

NT church on leadership - Handout

Introduction

- The NT reveals helpful examples and teaching on healthy church leadership, but it does not provide a formula or a fixed model.
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1. Church Leadership Develops Over Time and According to Need

- a. Apostles - Acts 1 - Matthias; foundations - [Ephesians 2.20](#).
 - b. Proto-deacons - Acts 6 - arise as need surfaces.
 - c. Evangelists/missionaries - Acts 8 - Philip ([Acts 21.8](#)) Samaria & Ethiopian; Paul & Barnabas, Acts 13 (note, team - including prophets and teachers).
 - d. Elders - [Acts 14.23](#) - [Acts 20.17](#), [Acts 20.28](#) - oversee, shepherd, spiritual oversight, Holy Spirit (v28), example and service ([1 Peter 5.2-3](#)).
- Leadership grew with the gospel.
NOTE: As the church grows (in number, spread and maturity), leadership 'grows' with it.
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2. Church leadership listens to the church and the Spirit

- a. Acts 6 - listening to congregational needs; Spirit-filled people
 - b. Acts 13 - Spirit spoke, congregation participated
 - c. Acts 15 - Antioch sent. In Jerusalem, the apostles and elders met with the church (v. 6, 12, 22), much discussion. The whole assembly listened (v. 12) and came to one accord (v. 25), "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us..." (v. 28).
- Spiritual authority begins with spiritual listening.
NOTE: The early church shows that spiritual leadership is neither autocratic nor democratic, but theocratic — led by God, with the congregation's participation.
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3. Church leadership is about roles, not positions

- Elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers etc. - descriptors, not titles.
- Recognising those already doing those things well - spirituality and competence. Smell like sheep. Roles are recognised, not awarded.
- Leadership is one of many bodily functions, [Romans 12.6-8](#), not an exalted role.
- Not looking for 'elders' as a title, but people with spiritual qualities - Titus 1.5ff; 1 Tim 3.1ff.
NOTE: Character, not charisma.

4. Church leadership exists to equip, protect and build up the body

Ephesians 4.11-12

a. Leaders Equip the Saints

- They help others use their gifts ([Ephesians 4.12](#); [Romans 12.4-8](#)).
- They model service and sound teaching ([2 Timothy 2.2](#); [1 Peter 5.3](#)).
- Leaders don't build empires; they build people.
- Shepherds grow the flock, not their power.

b. Leaders Protect the Flock

- Elders guard against false doctrine and spiritual harm ([Acts 20.28-31](#); [Titus 1.9](#)).
- They keep the church grounded in truth and love.

c. Leaders Promote Unity and Growth

- Leadership aims at "the unity of the faith" ([Ephesians 4.13](#)).
- By submitting to God's design, the whole body "builds itself up in love" (v. 16).

NOTE: Church leadership is for the benefit of the congregation, which grows to greater Christlikeness in spirit and behaviour.

Conclusion

Acts 20.28

"Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son."