

Biblical Elder Study, Session 1
Ballardsville Baptist Church, April 19, 2015

This class is the beginning of a 6-session class on Elders. Pastor Tony believes this may be the most important thing we have done as a church. It's new and different and some may be scared/worried. We are called to unity, to be together. We need to talk about these things with others, process it together, and that discussion will make us a healthier church body.

Some churches have elders, but they are not Biblical elders. The booklet we handed out tonight talks about it. We'll go through this booklet (see the church office to get a copy). There are some right ways for elders and some wrong ways. We're trying to do it the right way. The issue before us is NOT the experience of others/other churches. We want to align ourselves to Biblical teaching.

Pastor Tony believes God's wants to use our church in big ways. We already are doing phenomenal things as we are. We are not saying God is not using us now. It may define what we do in the future. We don't want to cause a major division, just to look at the Bible. We want to be overjoyed, excited about what God will do in our future.

Doug Nettle with the deacon group brought up a point. He said this is not Pastor Tony's idea/agenda. The deacon body had a lot of questions after his Timothy sermon series in July 2014. If the Bible says we should have elders, then why don't we have it? The deacons decided to ask Pastor Tony to teach more about it. It was also decided that the deacons could not just make this decision to go to elders alone, the whole church would have to be involved.

Pastor Tony read from 1 Timothy 3:1-7:

"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. **2** Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,^[b] sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, **3** not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. **4** He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, **5** for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? **6** He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. **7** Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil." (English Standard Version)

Pastor Tony led 3 sermons on this topic back in July/August 2014. Now we have to answer some questions:

1. What are we doing with this elder study? There is a booklet called Biblical Eldership, by Alexander Strauch. It is a "Cliff's Notes" version of a larger more exhaustive book by the same name. If anyone wants that copy it is \$20, but very detailed on the subject. We will teach through the booklet though, with several speakers. Also, if you go to the church website (bbclife.org) and click on the "About Us"

tab, you'll see a section on the Biblical Eldership study. Click on this link to find additional resources, documents and audio sermons on the topic from John Piper and John MacArthur and others. Use these resources. We want to develop a strong sense of calling to stay true to the Bible for the future. We want to prove ourselves faithful when we come under attack at a later date.

2. How will we make the transition, if we're going to make one? We don't know. Pastor Tony's vision is that we have our study, then build a consensus, then decide to move forward. If we get a consensus, then we will bring the topic up at a well-announced business meeting. We would have a motion to change the church governance and then table that motion for a month. This action will give people enough time to make an informed decision. The next month's meeting will take the topic off the table, have discussion, and then call for a vote. If approved, either the current constitution committee or a new group will be formed to put together the details, put flesh on the bones, on how we make the transition. This group would decide: who is going to select elders initially and then afterward, what issues the congregation would still be involved in, such as buying land, budgets, hiring decisions, large purchases, etc. The committee's work would have to be approved by the church. Then we would go through a process to train some men on becoming elders. As we go along adjustments will have to be made, but that is a vision for now.

3. Why, when things are going so well? As a pastor, Tony feels there is plenty of Biblical support for this model. There is more guidance on elders than on the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, sacraments, etc. It is perplexing that this topic has "left the table" of many church bodies today. Pastor Tony relayed the story of when the Torah was lost in Old Testament times, and how during the reign of King Josiah, the book of the law was found. Josiah tore his clothes at how they had broken the law and he ordered that it be read to all the people. We still struggle in our current governing model. If we're all committed we can find great unity in the struggle to change.

There are practical issues. In a medium-sized church you can have one or two families with a vision to grow the church and they can be in charge. As the church grows though, it is harder to set a vision that everyone can go along with. When each family has different visions, there is constant division. In the past 6 years, our church has gained 250 people, but during the same time 250 people have left. This is a cause for frustration.

Elders will be people, whom the church loves and are willing to set before them as leaders, for the purposes of teaching. They will understand the gifts of the people they lead, they will listen to them and then lead. All will be pulling the rope in the same direction.

Society is drifting towards godlessness and liberalism. We as a nation used to be more Biblically literate. The majority now are no longer literate. Society is increasingly immoral. The consensus within the church body is becoming increasingly more liberal as well. What used to be minority opinions (on homosexuality, abortion, etc.) is now the majority. The people believing in these things will be the ones joining our church. The long-term future of our church is tied to making corrections to put us in a firm

direction. Elders can keep us from straying. The current governing model would not allow someone with differing viewpoints to go uncorrected. Men holding each other to a higher standard of accountability will guard against these attacks. We have churches out there that are denying the resurrection, the virgin birth, and even creation. Godly men can guard against wolves in sheep's clothing and will have authority to stop these teachings. Some say the pastor should be the one to stop it, but some also say he doesn't have the power. That is a problem with the congregation-led church model.

For those who have missed this meeting, please come and participate. We have not been down this road before. The last thing Pastor Tony wants to do is to hurt this church. He doesn't want division. When he first came to our church as a pastor, he prayed to God that he wouldn't mess it up. The Articles of Faith for our church confirm the reason we need to do this study,

"The Supremacy of Christ

The ultimate source of Christian authority is Jesus Christ the Lord. His lordship springs from His eternal deity and power as the anointed Son of the sovereign God and from His victorious redemption and resurrection. The Bible is our authoritative rule of faith and practice, it is the inspired revelation of God's will and way, made full and complete in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ."

"The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, is inerrant in the original manuscripts, and is God's revelation of Himself to mankind. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction and is eternal. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation."

The next session will be Sunday 4/26 at 6 PM. If possible, try and be at each meeting.

An impromptu prayer time came up beforehand today, and if you are interested in praying again, please drop by 15 minutes early next week