was the apostle Paul who appointed Timothy at Lystra (Act 16:1). "Paul wanted to Timothy to accompany him" on his second

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missionary tour (Act 16:3). Thus, Timothy traveled, sent by Paul, on some specific pastoral missions. For example, he sent Timothy to Thessalonica, Philippi, and Corinth with specific instructions and mission. "And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and to exhort you" (1 Thess 3:2). "But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you" (1 Thess 3:6). "I hope in the Lord Jesus to sent Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you" (Phi 2:19, cf. 2:22). "Therefore I sent to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (1 Cor 4:17). It is evident that Timothy functioned as a shepherd in a broader category of church organization.

Is there evidence of how Timothy performed his universal ministry? The letters that the apostle Paul wrote give some clues to understand his ministry. First of all, he was assigned to correct false teachers: "As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine" (1 Tim 1:3; cf. 2 Tim 2:24,25). He was entrusted to instruct the members of the local churches. "If you put these instructions before the brethren, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the

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faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed" (1 Tim 4:6).

How did he perform his ministry? He was invested with authority. "Command and teach these things. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come, attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching" (1 Tim 4:11-14). Timothy was commissioned to prepare other believers to teach doctrine. "And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). He followed the teaching of the apostle Paul. "Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 1:13). His ministry was basically to teach the Word of God and work as an evangelist (2 Tim 4:1-5).

Titus received similar instruction from the apostle Paul. "But as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine (Titus 2:1). He was entrusted to promote love and fidelity in the family (Titus 2:4-6), and become a model of "good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured" (Titus 2:7). He held authority: "Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority" ( Titus 2:15).

Another important characteristic of the apostolic ministry was the fact that workers addressed churches in the

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introduction of the epistles. For example, Apollos and Paul were considered "fellow workers" (1 Cor 3:9). "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother" (2 Cor 1:1). "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:1). "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother" (Col 1:1). "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy" (1 Thess 1:1 and 2 Thess 1:1). Thus, there is evidence that Paul had coworkers such as Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:3), Timothy (Rom 16:21), Titus (2 Cor 8:23), Mark (Col 4:10), and Luke (Phlm 24).[1] All of them received teachings and instruction from the apostle Paul to achieve the work of teaching and witnessing.

## Elders as Local Church Leaders

As stated above, the early church functioned under the pattern of local and universal church organization, the local, through the ministry of the local church elders; and the universal, through the general ministers such as the apostles and evangelists.

### Who Were the Elders?

The first reference to elders in the early church is found when the believers at Antioch sent a relief offering

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[1]"The men and women mentioned, and others unmentioned, must have esteemed it a great honor to be Paul's fellow-workers in the highest of all enterprises." F. F. Bruce, The Pauline Circle (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 90.

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to the "elders" of Jerusalem "by the hand of Barnabas and Saul" (Act 11:30). It is probable that the early believers were organized according to the instruction of the apostles.

The πρεβυτέρους of the Jerusalem church appear without commentary in Act 11:30. Their designation was certainly similar to the term used to name the leaders of the synagogue in Judaism, but different in nature. They met with the apostles in the council of Jerusalem. Luke stated that both "the apostles and the elders" decided regarding the issue of circumcision in the council of Jerusalem (Act 15:2,6,22,23; 16:4). Therefore, there is clear evidence that at that time the elders were considered the religious leaders of the local congregations.

In addition, the apostle Paul and his helpers appointed elders in the local churches that they visited (Act 14:23). This is evidence that the apostles were transient shepherds and there was need for capable local leaders to care for the spiritual life of the congregation as soon as they departed. Thus, in the churches at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch were elders appointed by Paul and Barnabas. "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed" (Act 14:23). The apostles considered it imperative to provide permanent care for the flock. The elders provided this ongoing pastoral care.

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It is probable that those who labored among the members at Thessalonica and were over (προϊσταμένους) them in the Lord were also elders appointed by the apostle Paul and responsible for the local pastoral work. For this reason, the believers at Thessalonica must "esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (1 Thess 5:13). In other words, elders appear to be not only the leaders of the local congregations but also the shepherds of the flock.

The fact that the apostle Paul spent more than two years at Ephesus (Act 19:8,10) may suggest that he contributed to the organization of the local church elders under the direction of the Holy Spirit (Act 20:28) who made them "overseers." It is important to note that the apostle Paul mentioned that the Holy Spirit made the elders at Ephesus overseers (ἐπισκόπους) which is equivalent to πρεσβυτέρους (Act 20:17,28; cf. 1 Tim 4:14). At the meeting at Miletus, Luke showed the filial relationship among the apostle and the elders who deeply felt his parting. "They all wept and embraced Paul and kissed him" (Act 20:37).

In summary, elders were the religious leaders of the early church who governed the believers in local congregations and were responsible for their leadership, pastoral care, teaching, and supervision.

How did the early believers decide to organize the local church under the leadership of the elders? Did they follow the pattern of the elders at the synagogue or was

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their organization unique? It seems that they inherited the frame of reference of the synagogues, but their function was quite different. For example, in the Christian communities there were not an ἀρχισυνάγωγος, but a plurality of elders. The elders in the Christian communities were not only responsible for the worship services they also were pastors of the congregations.

And there are other characteristics. The elders believed that the promise of the Messiah was fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ. In this context, their leadership was patterned on the spirit of servanthood and service and not on hierarchy, superiority, or dominion. They were not supposed to rule over the members as superiors, but as servants of the Lord and with humility in the fulfillment of their pastoral and teaching ministries.

**What Were the Elders' Functions?**

Although the early church took the name "elders" from Judaism, the functions of the elders in the Christian church appear to differ from those of the elders of Judaism.[1] During the meeting among the elders at Ephesus

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[1]"How far did the functions of the Christians and the Jewish elders resemble one another? In the Jewish community its leaders were responsible for seeing that the Law was observed, and they could excommunicate those who persisted in breaking it; they also, when necessary, represented the community in dealing with the local Roman magistrates. But they did not, in addition to these judicial and administrative functions, act as pastors of their people or conduct the worship of the community assembled in the synagogue" (ibid., 149).

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and the apostle Paul, there were some specific statements that reveal their functions. "Take heed to yourself (προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς) and to all the flock (ποίμνιον), in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (ἐπισκόπους), to care for (ποιμαίνειν) the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own Son" (Act 20:28).

The first instruction of the apostle Paul to the elders was to pay attention to themselves. The expression προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς probably suggests that the entire life was to be in harmony with the teachings contained in the Scriptures. They were the local religious leaders of the people, so they needed to be faithful to the Lord, His Word, and the church. Indeed, Paul was warning them that apostasy would arise even among themselves; therefore, they must be prepared and alert (Act 20:29-31).

They must pay attention also to all the flock (ποίμνιον). The text explicitly uses the word παντὶ before ποίμνιον to denote the care of the whole church.[1] The elders must include all believers in their ministry, which

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[1]"The church is a body, a united flock, and not a large number of individual sheep--a great fact for Christians as well as for pastors. Sheep are not dogs, and one must think of dogs in the Oriental sense, ownerless, scavengers, etc. Sheep as a flock are precious, follow the shepherd, depend on him; it is a crime to be a hireling, to abuse the confidence of the flock; it is the devil's work to scatter the flock. All this and more lies in the word ποίμνιον, diminutive from ποίμνη, but only in form, not in sense." R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1934), 847.

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included all the families and their children. Therefore, it implies their ministry of visitation and nurture. How did they care for the whole congregation? Two important aspects must be considered: first there was a plurality of elders in each local congregation.[1] No single elder was responsible for the pastoral care of the local congregation. In this context, it seems probable that they would have distributed among themselves the responsibly for the visitation of the members in their houses following the example of the apostle Paul. The early church developed ministry in homes. They did not have church buildings, but "house" churches. Paul declared that he taught them "in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Act 20:20).

The apostle Paul explicitly pointed out that the elders under the direction of the Holy Spirit, were to be overseers (ἐπισκόπους) "to care for (ποιμαίνειν) for the church of God" (Act 20:28). First of all, these men are called πρεβυτέρους in verse 17; therefore the terms ἐπισκοπος and ποίμαίνω refer to their functions in the local

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[1]This was the pattern in the New Testament. See Act 11:30; 14:23; 15:2,6,22,23; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Pet 5:1,2; 1 Tim 5:17-19; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5-7.

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congregation at Ephesus.[1] The word ἐπίσκοπος connotes the idea of supervision, an overseer, the guardian of the flock. In other words, the term is used to explain the first part of the verse 28 in which Paul mentioned, "Take heed . . . to all the flock" (Act 20:28a). The last part of verse 28 gives insight into the responsibility of the ἐπισκόπους. They must "care for (ποίμαίνω) the church of God which he [God] obtained with the blood of his own Son." The ἐπίσκοπος was responsible for the care of the souls that were redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ (Mark 10:45).

Related to their pastoral ministry was the need for watchfulness. The apostle Paul admonished them to be alert. He declared that "after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (Act 20:29). In the epistle to the Hebrews, the writer reminded the members to "obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account" (Heb 13:17).[2]

The apostle Peter also exhorted the elders as to how to fulfill their ministry. "Tend (ποιμάνατε) the flock (ποίμνιον) of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as

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[1]"In general, the terms ποιμαίνειν and ἐπισκοπεῖν were closely linked in describing the work of the shepherd." Hermann W. Beyer, "ἐπίσκοπος," TDNT (1964), 2:615. See also 1 Pet 5:1,2 and Titus 1:5-7.

[2]See Jacques Dupont, Le Discours de Milet (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1962), 197-233.

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domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:1-3).[1] Three important points are mentioned here by the apostle Peter. First of all, the elders' ministry had to be without compulsion, that is, their pastoral ministry would be achieved with love and tenderness. Second, they needed the desire to work voluntarily. There was no indication of the amount of time they must spend in their pastoral ministry, but they ought to take the necessary time to achieve it. Finally, they must serve and lead the flock with humility, "being examples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:3). The word τύποι connotes the idea of modeling, that is, they must teach by example.[2]

It is important to note that the caring for souls was also the responsibility of the apostles. For example, Jesus Christ three times told the apostle Peter to tend and feed His sheep, to illustrate the shepherding and teaching ministry for the believers under his responsibility (John 21:15-17). In this context, the apostle also was functioning as ἐπίσκοπος and ποιμήν of the broader church.[3]

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[1]Some manuscripts also include the word ἐπισκοποῦντες, to oversee and care for the flock. (The Greek New Testament, apparatus.)

[2]See 1 Thess 1:7; 1 Tim 4:12.

[3]"Jesus here in effect announces to Peter and to the rest that they are now to make the transition from boyhood to manhood, from pupilage to self-government, from a position of dependence and exemption from care to one of influence, authority, and responsibility, as leaders and commanders in the Christian community, doing the work for which they have been so long under training." Alexander

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Therefore, both elders and apostles were responsible under God and the church for the care of souls. When they fulfilled their ministry, they were functioning under Christ, the "Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Pet 2:25). Apostles and elders care for the souls as ἐπίσκοπος and ποιμήν as Jesus Christ Himself does because He is the ποιμήν and ἐπίσκοπος of all souls. The above statements lead us to the conclusion that the apostles functioned also as ἐπισκόπους in a broader sense (1 Pet 5:1; Act 20:20,31), but never as a title to designate superiority or hierarchical power. The apostles worked as servants of the Lord.

Another important elders' function was expressed by the apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy: "Let the elders (πρεσβύτεροι) who rule (προεστῶτες) well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching (λόγῳ) and teaching (διδασκαλίᾳ)" (1 Tim 5:17). The word προεστῶτες gives the twofold meaning of those who lead and care for souls at the same time.[1] In addition, they were teachers and preachers of the flock.

In summary, elders are persons called by God and elected by the church to serve as shepherds, pastors, and

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Balmain Bruce, The Training of the Twelve (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), 507.

[1]Reicke, 6:700-703.

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overseers, caring for souls, as leaders of the church, preachers, and teachers of doctrine.[1]

**What Were Elders' Qualifications?**

Two lists designate the basic qualifications of elders to work in local congregations (1 Tim 3:1-7; 1 Titus 1:5-9).[2] It is necessary to emphasize one important point here: these qualifications ought not to be separated from functions. These qualifications represent what the elders are and the manifestation of these qualifications is expressed when they are elected because their character fits the call by the Holy Spirit and the church election. Moreover, the fact that they are representatives of Jesus Christ in their local congregations means that they already

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[1]The pastoral duties may be summarized as follows: "(1) To preach to the flock the Word of God, to bring them to an understanding of the gospel (1 Cor 2:4-7; Eph 3:8-11) and to an experience in the power of truth (John 3:11; 2 Cor 4:13, rightly presenting to them the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15), thus prudently to enhance their spiritual condition. (2) To pray for the flock (John 17:9-17; Rom 1:9; Eph 1:16; 1 Thess 1:2; 2 Tim 1:3). (3) To administer the ordinances of the Lord's house in their deep spiritual meaning: baptism (Rom 6:3-6), foot washing (John 13:3-17), the Lord's Supper (Matt 26:26-30; 1 Cor 11:23-30). (4) To preserve the truth of the gospel in the church (Jude 3; 1 Tim 1:3,4; 4:6,7,16; 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14; 2:25; 3:14-17). (5) To seek the conversion of souls, adding them to the flock (Acts 2:47; 11:24; cf. Luke 14:23)." "Acts," SDA Bible Commentary, ed. F. D. Nichol (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957), 6:393.

[2]"The various list of qualifications also were not mere suggestions for leaders but requirements." E. Ray Moore, "A Theology on Plurality of Elders: Model for the Multiplication of Shepherds for an Expanding Church" (M.Th. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1979), 60.

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believe in Jesus as Messiah and Savior and understand the elements of the plan of salvation, which includes justification, sanctification, restoration to a new life in Christ (1 Tim 1:15,16; 2:5; 6:13-16), and the mission of the church (Matt 28:19,20; Act 1:8).

The first qualification presented by Paul is that the elders must be irreproachable or blameless. Both terms have to do with the sanctified behavior of these leaders. Thus a bishop must be: according to 1 Tim 3:1-3, the husband of one wife, temperate sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, no lover of money. And according to Titus 1:6-8, the husband of one wife, blameless, not arrogant, not quick-tempered, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain, hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, self-controlled.

Paul's letter to Timothy noted that the elder must "manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim 3:4-7). And to Titus the apostle added, he

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should be able to give instruction in sound doctrine (Titus 1:9).

Among these qualifications, one that is most relevant to this study is related to the family ministry. In both instances the apostle Paul instructed that the elders must be faithful to their spouses. The family was the nucleus of the growing community and it was the place where the apostle visited to encourage and nurture the believers. Thus, the family was considered an important center for worship and teaching in the early church. Instructing Titus, the apostle Paul declared, "If any man blameless the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of being profligate or insubordinate" (Titus 1:6). Since one of their functions focus in nurture in homes, it is important to emphasize the good relations between husband and wife built on respect and love (Eph 5:22-33).

Parents are responsible for the transmission of the religious heritage to their children, and being elders their responsibility also includes the local church. Therefore, they will care for the children and youth so that they may receive the religious instruction that will provide the correct motives, attitudes, and values. Another important point is presented by the apostle: the children were "believers (τέκνα ἔχων πιστά)," which implies that the

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parents indeed were entrusted to teach their children the truth as the Word of the Lord.

"An apt teacher" implies not only the gift but also the ability to perform a teaching ministry in the home and in the church. Elders "must be able to give instruction in sound doctrine" (Titus 1:9). The transmission of the religious heritage and the fulfillment of the commission by Jesus (Matt 28:18-20) implies that the ministry of teaching by the elders of the congregation has priority. Therefore, both their Christian character and their spiritual gifts must be observed in order to select and appoint local church elders for their ministries.

In summary, elders are mature persons chosen and appointed at the direction of the Holy Spirit and the consensus of the local church to minister to the members in the context of servanthood as shepherds and pastors, leaders, managers, supervisors, and teachers of doctrine. How could the lay elders achieve such vital and comprehensive tasks? This is the subject of the next chapter in which a model is proposed of how elders may function in the local congregations in Inca Union Mission.

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# CHAPTER 4

## A MINISTRY MODEL FOR CHURCH ELDERS

It is assumed that records of the New Testament church organization contain the fundamental principles for church organization in the contemporary church. Thus, in this chapter, the applications and implications of the educational ministry of the New Testament church that were analyzed in the previous chapter are utilized to develop a ministry model for contemporary church elders.

From a biblical perspective, it is evident that elders perform very important functions in the local church including nurturing, leadership, and teaching. Although the New Testament illustrates this variety of functions, it is probable that elders, both then and now, have aptitudes for specific functions and tasks, not necessary all.

The Inca Union Mission is the focus of the model being proposed. In particular, this ministry model for church elders is focused on Perú where, it is hoped, it may be implemented in local congregations. This chapter begins by describing a model of elders as shepherds, leaders, and teachers, and the role of the pastor as trainer and supervisor.



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**Inca Union Mission**

The thirteenth regular constituency session of the Inca Union Mission held in Lima, January 15-19, 1991, reported extraordinary church growth in the last decade.[1] By September of 1990, the Inca Union Mission reported 307,411 members. From 1907, when the first Seventh-day Adventist church was organized, to 1980, after seventy-three years, 324 churches were organized. Between 1981 and 1985, 43 churches were organized, and in the last five years, 1986 to 1990, 326 churches were established.[2] In the last ten years, the number of churches has more than doubled. In addition, the goal for the next five years is again to double the number of churches and members.

What are the major factors for this extraordinary church growth? One factor is lay participation in all activities of the local church community.[3] However, the leaders of the Union have serious concerns including the reasons for the high number of apostasies. The total number of apostasies over the last five years was 27,708 or 17.3% of membership. These numbers indicate, among other issues, the urgent necessity of pastoral care.

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[1]"13er Congreso de la Unión Incaica," Correo Incaico 37 (1991): 1-62.

[2]Ibid., 6.

[3]According to the "Congreso" report, by the end of 1990 almost the 70% of the membership was involved in missionary work. There were 13,062 Bible instructors and 7,250 lay preachers. Ibid., 16.

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In addition, an analysis of the recent report indicates that the ratio of members to pastor has increased across the Union. By September of 1990, there were 1079 members per pastor, up from 812 in 1986. Pastors already have large districts to shepherd and visit. Moreover, in the Inca Union Mission, they conduct two or three evangelistic campaigns each year, further diminishing the amount of time available to shepherding, teaching, and administration. For this reason, it seems imperative to fortify shepherding, teaching, and leading in the local church by lay members. It would appear that elders in the Inca Union Mission are the logical ones to be organized and taught to perform such functions in harmony with the organization alluded to in the New Testament.

**The Shepherd Metaphor**

From a biblical perspective, the shepherd may best illustrate the diversity of elders' functions. As already described, on two occasions, the verb ποιμαίνειν is used to indicate the work of the local church elders (Act 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2) who, in reality, functioned as shepherds in local early churches.

Although in the Old Testament the work of the Lord is illustrated by the shepherd metaphor, Ps 23 is an example of how elders may also function as shepherds. According to the metaphor of the "shepherd and the sheep," elders are

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spiritual leaders who feed, nurture, protect, lead, and comfort the believers.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ provided the same principles in His discourse of the good shepherd (John 10:1-21; cf. Luke 15:3-7; John 21:15-17). In this illustration, an important action of the shepherd is to have intimate knowledge of each one of the sheep (John 10:3) providing food for the sheep, and leading them to good pasture (John 10:9). Also, Jesus illustrates that shepherds have a supreme responsibility to care for their sheep even at the cost of their own lives (John 10:11). Therefore, using the shepherd metaphor and the inherent functions of church elders described by the apostle Paul (Act 20:28), it is reasonable to describe their functions from the shepherd metaphor perspective.

Moreover, the illustration that Jesus gave goes beyond gentle pastoral care. Such shepherds would not be afraid of confrontation (John 10:12; cf. Act 20:29-31), even at considerable personal cost for "ministry is a self-giving sacrifice."[1] And the fact that there are other sheep that are not of the fold implies that elders will have a plan to reach out to people who do not know the "eternal gospel" (Rev 14:6,7).

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[1]Derek J. Tidball, Skillful Shepherds: An Introduction to Pastoral Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 87.

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In synthesis, the shepherd illustration suggests complete care for all their sheep. Shepherds would know the members of their congregations by name, and their needs, concerns, and problems, and be recognized as their spiritual leaders (John 10:4,14).

## A Proposed Ministry Model for Lay Elders

### A Description of the Model

The model is built on the descriptions in the New Testament of elders' ministry including their qualifications, functions, and their spiritual gifts that equip them for ministry. The model includes both the local and the broader church organization (See figure 1).

### The Pastor

The pastor is appointed by the conference--the broader church organization--to serve local churches[1] and supervises the process of elders' selection, training, organization and ongoing ministry. The council of elders is established under his leadership and is given authority to act in the local church.

### Appointment of Elders

First, the church selects the elders based on their qualifications (1 Tim 3:1-7; 1 Titus 1:5-9) and giftedness (1 Cor 12:7-11; 27-30; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11). Second, they

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[1]SDA Church Manual, 58, 119.

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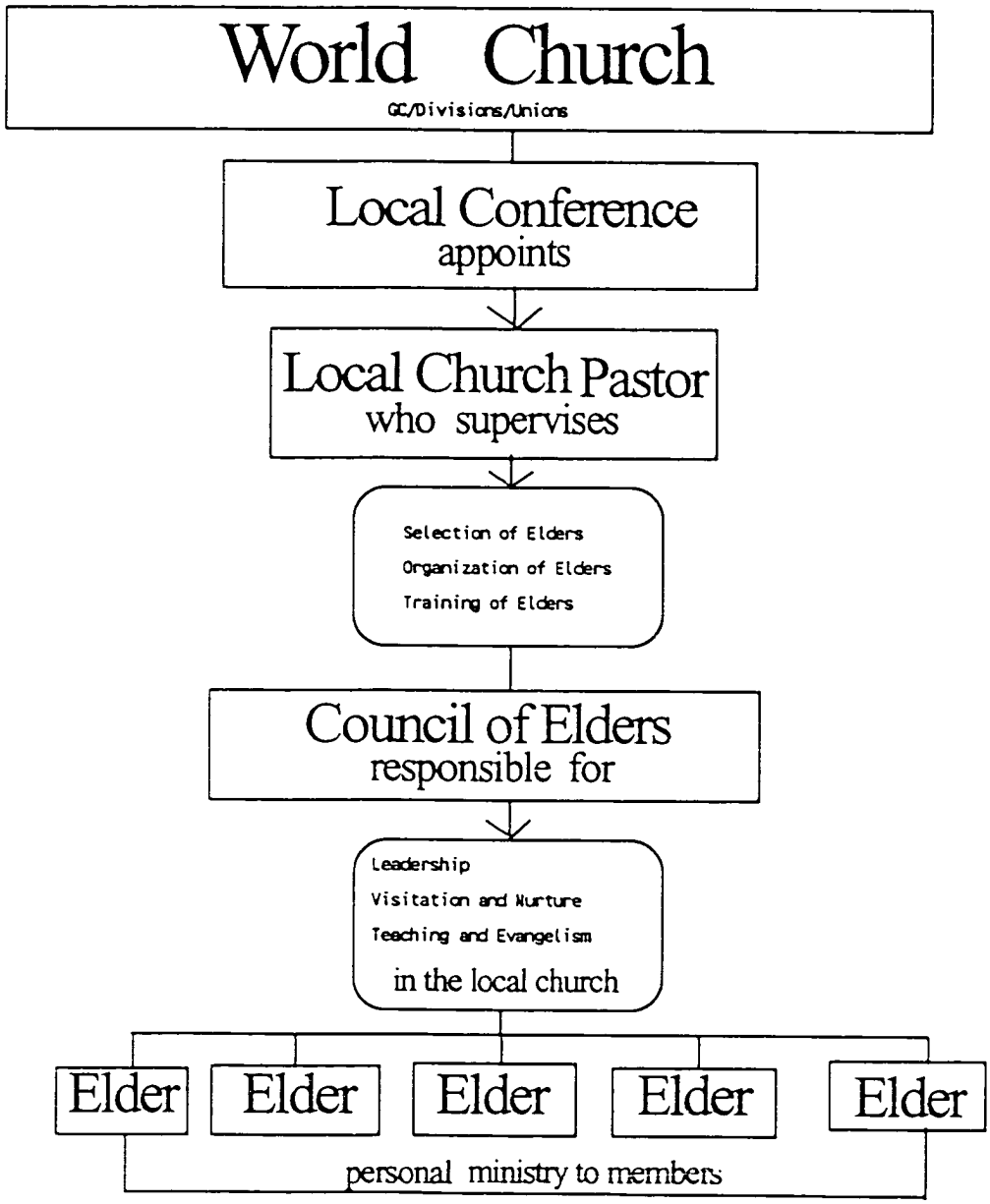


Fig. 1. A Ministry Model for Lay Elders

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are organized into a council of elders. Third, the pastor and the council of elders establish a strategy based on the educational needs of the parish. These ministries are described, organizationally as leadership, visitation/ nurture, and teaching/evangelism. Fourth, training programs are planned and implemented as needed. Fifth, an evaluation process is put into place to facilitate effectiveness in the elders' ministries.

## Selection

One of the most important issues for an effective ministry by church elders is the process of their selection. The church should establish an approach that identifies the spiritual gifts and the appropriateness of the characters of the members for various ministries.[1] In the case of elders, it is important to emphasize the qualifications identified in the Scriptures and encourage a union of spiritual character and observed appropriate giftedness.[2] In the

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[1]The local church should have a permanent program for enrolling workers. For example, the use of a task survey, a spiritual gifts survey, and continuing programs of promotion and instruction of people in the diverse areas of specialization such as evangelism, teaching, leadership, and management, should be included in the total educational task of the congregation. This is an important task of ministers.

[2]"Great care should be exercised in selecting officers for new churches. Let them be men and women who are thoroughly converted. Let those be chosen who are best qualified to give instruction, those who can minister both in word and in deed." Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 6:85.

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process of selection, it is also important to consider the expectations of the congregation. In all cases, selection of elders is a spiritual, not a political, activity.

In selecting elders, the nominating committee will consider seriously the list of qualifications presented by the apostle Paul.[1]

> In the days of the apostles, the ministers of God did not dare to rely upon their own judgement in selecting or accepting men to take the solemn and sacred position of mouthpiece for God. They selected the men who their judgment would accept, and then they placed them before the Lord to see if He would accept them to go forth as His representatives. No less than this should be done now.[2]

These qualifications are the manifestation of a truly Christian person of honesty and integrity. If the process of selection follows such biblical guidance, there is a good reason to expect that elders will be a great support in their local congregations. Therefore,

> May the Lord impress upon the minds and hearts of all connected with the sacred work of God, the importance of asserting whether those who are to minister as deacons and elders are suitable men to be entrusted with the flock of God.[3]

In due course, the leaders of the local church would be expected to follow the instructions of elders' ordination

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[1]SDA Church Manual, 124, 53-54.

[2]White, Testimonies for the Church, 4:406.

[3]Ellen G. White, MS 176, 1898, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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established in the church manual.[1] This should be made with careful consideration and much prayer "that God would designate by His Holy Spirit whom He will accept."[2]

It is necessary to have a variety of persons as elders so they may function in the diversity of activities previously mentioned. For this reason, it is essential to communicate clearly to the prospective elders to which specific functions they are being elected and in which they would engage, and the support and training that would be available.

## Organization

The New Testament has a pattern of church organization. As presented in the previous chapter, we noted that there were leaders at the broader or universal level, the apostles and their co-workers, and local church elders who were chosen to take care of the spiritual life of the believers on an ongoing basis. In other words, the structure of the early church was organized at both local and universal levels. This evident church structure gives insight into a possible model for contemporary local church elders and the pastors who oversee large districts.

Since the apostles and their associates stayed in

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[1]"Election to the office of elder does not in itself qualify one as an elder. Ordination is required before an elder has authority to function in that office." Church Manual, 57.

[2]White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:617.

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some cities for considerable periods of time, they were able to organize local churches in each location. They visited the entire district, pastoring, nurturing, organizing, and teaching. After they left, local elders assumed the full responsibility for the continuation of that ministry. For this reason, in the book of Acts and the epistles of the apostle Paul, the instructions regarding the functions performed by local church elders are "similar" yet different to the functions accomplished by the broader church leaders.[1] While both had similar functions, they were different in the sense of the organizational perspective, elders responsible only to the local church (Act 20:17; 1 Thess 5:12; Phil 1:1); the apostles responsible for groups of local churches, preserving unity and doctrine.

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[1]The apostles were considered part of the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20,21). Thus, James, Cephas and John were reputed as prominent leaders of the universal church (Gal 2:9). Peter and John were involved in preaching and teaching (Act 3:1, 4:1,23). Paul and Barnabas taught multitude of people in the church (Act 11:25,26). Therefore, it is evident that the apostles functioned as shepherds, leaders and teachers of broader church organization. They selected and ordained elders to continue with the ministry in local congregations. In this context, elders functioned as shepherds, leaders, and teachers (Act 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1-3; 1 Tim 5:17). There were two kind of leaders in the early church organization: those responsible to the church at large (the apostles) and the local church elders responsible for supervision and leadership of their congregations (Phil 1:1).

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In contemporary Seventh-day Adventist church organization in Perú, a pastor would be appointed to be in charge of a district with many churches and companies and elders selected to be responsible for leadership in each local church. Pastors are usually appointed for several years; elders are elected only for a specific church and for a one-year term.[1]

**Council of Elders**

One of the main characteristics of the local eldership ministry is its plurality. In the epistle to the Philippians, elders (bishops) were presented as a group of leaders functioning in the local community (Phil 1:1). The apostle Paul testified to the method of training these leaders of the church by association with them (e.g. Timothy and Titus). Paul's perspective was that a group of leaders should be in charge in each local congregation (Act 14:23) and this plurality of leadership with a variety of gifts, gave variety to the process of building the church. A plurality of elders has the obvious practical implications of multiple resources with broader wisdom and vision in a team.[2]

The Scriptures give some indications of the

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[1]SDA Church Manual, 57.

[2]Niednagel, 41,42.

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importance of relationships among the disciples that may be applied to the elders' leadership (Matt 10:1; Luke 6:12-16; cf. Luke 22:24-27). From the perspective of the plurality of elders, they all have a responsibility toward Christ,[1] toward their fellow elders, and toward the members of the local church. Therefore, to work effectively in the fulfillment of their task, elders should be organized in a council.[2] During the meetings of the council, elders should establish a clear over-all sense of direction and purpose (Acts 15:6,22,23; 16:4). The fundamental purpose of the board of elders is to structure and facilitate the activities of elders to the benefit of all members.[3]

The council will conduct interviews and surveys to

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[1]Lawrence Richards believes that since the church is the body of Christ this requires a participation of multiple leadership recognizing Jesus Christ as the Head. Lawrence O. Richards, Christian Education (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Ministry Resources Library, 1975), 150.

[2]They may meet according to their needs and plans. In Perú, elders and pastor gather once a month to discuss their ministry and responsibilities.

[3]Elders are usually placed as advisors in some departments and committees, including the church board. If these meetings are well-run they accomplish a great deal in a short time. For this reason, elders should become skilled chairpersons. As chairpersons, elders should set and follow the agenda, enforce good group procedure, maintain impartiality, encourage board participation, make sure all proposals are presented and understood, acknowledge all participants, and keep the record and communicate. After any resolution is made, it is necessary to specify by whom and when the actions are achieved.

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determine the needs for training. Through this analysis, it is probable that some problems may surface which will help to establish a list of curricula priorities. Elders also may evaluate their actual level of performance by comparing functions displayed in the Scriptures, with the expectations of the church and their own performance.

**Voluntary Service**

It is important to note that elders' ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist church is accomplished in a voluntary basis.[1] Although they are ordained to function as leaders in the local congregations, their ministry is performed voluntarily--that is, without a salary. The disciples in the early church witnessed on a voluntary basis, living in fellowship and communion (Act 2:42). For this reason, the apostle Peter pointed out the work of the elders as being "not by constraint but willingly" (1 Pet 5:2).[2] On this basis, elders are called and appointed by the local church

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[1]"A volunteer is a person who provides time and service of her or his own free will. There are no constraints or demands placed on such a person. Time, energy, and effort are given freely." Douglas W. Johnson, Empowering Lay Volunteers (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 15.

[2]The apostles and the early believers worked in the church voluntarily. However, there was not a professional ministry as it is known today. Paul and other workers supported themselves by tent-making (Act 18:3; Act 20:33-34; 1 Cor 9; 2 Cor 11:7-11; 2 Cor 12:14-18; 2 Thess 3:7-8). It is probable that 1 Tim 5:17,18 refers to certain rewards given to the elders. In general, there is no indication that elders were paid by their local churches. It appears that some widows were paid by the church (1 Tim 5:3-16).

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to serve with their time and energy freely. In the Inca Union Mission, much of the work in the local congregations is already achieved on this voluntary basis.

In summary, elders should have a permanent council and meet regularly to function in the plurality of their capacities to plan, to inform, to resolve problems, to present devotionals, and to receive training and to report on their ministry.

## Training

How can churches ensure that elders fill their functions as presented in the New Testament? The New Testament model emphasizes church elders in their qualifications, their character, and their spiritual gifts. It appears that the apostles chose local leaders who gave evidence of Christian character and spiritual gifts matched with the function to which they were called. Moreover, it seems that the apostles followed the "training model" given by Jesus Christ because they constantly were preparing others for the work of the ministry. For example, the apostle Paul gathered co-workers (e.g., Timothy and Titus, Act 16:3; Gal 2:1), who also functioned at the same leadership level. As E. G. White asserted,

> They have been faithfully instructed in the way of the Lord, and had been taught how to labor unselfishly, earnestly, perseveringly, for the salvation of their fellow men. This careful training of new converts was an important factor in the remarkable success that

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attended Paul and Barnabas as they preached the gospel in heathen lands.[1]

Thus, after selection, it will probably be important to implement training programs (especially for those who are new in their office). In the council of elders, pastor and elders will discuss needed training related to elders' assigned pastoral care in the local congregation.

Following the functions of local church elders described and referred in the New Testament, training may include insights in counseling. Since elders are confronted with a variety of problems including adolescent crisis, divorce, single parents, family and child relations, they need such basic knowledge.[2] This preparation would

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[1]White, Acts of the Apostles, 186,187.

[2]There are series of books in this area which may be useful but should be read with critical thinking, for example, William T. Kirwan, Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling: A Case for Integration Psychology and Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984); William R. Miller, Practical Psychology for Pastors (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1985); Gerald Corey, Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy (Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1991); Andrew D. Lester, Pastoral Care with Children in Crisis (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985); John G. Kruis, Quick Scripture Reference for Counseling (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988). In family counseling, for example, Edwin H. Friedman, Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue (New York: The Guilford Press, 1985); Stephen A. Grunlan, Marriage and the Family: A Christian Perspective (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Academie Books, 1984); John Bradshaw, The Family (Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, 1988); Irene Goldenberg and Herbert Goldenberg, Family Therapy (Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1991); Ray S. Anderson and Dennis B. Guernsey, On Being Family (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985).

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facilitate elders to fulfill an important dimension of elders as shepherds.

Second, among the many areas of knowledge two seem to be necessary for the fulfillment of their teaching ministry. They are the content of the message (the Scriptures) and the method for communicating it. Therefore, they should be taught the principles of hermeneutics and exegesis in order to be able to grasp by themselves the meaning of the Scriptures. This would be related to the knowledge of Christian doctrines which elders will study according to the teaching of the church and centered in the ministry of Jesus Christ. An important aspect in the teaching and learning process is the knowledge of the learner; therefore, a study of life-span psychology and the psychology of learning would be most helpful.

After planning the curriculum, and who will teach, the pastor will develop a training calendar to present the courses delineated as appropriate.

## Elders' Ministry

### Leadership

Leadership/administration is only truly effective in the church when exercised by those who have that spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:28). The gift may be exercised in both local and broader geographic areas. At the broader level, the gift is "to direct large areas of God's work in ways that

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inspire the members and bring progress and unity."[1] On a local level, it

> is the special ability that God gives to some members of the Body of Christ which enables them to understand clearly the immediate and long-range goals of a particular unit of the Body of Christ to devise and execute effective plans for the accomplishment of those goals.[2]

The apostle Paul recognized the leadership function of elders when he said, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor" (1 Tim 5:17; cf. 1 Pet 5:3) which implies that they have some authority (Heb 13:17). The basic component of leadership should be directed toward the spiritual growth of the congregation, seeking the lost (cf. Luke 15:3-7), and evangelism (John 10:16). As leaders, elders influence and guide people by the same principles of service and love taught by Jesus Christ. There is no hierarchical pyramid in Christian leadership, but a servanthood leadership through love (Matt 23:11). Thus, the model of leadership is not of domination, but of service.[3] In this model, all members of the

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[1]Roy C. Naden, Your Spiritual Gifts: Making the Great Discovery (Berrien Springs, Michigan: IPD, 1989), 129.

[2]C. Peter Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1979), 156.

[3]"Leadership is a function, a process that moves and shifts from one person to another as the need and circumstance shift. But always it moves people, changes them, helps them to grow. It is a movement, a journey." Andrew T. LePeau, Path of Leadership (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 13. "In the kingdom of Jesus, and in the fellowship of His living church, leaders are servants who stoop to minister from the servant's

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congregation are equal and it is expected that they will live and function harmoniously, as in the physical body, having Jesus Christ as Head.

What is a leader? From a biblical perspective, a leader is one who works for the growth of the church guided by the ideal of service (Mark 10:44).[1] To be a leader is to exercise "influence" that inspires and moves persons to action, with a maximum of collaboration and a minimum of opposition.[2] They are measured by the integrity of their characters[3] and not only by their activities and success. As leaders, elders should develop plans for the church, and facilitate the development of a definition of collective mission so that all work may be effective.[4]

Another important aspect of elders as leaders is their ability to formulate and implement plans. The importance of planning is taught in the Scriptures. For example, after Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, he

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position and bring cleansing to the body of our Lord." Richards and Hoeldtke, 106.

[1]Ibid.

[2]Curso Para Preparación de Líderes (Brasilia: Ministerios de la Iglesia, Division Sudamericana, 1986), 5.

[3]Ellen G. White, Christian Leadership (Washington, D. C.: Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, 1985), 4-22.

[4]Leaders set plans for worship, nurture, preaching, evangelism, education, teaching, and service.

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proposed a plan for the conservation of Egypt and later on for the preservation of the people of Israel, because it was recognized as a plan from God (Gen 41:25-35; 41:39-41). Jesus Christ also mentioned the importance of planning in the parable of the tower. "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28). Planning is the process by which dreams and goals become reality in life and serve to move in a "coherent and comprehensive manner toward their realization."[1]

The apostle Paul understood this dimension of leadership when he planned to visit Spain (Rom 15:25,28). Also, in his letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul instructed his co-worker that elders should manage, plan, their own houses first before managing and planning in the local church (1 Tim 3:4,5). "The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but every one who is hasty comes only to want" (Prov 21:5). Elders should understand and implement comprehensive planning. As Ellen G. White asserted,

> Elders and those who have leading places in the church should give more thought to their plans for conducting the work. They should arrange matters so that every member of the church shall have a part to act, that none may lead an aimless life, but that all may accomplish

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[1]Benjamin S. Baker, Shepherding the Sheep (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1983), 40.

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what they can according to their several ability.[1] For this reason, a knowledge of the basic elements of church administration are necessary--for example how to set goals, delegate responsibilities (with corresponding authority), and how to evaluate performance.[2]

Surely one of the most important aspects of planning is to produce a mission statement. Mission statements clarify the reason for existence the long-term vision of the corporate body. The next step after establishing mission is to express the mission in immediate measurable goals. In this, elders have the responsibility to represent the members and to identify the needs to be addressed. When goals have been established, the congregation can move towards them. If this task is accomplished, it can facilitate success for the local congregation. Thus, for institutional effectiveness, it is necessary

> to start with **MISSION**, which is then translated into **GOALS**, which can then be reached by deciding which **METHODS** are appropriate and who will be both responsible and empowered to act, who then develop appropriate **INSTRUMENTS** to measure progress, which is then compared with the **MISSION**. And thus the loop continues year by year.[3]

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[1]Ellen G. White, "Ye are Laborers Together with God," Review and Herald, Sep 2, 1890, 529.

[2]Church management includes: identifying the needs, planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, communicating, evaluation, motivation, and budgeting.

[3]Roy C. Naden, "Understanding Your Culture Defining Your Mission," unpublished paper, 1992. Religious Education Department [sic], Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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What are some of the activities that elders should plan? They should be involved in planning all lines of missionary work.[1] Elders are also responsible for the church worship services. The Church Manual states,

> Under the pastor, or in the absence of a pastor, the elder is responsible for the services of the church and must either conduct them or arrange for someone to do so.[2]

This activity should be carefully addressed with the pastor so that the church may be fed a balanced spiritual diet. This annual plan will allow elders considerable time for study and preparation for their preaching. During the elders' council meetings, they should evaluate the preaching plan of the previous year, the present program of preaching, and the probable plan for the next year. The annual plan should be thoroughly discussed, and include a variety of themes including biblical books in appropriate sequence.

**Visitation and Nurture**

Shepherds should have knowledge of each one of their sheep. "I know my own and my own know me" (John 10:14). One method to know the sheep (the members) is by visitation.

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[1]SDA Church Manual, 58. "Those who are elected as elders and deacons should be ever be on alert that plans may be made and executed which will give every member of the church a share in active work for the salvation of souls. This is the only way in which the church can be preserved in a healthy, thriving condition." Ellen G. White, "God's Means for Diffusing Light," Review and Herald, December 19, 1912, 3.

[2]SDA Church Manual, 59.

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One aspect of visitation is perceived from the action of Jesus Christ who sent the twelve "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:6; Luke 9:1-6; cf. Luke 10:1-16). He Himself taught the importance of visitation by reaching people where they were. Therefore, visitation is an activity included in the ministry of shepherding.[1]

The basic purpose of visitation is to fulfill the ministry of shepherding--that is, nourishment, guidance, protection, and healing. For this reason, elders' visitation is sometimes achieved in the context of the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20). Elders should determine the purpose of the visitation in relation to the overall plan of the congregation. For example, they may visit to encourage attendance, to involve laity in evangelism, to accomplish evangelistic decisions,[2] or for some other special purposes. In this framework, elders' visitation may be seen as bringing the local church into the home.

On what basis should the elders visit the members of the church? When the elders visit the homes of the believers, the conversation should be guided to a spiritual dimension or to the felt needs. It is convenient to have a

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[1]The coming of Jesus Christ as "Immanuel" (God with us) is a supreme example of visitation (Matt 1:23; cf. Luke 1:68; John 3:16).

[2]Evangelism without visitation is worthless. See Mark Finley, Padded Pew or Open Doors (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1988), 79-131.

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blank form on which elders can write a brief description of the family and on which they also may report their visit.[1] If two elders visit together, they should arrange ahead of time who will lead in the conversation.[2]

It is essential that elders listen to the members. This, of course, involves not only hearing the words but the feelings behind the words.[3] Listening to members talk involves the process of understanding and love which build relationships. This is a task requiring patience and perception. Properly achieved, this action may provide solutions to many needs (cf. Mark 10:46-52; John 4:7-38; 3:1-21). Therefore, the primary element in visitation is the ability to listen--that is, listening with understanding and with all the heart.[4]

During the visit, elders may identify a problem and be able to analyze a cause. They should show the healing

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[1]For this purpose, a record system for church members should be kept in which includes as much information as possible. Johnson, 52.

[2]If the purpose of the visitation is to make a family Friday celebration or for evangelistic purposes, it is convenient to invite all members of the family.

[3]Duncan Buchanan, The Counseling of Jesus (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1985), 29.

[4]According to James D. Hamilton, this ministry is achieved by listening, responding, supporting, clarifying, interpreting, formulating, and guiding. James D. Hamilton, The Ministry of Pastoral Counseling (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1972), 59.

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power of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.[1] Elders should also recognize that reading the Bible is beneficial for Christian families. Therefore, they will select passages that meet needs.[2] Before departing, elders will always close the visit with a prayer, naming the needs, concerns, and joys of the family.[3] When members of a family wish to discuss a matter privately, it is important to talk in private place or to schedule another appointment.

The pastors in the Inca Union Mission have the responsibility to plan in advance for organizing pastoral visitations in their congregations throughout the district under their jurisdiction. Therefore, in the general plan of the district, the pastor and the elders of each congregation would establish the appropriate plan for visitation and pastoral care.[4] Ideally, elders could have groups of some

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[1]In the Inca Union Mission, pastors have several congregations to visit. In many cases, the church members live on distant areas from the pastor's residence, in places where there is a lack of professional assistance in counseling. Pastors visit a few times in a year the church or company in their districts. Therefore, a basic knowledge of pastoral counseling by the local church elders is necessary.

[2]See John G. Kruis, Quick Reference for Counseling (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1988).

[3]Cf. Rom 1:8-11; 1 Cor 1:4; Eph 1:16-23; Phil 1:3-11; Col 1:3,4, 9-12; 1 Thess 1:2,3.

[4]"Monografía de Planificación" (Brasilia: Seminario Adventista Latinoamericano de Teología, n/y), 1.

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ten families[1] for which they are responsible all in geographic proximity to their homes. This demands considerable work, but it is the only basis for consistent nurture and evangelization.[2]

Active Members

Elders as shepherds care for all the flock (cf. Ps 23:2,3; Isa 40:11). As the apostle Paul stated, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God" (Acts 20:28). Paul was referring to the well-being of the believers which includes both faith and practice. From a biblical perspective, there is to be no separation in life between being and doing; they are to be fully integrated (1 Sam 16:6-13; Matt 23:1-11; 1 Thess 5:23; Rom 2:13; 2 John 2). Thus, acquisition of doctrine is not only an intellectual exercise, it is intrinsically united with the incorporation of these doctrines into a Christian life style

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[1]"For maximum effectiveness the flock should be between 8 and 10 families." Roland Emil Niednagel, "The Development of Lay Pastors (Elder/Shepherds) at Cornerstone Church: A Five Year Plan" (D.Min. project, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), 139.

[2]"Monografía de Planificación," 1-4. In this context, Arnaldo Enríquez has developed an evangelistic manual in which visitation to all members of the congregation is the key element in the program of preparation for evangelism. The purpose of this plan is to encourage them in their spiritual life, to promote a family encounter, social relations, and missionary outreach. Arnaldo Enríquez, Festival de Siembra y Cosecha (Lima: Editorial Imprenta Unión, 1988), 7-10.

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(2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 3:18). Therefore, elders are not only dealing with the communication of truth, but with the communication of truth in ways that influence the whole life. For this reason, they will help the believers to grow spiritually by providing them with the basic knowledge of the Word of God, relational experiences with one another and God, and witnessing experiences with others.[1]

New Members

Elder should also be responsible for visiting new members to encourage and to provide support. Their mission to these new members would be to integrate them into the life of the congregation. Therefore, they would introduce them to their joys, privileges, and responsibilities as new church members and in the practice of Christian stewardship in all areas of their lives.

One of the goals of these visits is to help new members to achieve spiritual maturity; therefore, elders will consider additional biblical studies in their homes. It is appropriate to introduce new members into the plan of Bible study for the whole family for the whole life span. Elders may also need to provide materials about health and family relations. In this way, new members can discover the full benefits of their new lives in Christ.

In the context of a conservation plan, elders may

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[1]Gene A. Getz, Sharpening the Focus of the Church (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 108-120.

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invite--when the time is appropriate--other church members who live in geographical proximity to include the new members in a missionary project. Under certain circumstances, elders will have in their zones some weekly fellowships to study the Scriptures and to pray, and celebrate sundown on Friday and Sabbath evenings.[1]

Discouraged Members

In addition, elders may provide comfort to discouraged members, showing them the unlimited power of comfort and peace found in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 1:3-5) which is the biblical pattern for pastoral care.[2] In practicing this ministry, it is important to have in mind the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the process of life restoration and healing (John 14:15-18, 25-27). In this context, elders are instruments of the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of both members and nonmembers to produce well-being and peace. Therefore, through the elders, the local church may accomplish the functions of healing, guiding, and reconciliation.[3]

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[1]Elders should be aware of different kinds of homes in contemporary society. For example, homes in which there are single parents and children, persons never married, divorce, or couples who never have children.

[2]It is through Christ that members encounter peace (John 14:27; Eph 2:14). It is Christ who has given to each member the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:16-21).

[3]According to Hugh Lee Eichelberger, the goal of pastoral care is wholeness, unity, reconciliation, and restoration. Hugh Lee Eichelberger, "A Model for Training

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If elders feel during their visitations that they cannot adequately care for the situation, they must refer it to the pastor or, in consultation with the person visited, to a professional counselor. In each of these cases, elders will have in mind the ethical principle of privacy.[1]

Elders will report to the pastor after each visit. Usually this report is presented in the council of elders in which priority needs are discussed. However, there is some information that should always be kept in strict privacy. They should acknowledge the difference between a friendly visit and visitation that includes the processing of healing emotions.

**Teaching/Evangelism**

Teaching is the mandate of Christ to the church (Matt 20:16-20) that the disciples began to fulfill as soon as they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:42; cf. John 16:13). Elders as teachers should follow the same mandate, planning to teach in ways that children, youth, and adults are all properly fed from the Word of God. For this reason,

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Presbyterian Church Officers to Provide Pastoral Care to Members of their Congregations" (D.Min. dissertation, Columbia Theological Seminary, 1986), 32.

[1]The knowledge of the ethical principles of the country where the local church is located is appropriate. It is necessary that elders know the ethical standards for counseling. The code of ethics provides insights that elders may use in different situations. See Gerald Corey, Marianne Schneider Corey, and Patrick Callanan, Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions (Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1988).

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it is imperative that elders know the Scriptures (cf. 2 Tim 2:15) and incorporate it in their own lives. They will teach the Scriptures believing what they teach (2 Cor 4:11-13), understand the psychology of human nature, and the process of communicating[1] the truth efficiently. It is important that elders "be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9).

The Study of the Scriptures

According to the book of Acts elders participated in the council of Jerusalem and were involved in the decision regarding the issue of circumcision (Acts 15:4,6,22,23). Similarly, elders should be prepared to be involved in formulating and in shaping doctrine. In fulfillment of their teaching ministry, local church elders should be prepared to discuss theological issues and be able to take a position in explaining clearly Adventist doctrines and rejecting heresy.[2]

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[1]"Teaching/learning process requires both the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. One without the other is inadequate." Kenneth O. Gangel and Howard G. Hendricks, eds., Christian Educator's Handbook on Teaching (England: Victor Books, 1988), 33.

[2]"There is a wide field for the elders and the helpers in every church. They are to feed the flock of God with pure provender, thoroughly winnowed from the chaff, the poisonous mixture of error. You who have any part to act in the church of God, be sure that you act wisely in feeding the flock of God; for its prosperity much depends upon the quality of this food." E. G. White, MS 59, 1900, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs,

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Elders need a basic knowledge of the biblical principles of interpretation[1] and exegesis.[2] A primary task of the elders is not only to teach the members the Scriptures, but also to teach them how to study the Scriptures for themselves. One of the greatest privileges that God has given to His children is the opportunity to study His Word. This has been the guiding ideal for the people of Israel and the Christian church through all generations (Deut 6:6-9; 2 Tim 3:16). They will assure the members that a knowledge of the principles of biblical interpretation is the privilege not only of skilled theologians, but of every Christian believer.

As teachers, elders will plan their own meaningful quiet time with God. The Christian experience of elders will only be authentic if they dedicate time to personal study and prayer. This experience is the foundation by

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Michigan.

[1]See Gordon M. Hyde, ed., A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics (Washington, D. C.: Biblical Research Committee, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1974); Hasel, Understanding the Living Word of God; Hans K. LaRondelle, The Israel of God in Prophecy (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1983).

[2]For example, in Bible classes, it is important to prepare doctrinal lessons with fewer passages in their full context.

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which they will enrich and influence the members of the congregation.[1]

## Teacher Performance

Elders as teachers have many opportunities for service, for example, as teachers in Sabbath School, baptismal classes, evangelistic seminars, classes, and Bible-studies.

A vital aspect of elders' teaching is to lead the members to discover their spiritual gifts so that they too may be equipped for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12). Following this plan will provide the local church with a permanent pool of spiritual services since all members have been called to ministry.

In addition, elders who are the best teachers are continual learners. They need to develop study habits in order to make their teaching most effective striking a balance between method and content.

## Elements of Biblical Teaching

Elders, as teachers, should know the basic components of a curriculum design--that is, a plan for guiding learning experiences. The basic components include: the desired outcomes, the content, the method, and

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[1]"The effective teacher always teaches from the overflow of a full life." Howard G. Hendricks, Teaching to Change Lives (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1987), 27.

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evaluation.[1] The outcome describes the explicit behavior desired written in terms of the student's action. This will then determine the content of the lesson or course. The content should be planned for scope and sequence and learning complexity of the cognitive domain to maximize learning mastery.[2] Finally, curriculum assessment is the process of evaluating learner outcomes.

In the process of presenting the lesson, elders are instruments in the hand of God to communicate His truth. Thus, lessons should be presented in such a way that students will respond to the Word of God and to the influence of the Holy Spirit who will change their lives. This process will produce visible fruit.

The effectiveness of each presentation depends on one's contact with God, the clarity and method of the truth presented, and the opportunity for interaction with the students. In both preparation and presentation, the teachers are collaborators with the Holy Spirit. Teaching Christian doctrine is a service of love which grows in both grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). Therefore, elders should recognize that the students need pleasant eye-contact and unconditional love. Living the

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[1]It is important to have a format of the design that includes objectives, content, activities, evaluation.

[2]In the elaboration of objectives, elders should be aware of the major categories of cognitive domain such as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

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example of Jesus, Christian teachers realize that students are not changed by command, but by being loved. What then is the ultimate purpose of teaching? That elders may become channels of God's redemptive grace.

How can the presentation of a biblical lesson help students in their personal salvific experiences with Jesus Christ? Students have not adequately learned if they have only a cognitive understanding of truth without the experience of the truth incorporated into their lives under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In other words, real learning is an inner activity, including the assumptions of values, which involves transformation of the life (Mark 12:30).

*Baptism and Lord' Supper.* There are two vital celebrations that regularly involve the participation of church elders: baptism and the Lord's supper. Elders should be able to conduct a baptismal class (a teaching function) to prepare new believers to be incorporated into the local church. Since baptism is a prerequisite to church membership, elders will ensure that prospective new members are well-prepared not only in the fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventist, but also in the practice of Christian life. Sometimes, when the candidates are ready for baptism, they may have a special session with the council of elders

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for examination and encouragement.[1] It is important that elders teach the prospective members the meaning of baptism by immersion (Matt 3:6; Mark 1:5; John 3:23; Mark 1:9,10; Acts 8:38,39; cf. Rom 6:1-6; Col 2:12,13). Although there is no specific biblical command for elders to administer the rite, under certain circumstances, elders may officiate the rite of baptism in consultation with the conference president.[2]

The Lord's Supper should be planned, having in mind a clear understanding by the whole congregation of the meaning of the ordinance.[3] Therefore, elders in their teaching ministry would instruct believers as to why it is important to participate in the rite. According to the church manual, this ceremony is celebrated once per quarter.[4] It "should be a most sacred and joyous occasion to the congregation, as well as to the minister or elder."[5] Elders are responsible for conducting the service and they also may preside.[6] This ceremony will give to the

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[1]SDA Church Manual, 42,43.

[2]Ibid., 59,118,119.

[3]The Lord's Supper is the participation of the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ as manifestation of faith in His sacrifice and the hope of His second coming (1 Cor 10:16; 11:23-26).

[4]Ibid., 78.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., 59.

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congregation a deeper corporate communion with Christ and an assurance of cleansed lives in preparation for His second coming. Thus, elders should teach personally, especially in their visitation and collectively in meetings and sermons, the importance and blessing of the communion service.[1]

*Sabbath Worship*. The apostles and the early disciples worshiped on Sabbath. For example, Paul and Barnabas met in the synagogues on Sabbath, or in a place of prayer (Act 13:13-44; Act 16:11-13) where they met with Jewish and Gentiles worshipers. After they believed in Jesus as Messiah and Redeemer, they still continued worshiping in Sabbath. The basic components of Sabbath worship included reading the Word of God, exhortation, and teaching (Act 17:2,3; 18:4). The Apostles and the believers participation on Sabbath worship indicated their acceptance of the Sabbath as the day of the Lord.

According to the Scriptures, the Sabbath was established in God's creation. Thus, the Sabbath is a memorial of creation and was blessed and sanctified by the Lord (Gen 2:1-3). The Sabbath is also a perpetual sign of the covenant (Exod 31:13; 34:27; Ezek 20:12,20) with His people. Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Sabbath is a day chosen to worship our Creator and Redeemer (Exod 20:8-

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[1]Ibid., 78-83. It is also suggested that in harmony with Jesus' instructions, the ceremony of foot washing will precede the Lord's supper (John 13:12-15).

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11; Rev 1:10). Therefore, in harmony with God's instructions (Deut 6:4-9), church elders should teach the members how the day is to be observed. It is important to note that one of the focus of instruction should be centered in building a deep relationship with God and celebration.

In harmony with its nature, Sabbath worship continues its relevance today. Since the "Sabbath worship service is the most important of all the meetings of the church,"[1] elders should be responsible for its planning and they may preside at the worship services. According to the order of service, a careful preparation should be made in local congregations. Elders may pray, read the Scriptures, and preach the sermon. For this reason, it is appropriate to have a calendar in which elders are scheduled for all of those activities.

## Pastor as Supervisor/Trainer

This model focuses on church elders' functions as facilitators and supervisors of church life. Pastors are leaders in a broader sense who follow the instructions of the apostle Paul to "equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:12).[2] To achieve this important ministry, pastors, through their educative mission, may help elders to

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[1]Church Manual, 59.

[2]Douglas R. Kilcher, "The Minister as an Equipper," in The Adventist Minister, eds. C. Raymond Holmes and Douglas R. Kilcher (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1991), 99-108.

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discover and develop their potential gifts and abilities. Traditionally, pastors have been known as preachers. However, from a biblical perspective, they also should function as shepherds, leaders, and educators. As educators, they provide instruction and inspiration so elders may be effective in their ministry.

The council of elders should discuss elders' education and establish priorities for a training curriculum. The pastor and the church elders will then look for teachers who are specialists in the areas of planned instruction. An instructor may be the local pastor, a neighbor local pastor, a leader from the Conference or the Union, a teacher from Inca Union University, or someone from outside the local church organization.

## Implementation

After developing the curricular plan of elders' education, pastors would decide the best time for this instruction.

The concept of small training groups may be important. Jesus Christ chose twelve to be with Him, and after a period of preparation He sent them to teach and preach. The same principle was practiced by the apostle Paul and his associates. In the same way, pastors may gather a group of elders in a familiar atmosphere and instruct them, in the apprenticeship model, to accomplish their functions. Since elders are, in reality, in a

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training process for their local congregation, the principle of teaching by doing would be prominent. The idea is to prepare competent leaders to care for the local church so that the district's pastor may become more involved in evangelism and church planting--his special work.

If needed, the pastor may meet with the elders on a weekly basis to study a specific topic in the modality of a seminar or field work. They may gather in the pastor's home[1] in groups of eight to ten to discuss certain pastoral issues. Some practical details for the instructional session include: meeting in a comfortable atmosphere where there are appropriate physical arrangements, (e.g. sitting in a circle so all can see and easily talk with each other).

Because of the nature of the process of training, local pastors should understand the basics of instructional product development. This knowledge will enable pastors to prepare their own courses and manuals of instruction in training. Briefly, this process includes the writing of non-ambiguous objectives, developing an instructional sequence that facilitates mastering, and some practical

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[1]Itanel Ferraz, "Preparo do Obreiro Voluntário" (Brasilia: Seminário Adventista Latinoamericano de Teologia, 1981), 81. They will determine the best place in which they may receive the instruction in an pleasant environment.

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methods of evaluating learning mastery.[1] In the construction of their objectives, pastors will identify the learner as the elder of the local congregation. Therefore, the objective would always focus on them.

## Regional Meetings

Another method for the training of elders in a specific district is to include them in regional pastoral meetings. Traditionally, church districts are assembled quarterly for planning, reporting, evaluation, and baptisms. Usually, the meetings are held during weekends. Therefore, as a part of their regular program, they may invite pastors and elders of neighboring districts to participate in specific seminars, workshops, or courses. For this reason, the district's pastor and the leaders of the Conference need to coordinate the plan of action. The time of report may be used as an opportunity to introduce some case study learning--that is, an analysis of certain problems to discover causes and probable solutions.

In major cities, some Conferences have monthly Sunday gatherings in which all the leaders of churches of a determined zone attend a meeting in one of the churches. These meetings may be used to teach biblical doctrines, the history of the denomination, and principles of teaching and

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[1]Richard E. Schutz, Robert L. Baker, and Vernon S. Gerlach, "Stating Educational Outcomes," In Instructional Product Development, eds. Robert L. Baker and Richard E. Schutz (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1971), 1-64.

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learning. It is important that during the schedule they have time for reports and the evaluation of instruction. The idea is that they also may become instructors in certain areas of ministry so that they may conduct seminars and workshops in their own congregations.

## Summary

This study suggests a model of elders' ministry to be implemented in local churches in the Inca Union Mission. The basic elements of the model are based in the Scriptures in which elders are viewed as shepherds, teachers, and leaders. The model has two important components: the function of the pastor as trainer/organizer and the selection of elders on the basis of giftedness and character, then organized and trained.

It is evident that elders fulfill important ministry: primarily leadership, visitation, and teaching/evangelism. As leaders, they should help to define the mission and goal for the local church and move them to reach and involve the laity. As shepherds, they will visit the members of the congregation, in an atmosphere of peace, providing for their needs. As teachers, they will become instruments of the Lord to produce change in their minds.

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# CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION

## Summary

There has been considerable uncertainty regarding the nature, functions, and responsibilities of church elders. Much emphasis has been placed on professional ministry and little attention has been given to the selection, education, and ministry of lay elders. However, from the biblical perspective, both local and universal elders (pastors) are responsible for the leadership of the local churches. Although they minister from different perspectives, their functions are is some respects quite similar. While pastors are trained in colleges and seminaries, elders are left with little or no training in the important areas of their ministry.

In chapter 2, the hermeneutical presuppositions and the review of eldership literature were considered. In this study, the Scriptures were the primary source. Thus, the study of church elders presupposed the full authority of the Scriptures for understanding the New Testament church



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organization and elders' functions.[1]

According to other literature examined, the ministry of church elders has been an important ecclesiastical issue. Three different perspectives of the meaning of elders were selected on the basis of their unique understanding of the nature and functions of church elders (or bishops,) namely: the Presbyterian Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

From the Presbyterian perspective, there are both ruling and teaching elders. However, among their theologians there was disagreement regarding this separation. Some authors suggested that 1 Tim 5:17 refers only to one group of officers; others, that it alluded to two groups.

From the Roman Catholic perspective, bishops, (elders) are successors of the apostles who have ecclesiastical authority in the hierarchy and sacramental orders. In their structure, Roman Catholic theologians distinguish between the ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. They view the bishop as a leader, pastor, and teacher of local congregations.

From the Seventh-day Adventist perspective, church structure in the New Testament suggests another model that might be utilized in contemporary church organization.

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[1]Old and New Testaments are the authoritative source for truth and doctrine and the indispensable standard for faith and practice.

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Seventh-day Adventists believe that the church structure has both local and universal dimensions. At the universal level, pastors are appointed to minister in a group of churches. At the local level, elders are selected and ordained to function as leaders in a local congregation. SDAs also believe that the terms elders and bishops are interchangeable and refer to the same group of persons based on biblical evidence (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5-7). In SDA literature, there was consensus, among the scholars, regarding the meaning of the terms πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος. They asserted that the Scriptures use the terms πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος as interchangeable terms referring to the same group of persons. It is clear to those theologians that elders function as leaders, pastors, and teachers in local congregations. However, little has been said about how they may best fulfill their functions.

There were different opinions about the historical background of the elders. Some scholars viewed elders as a the outcome of the Jewish synagogue system; others thought that they received only the structure from Judaism and that their nature and mission were different. Others suggested that the most important background would be found in the Old Testament LXX. Certainly, the apostles and early believers adopted a system with which they were familiar. In this sense, synagogues became a center for the proclamation and teaching of the message of the resurrected Messiah.

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Regarding their qualifications, the literature pointed to 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 as key texts for the selection of church elders. Some authors classified these qualifications in categories. There were discrepancies however because some emphasized the idea of character over spiritual gifts. Since qualifications refer to the whole person, including being and doing, both character and spiritual gifts are important. The qualifications stated in the epistles were an affirmation of the integrity of Christian character as an important element in the process of selection. However, there is no known study that details the process of the selection of elders on the basis of spiritual gifts and character, and their subsequent training and supervision in local ministry.

Most of the literature emphasized that the qualifications applied only to men. On the other hand, a small body of literature recognized the important role of women in the home, the school, and the church. Certainly, women belong to the kingdom of God and receive spiritual gifts the same as men do. But there is still some controversy over the selection and ordination of women as elders in local congregations despite General Conference actions authorizing it.

In general, there was abundant information regarding the nature, function, and responsibilities of church elders; on the other hand, little was said about how elders may

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accomplish their task and what training they may need in order to work more efficiently.

Chapter 3 considered the theological foundation for the educational ministry of the church. Old and New Testaments teach that education and teaching are important dimensions of church mission. According to the Scriptures, God is the Teacher of Israel Who now is manifested through the ministry of Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1,2). To fulfill His mission, the Lord instructed Israel how to teach the truth to following generations. Thus, the methods described to transmit one's religious heritage were the family, the priests, the prophets, and the elders who fulfilled the teaching ministry.

Priests were not only responsible for the ceremonial rites in the sanctuary, they also were responsible for explaining to the people the meaning of the sacrifices. Prophets were called by God to bring about revival and reformation by obeying the Scriptures. Finally, the elders were responsible for teaching, judging, and interceding for the congregation. From the Old Testament perspective, there were specific instructions for teaching the Word of God throughout all generations.

One of the most prominent promises of the Old Testament was the mission of the future Messiah Who would function as the Teacher of Israel. This was one of the distinctive differences between the teaching ministry of

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Jesus Christ and the teaching of rabbis and scribes. He, as the predicted Messiah, while functioning as Priest, Prophet, and King, communicated the good news of the kingdom of God as Teacher.

One of the characteristics of Jesus as Teacher was His servant attitude in the fulfillment of His mission. As Teacher, He taught these principles not only by speaking but by His own example and sacrifice. He taught His disciples that the principles of church government were not like other institutions in the world but by the inherent manifestation of service and humility in their leadership.

Certainly, the ministry of teaching--including healing and restoration--was the most prominent function of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. As Teacher, He had compassion for people and provided for their needs. He was an itinerant Teacher who communicated with people where they were--that is, in the synagogues, by the sea, in the cities and villages, in the temple, boats, and houses. These informal settings were utilized for the purpose of preaching and teaching the kingdom of God. Moreover, His ministry included the process of training others. In this context, He called and instructed the Twelve by close companionship for the continuation of His mission.

Finally, He taught the Scriptures with authority because of His extensive knowledge of the Scriptures. But He taught the Torah from a new spiritual perspective. He

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showed that all the Scriptures center on His mission and sacrifice and He rejected the error of those who claimed to be teachers of the people and were not. After His resurrection, He expressed the necessity to continue the church mission by making disciples, teaching, and baptizing them (Matt 28:18-20). In doing so, the disciples followed the same principles of service, love, and compassion demonstrated by their Master.

After Jesus' ascension, the disciples continued with the mission entrusted to them. Church growth and preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles made further church organization necessary. The apostles and their co-workers organized local congregations in which they appointed local church elders who functioned as shepherds, leaders, and teachers.

At this early stage, the disciples witnessed in the temple, synagogue, and homes as a fulfillment of the commission entrusted to them by the Lord. Paul and his associates focused the attention of their ministry on the Gentiles, although first they visited the Jewish synagogues in each city. The apostles taught, preached, and took care of groups of churches, visiting and encouraging the believers.

Paul's epistles show his concern for the maturation and well-being of the church in general, and the local church in particular. He and his co-workers continued, on a permanent basis, the ministry of shepherding, teaching, and

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supervising the believers, following the principles of love, compassion, and warm fellowship during their missionary tours.

For the development of the church, the apostles were distributed in regional territories in which they took care of multiple churches. A model of church organization is clearly seen from this early beginning. On a universal level, Paul and his associates served a group of churches, and on the local level, elders were selected to serve in the local churches. Thus, elders continued in the ministry of the apostles, giving the believers a sense of unity, teaching doctrine, and caring for their spiritual lives. Dramatic church growth soon created the need for further church organization in which local church elders were important components.

Who were the elders? They were local church leaders responsible for shepherding, leading, and teaching in the local congregation. They were selected by the church and the apostles under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the elders' most important mission was both to minister for spiritual growth and to equip the believers for the work of ministry--that is, to involve all members in the fulfillment of the mission and purpose of the church. They took care of the whole congregation, including the children, youth, and adult believers. As leaders called by God, they

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were responsible under their Principle Shepherd, Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:25).

Paul's most important instruction regarding the function of the elders is found in the encounter at Miletus with the elders at Ephesus (Act 20:17-35). The apostle Paul declared to them to "take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God which he obtained with the blood of his own son" (Act 20:28). This instruction is still relevant for elders' ministry today.

In chapter 4 this study proposed an educational model by which elders may serve according to the multiplicity of their functions--that is, pastoring, leading, and teaching. From a biblical perspective, the shepherd image may illustrate the variety of functions that elders fulfill. Elders, as shepherds, have great responsibility under God and the church to care for all the members of the congregation in an atmosphere of love, compassion, and sacrifice.

A model of elders' ministry is built on the descriptions in the New Testament following the instructions of the apostle Paul regarding their qualifications, their functions, and the discovery of their spiritual gifts. Elders' qualifications may be outlined in six categories (see figure 2). In synthesis, their qualifications focus on their whole lives expressed in their characters, family

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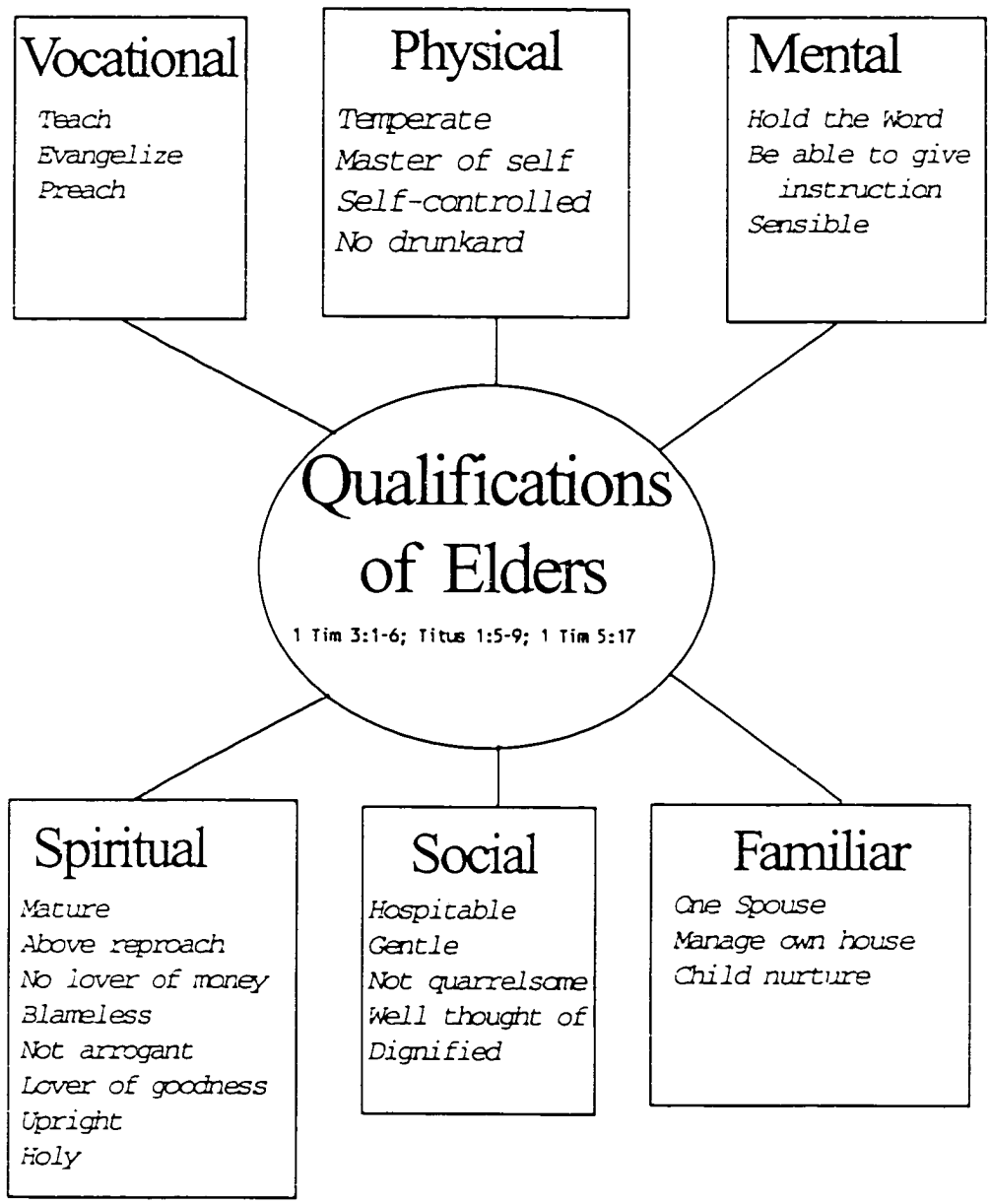


Fig. 2. Qualifications of Elders

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relations, and their knowledge of the Scriptures. Under the pastor's supervision, elders are selected and organized, taking into consideration the expectations and needs of the congregation.

After selection, the pastor and council of elders implement a program of training for those who are new in their office and for those who need to improve their ministry. Some of the areas of instruction which are often inherent to their functions are pastoral ministry, pastoral counseling, hermeneutics, a knowledge of biblical doctrines, the psychology of learning, and biblical preaching. All such training is developed to help elders to improve their efficiency in ministry.

This model posits that elders are primarily responsible for leadership, visitation/nurture, and teaching/evangelism. In this model, spiritual gifts for ministry are grouped in three categories (see figure 3). As leaders, elders would provide direction and vision to their local congregations; therefore, they would be responsible for planning all missionary work established through a mission statement and the resultant goals. This elders' leadership is fulfilled through proper methodology and implementation (see figure 4). To fulfill their ministry of visitation, they are responsible for visiting each family under their jurisdiction and to provide for their well-being and integration into church life. In this function, elders

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Holy Spirit

Spiritual Gifts

Equipping the saints for the work of ministry

| Leadership<br>Typically has such gifts as: | Visitation/nurture<br>Typically has such gifts as: | Teaching<br>Typically has such gifts as: |
|---|---|---|
| Wisdom | Discernment | Knowledge |
| Leadership | Giving | Teaching |
| Administration | Faith | Evangelism |
| Apostleship | Shepherding | Prophecy |

Fig. 3. Spiritual Gifts for Ministry

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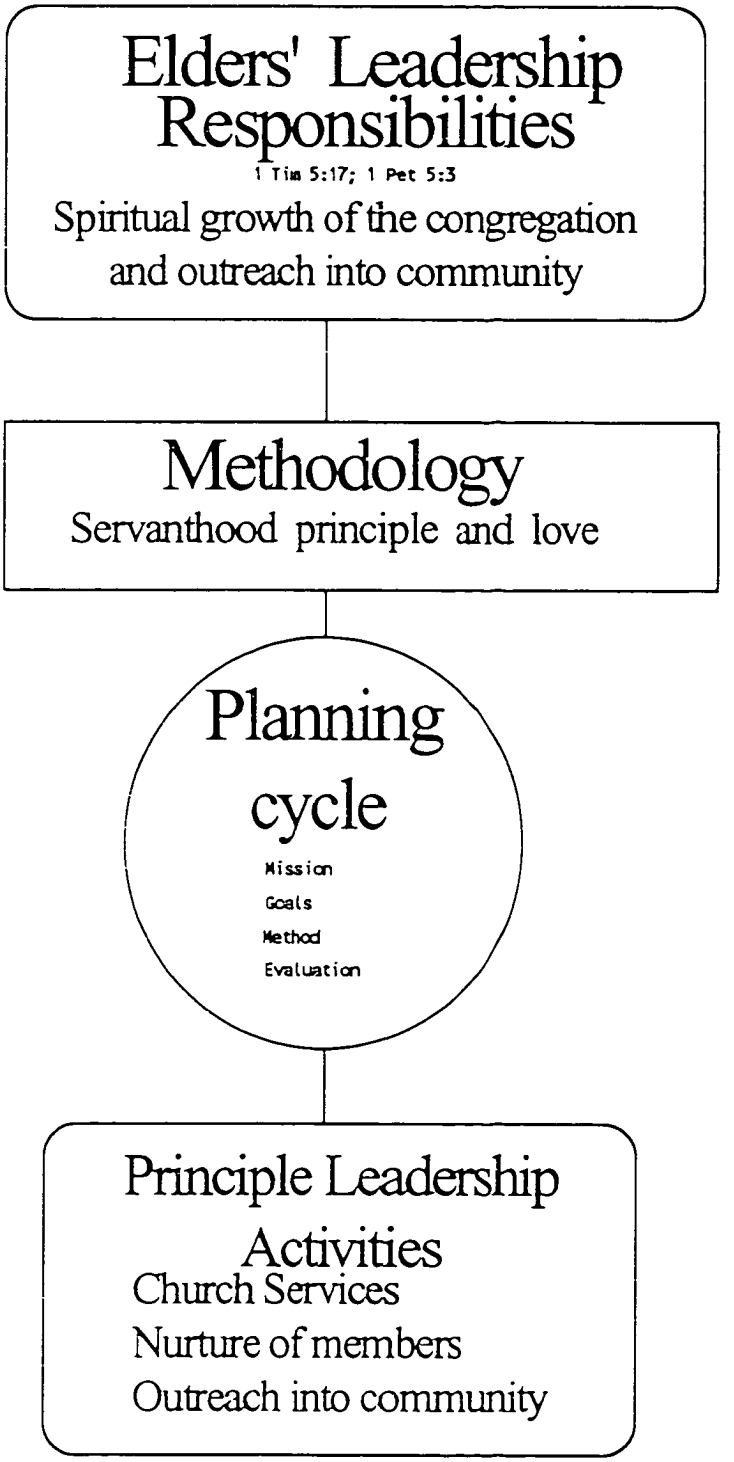


Fig. 4. Leadership for Service

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are also sometimes involved in counseling as they listen to the needs of the members and seek appropriate solutions. Elders are instruments of the Lord who through their work and influence seek to create peace in the lives of the believers. The basic purpose of visitation is to fulfill the ministry of shepherding--that is, to provide nourishment, guidance, protection, and healing. Organization for visitation is achieved by the commitment of elders to minister families (see figure 5).

Finally, teaching is an indispensable activity fulfilled by the elders. Therefore, in the fulfillment of their ministry, elders are instruments of God in the transmission of truth found in the Scriptures. They should not only teach the truth, they also need to teach the members how to study the Scriptures by themselves. Elders should remember that in order to keep their classes alive, they should have a permanent program of study. As teachers, they will be able to conduct a Bible class in which prospective members will embrace the church's fundamental beliefs as revealed in Scripture which center in the person of Jesus Christ. The teaching ministry functions by knowing the method, content, and nature of the learner (see figure 6).

To achieve the implementation of this model, pastors--universal elders--are responsible for the process of training and supervision. A table of basic training for

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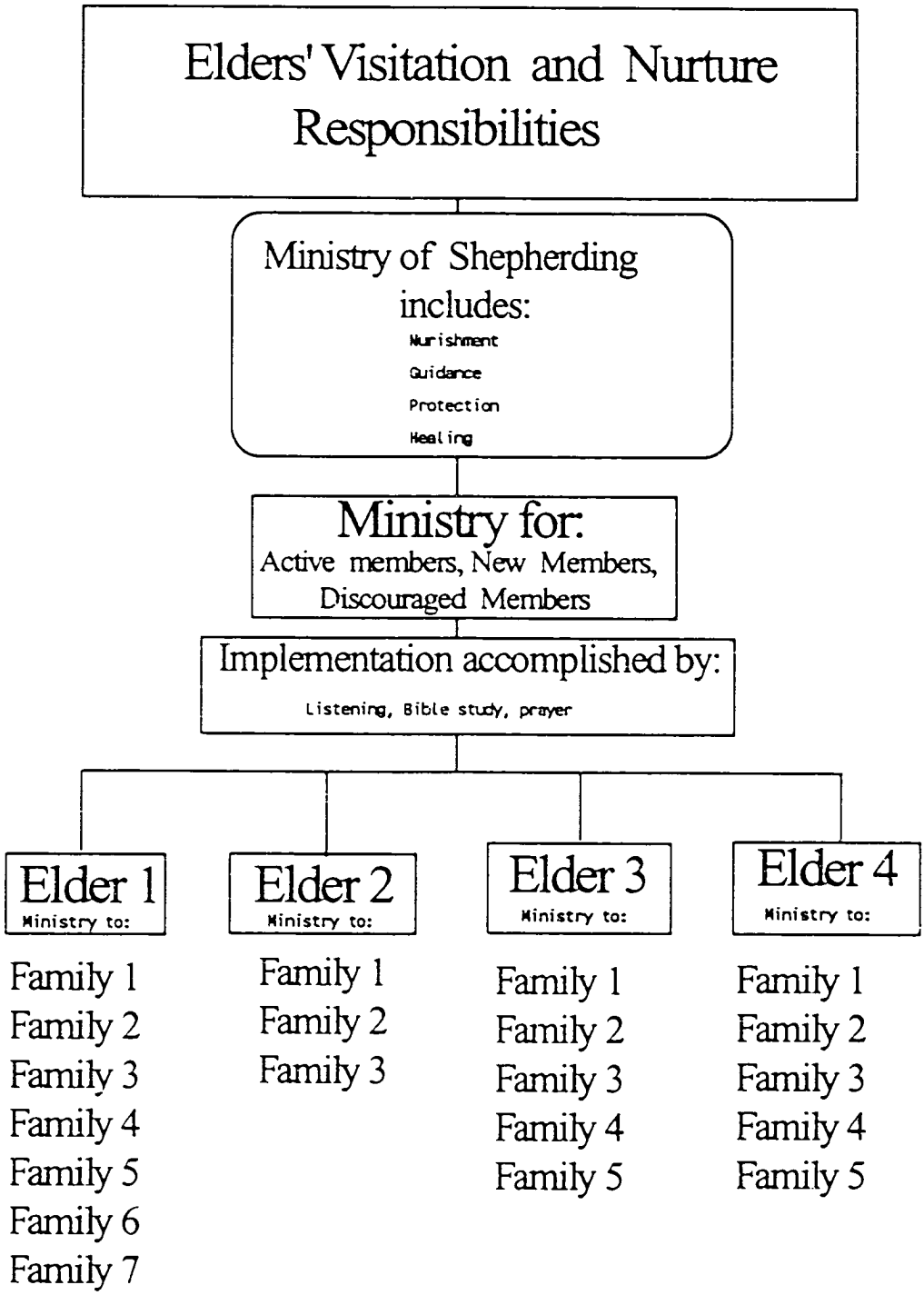


Fig. 5. Organization for Visitation

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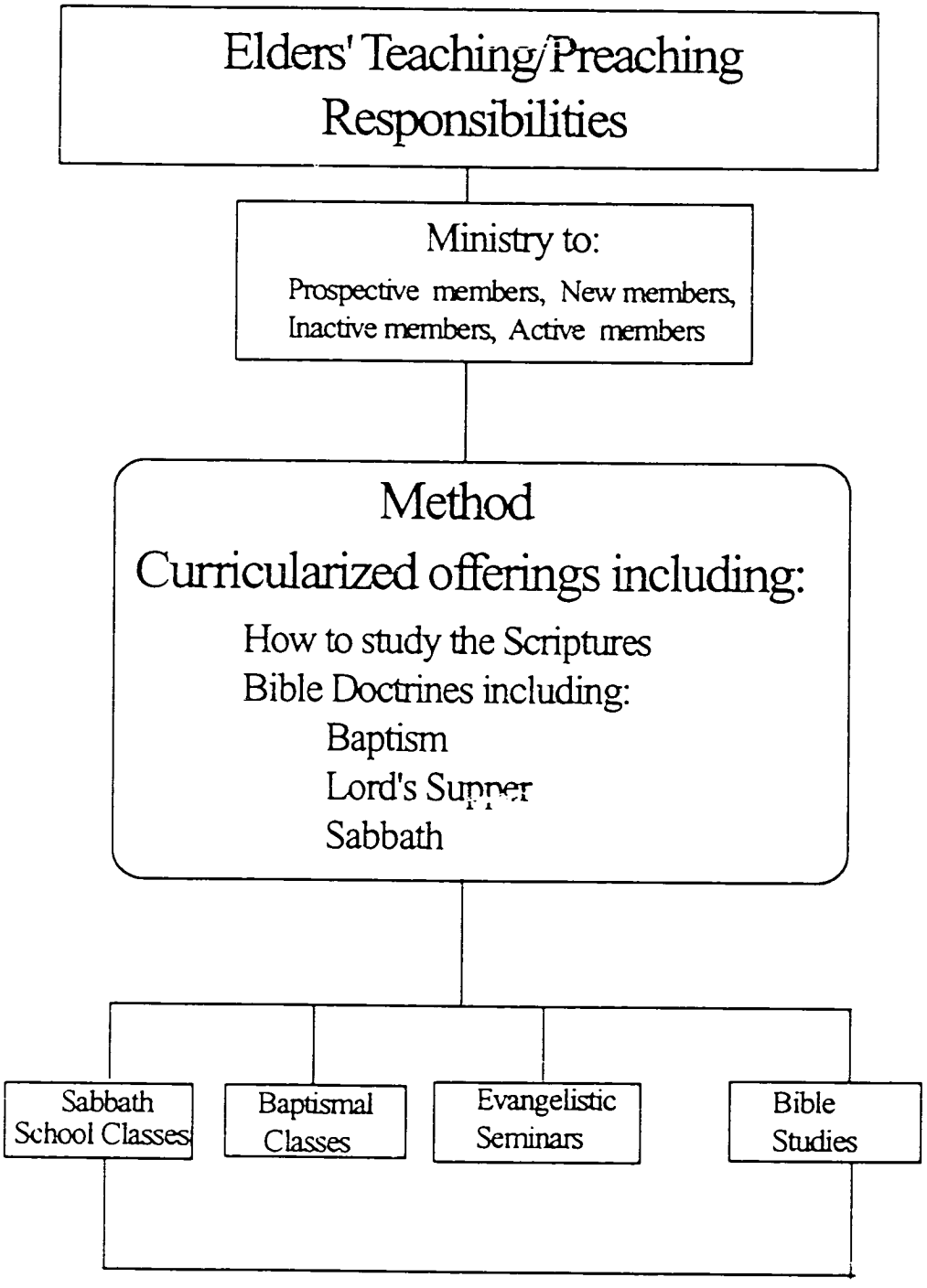


Fig. 6. Elders' Teaching Ministry

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elders is proposed which includes their inherent ministry functions (see figure 7). The key element of this model is the involvement of pastors in the supervision and educational ministry of church elders. Properly trained, elders become an extension of the ministry of professional ministers.

## Implications

Elders' ministry needs to be restored to its proper place in church organization. This model illustrates that elders are spiritual leaders of the church; therefore, they should serve in collaboration with professional ministers. Among elders and pastors there is no distinction by rank or hierarchy. They function harmoniously in the context of local and universal church organization. Therefore, it is necessary to respect elders for the value they offer to the church.

Traditionally, pastors have been primarily evaluated by the number of persons baptized in their churches. Certainly, this is one factor for evaluation. However, in Perú credit for church growth is in great measure due to the consistent work of the laity. Since pastors are responsible for training church elders, they may also be evaluated by their capacity to train elders and the efficiency of their performance measured by both spiritual and kingdom growth.

The fact that pastors take part in elders' education implies also that they need to be prepared to achieve this

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# Table of Basic Training for Elders

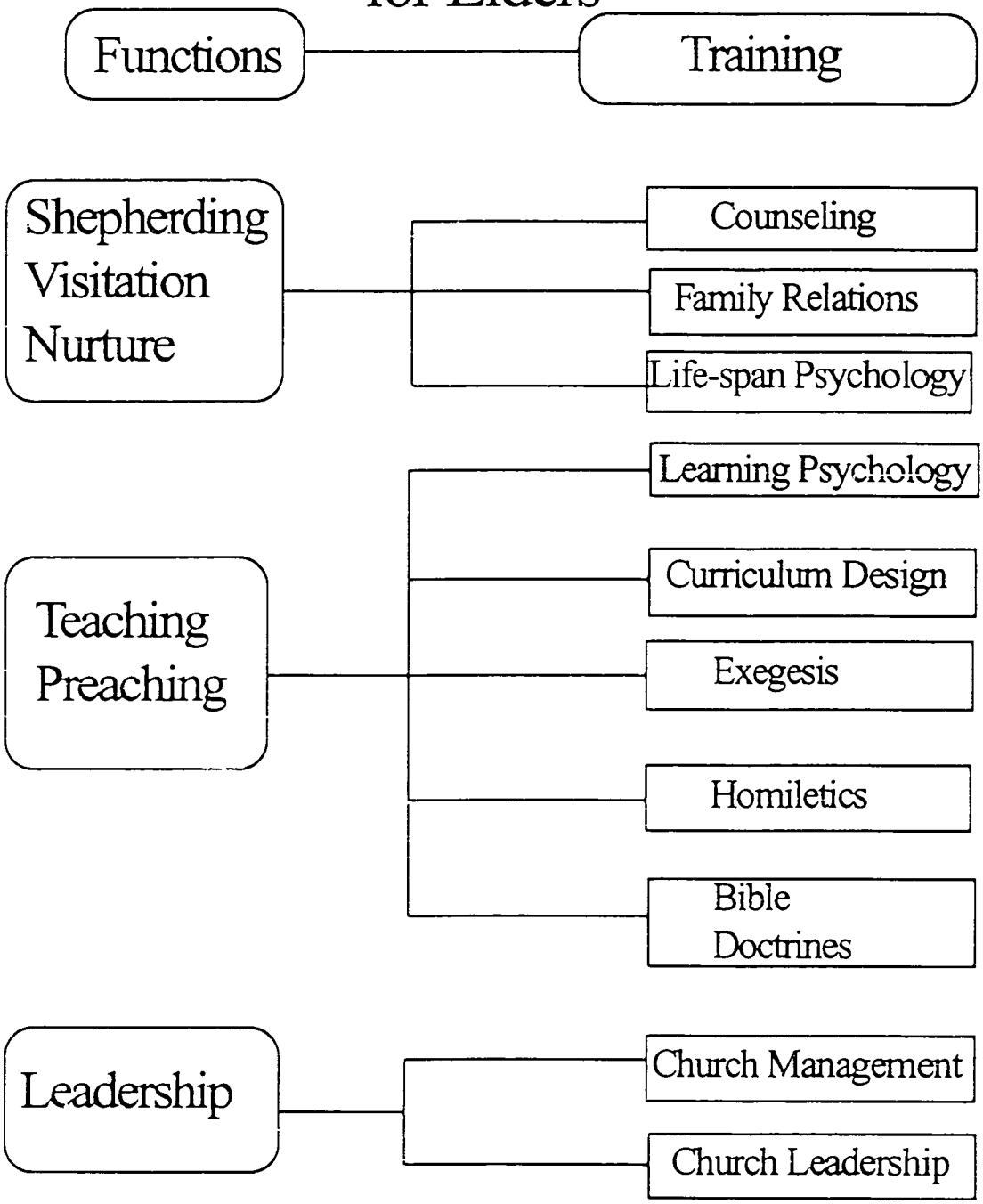


Fig. 7. Training Curricula

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function. Traditionally pastors have been trained as preachers and theologians, but they also need to be prepared as teachers. Therefore, this model suggests that seminaries and colleges should include in their core of study courses related to the teaching ministry. Seminaries may include such courses as teaching/learning psychology, curriculum design, instructional product development, life-span psychology, and character development. This core should not be optional but as a foundational core for the ministerial training so that they may be equipped to fulfill the important function of educating local elders in harmony with the church educative mission.

According to the model proposed, elders and pastors should be considered partners in their ministry because, from a biblical perspective, they are all shepherds of the flock. Therefore, they should work together, encouraging each other and developing plans for the maturity of their own lives and of the local church.

Although there is not a dichotomy between clergy and laity, there is a tendency to look at the laity in that framework. This dichotomy can make it difficult for pastors to implement this model in local congregations since elders' ministry seems to be negated. This study posits that elders and pastors are similar in their ministry yet operate from different perspectives. Elders and pastors should follow the pattern of servant leadership proposed in the

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Scriptures. Pastor and elders should work in an atmosphere of companionship and friendship. Therefore, pastors are not bosses, they are servant-leaders with a responsibility of teaching local elders in church congregations.

In addition, by following this model, pastors will have more time for evangelism and church planting. In places where a pastor has between two and ten churches, it is virtually impossible to address mission and local church goals without the ministry of local church elders. Therefore, the application of this model will facilitate evangelism, church growth, and nurture.

This model also implies that ministers are responsible for helping the believers to discover their spiritual gifts. When they do, pastors should encourage and assist them to develop their skills for the work of ministry. This means that pastors should be responsible for the process of training and educating the local church leaders in harmony with the spiritual gifts discovered and the growth of those gifts until they are regularly functioning in church services.

The application of this study by local congregations will include lay participation in the work of conservation. Elders may also instruct others to become shepherds and, through the multiplication process, all the church may be involved in ministry.

Finally, the apostle Paul, writing to Timothy,

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declares, "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching" (1 Tim 5:17). The only passage of the Scriptures in which elders are mentioned as preachers is 1 Tim 5:17. Since, in the Inca Union Mission, evangelistic and biblical preaching in the worship services and evangelistic campaigns are regular activities of elders, it is necessary to prepare instructions on how elders may accomplish this delicate task of presenting truth.

## Recommendations

Since in the Inca Union there are large districts with only one pastor, elders should be considered as important components of the whole church organization. At the Union level, they should be invited to annual planning and assemblies of the ministerial association. Local conferences should also invite elders to participate in regular ministerial sessions to discuss and evaluate methods being implemented, especially evangelism and church administration. Conferences need to include some elders in administrative boards and councils as representatives of ecclesiastical geographical areas.

Leaders of Union and local Conferences could encourage pastors to schedule elders' training for this would increase the pastors' opportunities in evangelism.

Since there are many elders who have professional degrees, pastors and local conferences should encourage them

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to take extension courses from the School of Theology. Local conferences may facilitate, in coordination with their pastors during the months of summer vacations, appropriate training in regional schools.

## For Further Study

1. Elucidate on what basis elders may baptize new believers. Does the Great Commission, Matt 28:18-20, imply that elders may exercise this baptismal function?

2. Construct a curriculum under the modality of instructional product development in the areas of training necessary in the Inca Union Mission elders such as counseling, family relations, homiletics, exegesis, church management, and Bible doctrines (at present, there is no material available that deals with the basic training of local church elders.)

3. Produce a model for the evaluation of the effectiveness of elders' ministry.

4. Investigate the meaning of ordination for both universal and local church elders.

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