

September 8, 2019 | DAVID ANDERSON

God's Design for Church Leadership Titus 1:5-9



Why was Paul commissioned to be the slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ?

Paul's purpose was to further the faith of God's chosen ones and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness (1:1). In the context of Titus, Paul leaves his most valued ministry partner on the island of Crete to care for these baby churches who were struggling in a corrupt, bankrupt and vile Cretan culture (1:12).

What does Paul tell Titus to do? What is of utmost importance for the success of the Gospel on the island of Crete according to the Apostle Paul?

The reason I left you in Crete was to set in order the remaining matters and to appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. (Titus 1:5)

As the Gospel and the Holy Spirit exploded across the New Testament world, God's design for His church was actually very clear. Leaders, called elders, were appointed as soon as there were believers in each of these churches. When Paul, Barnabas, John Mark, Titus, Timothy, etc. went out to proclaim the grace of God throughout the Roman Empire, there were several stages. Their first round was to proclaim the Gospel and then they would circle back and retrace their steps in those cities to "appoint elders . . . in every church" (Acts 14:21-23).

According to the Word of God, what makes someone qualified to be an elder? There are two places in the New Testament where we see the qualifications of these elders: 1) 1 Timothy 3 and 2) Titus 1. It is here that we discover that elders are godly men who were called by God to shepherd the flock as servant-leaders - humbly, selflessly, under the headship of Jesus Christ, and under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Just as Jesus, God's divine truth, took on human flesh and lived among us, so the message of the Gospel must reside in the leaders of the local church. The Lord established the church so that the body of Christ might live the truth of the gospel before the world, to be light in the darkness just like Jesus (Swindoll's Living Insights, Pastoral Epistles). The elders are called to lead out in this way.

Paul has a two-part charge to Titus in verse 5: 1) set in order what remains and 2) appoint elders in every city. Paul found the churches broken and twisted by apostasy (false teaching) and they needed to be realigned. "Set straight" ("thoroughly set straight") comes from the Greek term *ortho*. *Ortho*, which medical writers used to describe the process of setting and splinting broken bones, is where we get the word the "orthodontics" and "orthopedics".

Titus says the false teachers left the Cretan churches all twisted up, and those churches needed to be properly aligned and healed. The false teachers were interested in myths (1:14) and genealogies (3:9), focused on the Law (1:10, 14; 3:9), controversial and argumentative (1:10; 3:9), deceptive (1:10-13), immoral (1:15-16) and their focus was material gain (1:10). The false teachers were primarily but not exclusively Jewish (Titus 1:10).

Paul tells Titus to straighten out “what remains”, which may refer to the current state of the Cretan church or the churches on Crete that Paul wasn’t able to visit, or it could also mean a combination of both. “As I directed you” is the reference of the time and training Titus, Paul’s genuine spiritual son, received. Titus was to train another generation of leaders in the same manner in which Paul had prepared him (2 Tim. 2:2).

Paul directed Titus to “appoint elders”. Paul uses two Greek terms interchangeably for elder:

Presbyteros	Episkopos
Translated “older man”, but referring to elders in the congregation who are honored for their wisdom, maturity, humility and selflessness in leading the church.	Many expositors agree that the terms are interchangeable and similar and episkopos stresses the function of the elder while presbyteros stresses the person.

What’s the job of an elder? In Ephesians 4, Paul highlights the calling of the leaders of the church: *It was (Jesus) who gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God – a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ’s full stature. So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes. But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head. From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body grows in love.* (Eph. 4:11-16)

As an elder team and as a church we get our nourishment from the head of our body, Jesus Christ. This is not a human organization or enterprise, because the head is Jesus Christ and He is divine and has given us new, spiritual life from above (John 3). As a result, we don’t copy organizational charts from worldly companies; we aren’t just looking for best business practices to run our church. Our greatest desire is for Jesus to be given opportunities to lead, nurture and shepherd His church.

Our calling as elders and pastors is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, that is, to build up the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). Our job is to hand over the ministry to you all. Our job as leaders isn’t to do the ministry for you, but to equip you all to do the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Elder Leadership, the Ministry and You:

If it’s true the role of the church leaders is to equip you for the work of the ministry, then what is your part?

If ministry is a football game, what location on the football field would you place yourself? Why?

Are you afraid on the sidelines? Are you even in the game? Are you exhausted and needing a timeout? Are you angry at the Coach? Did you accidentally score for the other team?

How can we pray for you and encourage you wherever you find yourself this morning?