

Elders, Deacons and Saints

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Essence of church is mission Matthew 28:19-20

The great commission wasn't to plant churches but to go into the world and make disciples. The early apostles found that while healing and preaching the gospel drew people to repentance, local churches were needed to disciple people and continue the work of making disciples.

Churches were planting because mission was happening. Arrive in a town, heal the sick, preach the Gospel and then gather. You watch - God is at work in Massingham, people are getting saved - we will end up with a congregation up there. Hoping it will be our first plant.

So it was doing mission shaped doing church

Churches often then get established and stuck in the mundane of running what they have and end up with a missions department, which eventually just prays for missionaries who are already abroad rather than doing mission.

Tail shouldn't be wagging the dog!

Biggest hindrance is a lack of leaders Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus saw crowds, he felt compassion

What do you see? - could turn nasty, scary, watch out for pickpockets

Jesus saw the harrassed and helpless, on the highway to hell

Look with your eyes - allow the Lord to open them

Abraham saw the stars, Moses the burning bush, Gideon an angel, Isaiah saw God and Paul a blinding light

The harvest will stay unharvested, the unsaved will stay unsaved until workers go out!

Godly order - prepare leaders, God will send converts to disciple

Could say don't need more leaders we have enough leaders for the follower we have, enough life groups for attendees

God says prepare leaders I will give you more followers!

Elisha and the jars of oil 2 Kings 4:3-6- the oil of harvest stops when we are out of leadership jars

Big vision which will require us to grow into big people!

We are the gateway for the gospel to go the nations

For us that means we are a multicultural family, passionately pursuing God, drawing people in, sending people out resulting in church planting in the region and the re-evangelisation of Northern Europe

Elders, deacons and saints.

Saints

Paul writes to the elders, deacons and saints. Philipians clearest 1:1b

All who follow Christ are saints, holy Ones, male and female, whatever nationality. You are a saint.

Not a miserable sinner! You are a saint

Deacons = servants

First seen in Acts 6 as the church was growing and the elders needed help so they could focus on what God called them to do.

Deacons are Spirit filled and full of faith - start by serving and grow in that and anointing and fruitfulness

Male and female - Phoebe in Romans 16:1 deaconess.

Newfrontiers unfair reputation - NFI stood for No Females Included

Awful! And awful that wonderful ladies have felt that. Want to see everyone released into their gifting and destiny.

Amusing though that a friend of mine was having his ear bent about women in ministry and so he compared his church with the Vineyard guy and found he had more women serving in public ministry roles than the Vineyard pastor. Here 18 out of 36 public ministry roles done by women!

Overjoyed to be releasing men and women into their anointing and gifting.

Ladies you have a destiny in God as much as the men - overjoyed to see Amie preaching, Rebecca

hosting gatherings, Sarah leading the pastoral team and Jane doing a wonderful work as deacon for women's ministry! More Lord!

So we have saints and deacons to see the vision come to pass in God's time and with His power

Elders

Men of proven character, called by God to guard, guide and govern the local church.

Some bristling - that I said men.

Hate oppression and putting down of women. Right the wrongs of inequality. God made women and men in His image equal in status and dignity, but with different contributions and differing roles.

Clear Biblical mandate is that eldership is male, I haven't got time to go into that this morning in detail and I don't want it to be the focus- but safe to say where culture and Scripture collide. Scripture trumps culture.

Culture here is that eldership release godly men and women to fulfil their destinies, walk in their anointing and serve King Jesus as we see His kingdom grown - there's a wide scope of permission just like the garden of Eden, with one prohibition. Ladies and gentlemen enjoy the wide scope of permission and don't let Satan get you fixated on one prohibition just like in Eden.

What do elders look like?

Character - 1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:7-9

- Above reproach - no skeletons in the cupboard
- The husband of one wife - rules out bygamists, but what about divorcees who remarry. Tough one and you'd need to look at the circumstances
- Sober-minded - No corporal Jones, don't panic!
- Self-controlled - full of the Spirit, not full of bad habits, no secret internet porn addiction, in debt all the time
- Respectable - dignity, people respect him
- Able to teach - not all elders need to be preachers, but they do need to be able to teach people and keep them safe from heresy
- Hospitable - must be outward looking because hospitable in Greek means "Love the stranger"
- Not a drunkard - self control when it comes to alcohol

- Not violent but gentle
- Not a lover of money - protects us from people doing it for riches. And our treasure shows where our heart is
- Manages household well - we lead at home before we lead at church
- Not a recent convert - provenness in their walk
- Well thought of by outsiders - so not a religious nutter

Competence - socially, mentally and pastorally

Chemistry - get on, but not cliquey

When Paul said goodbye to the Ephesians in Acts 20, they travelled to Miletus about 50 miles away, so there was a depth of relationship, there was much weeping. So it's not all church business, there is a depth of relationship.

Currently 2 elders - maybe enough for 100 people, but not enough for our vision.

Begin to create a culture of treble it - for now, for growth, for sending.

Looking for a trebling at every level - life group leader start grabbing some trainees to help care for your small group family.

What to do aspire to be leadership - deacon or elder...

Desire - aspire 1 Tim 3:1

Desire to lead people deeper in God, to guard them, guide them, govern them as a servant leader

Lead yourself well

Lead your family

Push back the enemy

Daring

Desire has to turn into daring. Not interested in armchair warriors.

Buck stops with elders, it's not for the timid. Deacons have real responsibility in their area. Takes guts to be a God pleaser not people pleasers and fear of man.

Enemy snipes at leaders first (then radio man and then medic)

Diligence

Zeal without knowledge is dangerous

1 Tim 4:12-16 don't neglect your gift, be diligent in it

Grow in character

Serve wholeheartedly. Watching those who come happily to set up and those who are still helping at the end!

Getting ready for the wave - announcing and laying hands on new life group leaders next week.

One of my aims for 2018 expand the eldership

How does that happen?

Churches planted by apostles and leadership team emerges. Eldership emerges and is confirmed by apostles - Paul & Barnabus in Acts 14

4 groups involved!

God - Holy Spirit makes elders Acts 20:28 "Pay careful attention to yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church, which he obtained by his blood"

Apostles - appoint elders Paul & Barnabas did that in Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5

Other elders

Local church - as there is such an emphasis on good reputation and respect in the qualifications, obviously the local church needs to be happy.

Process

Identified - character, humble spirit, servant hearted, acting like an elder

Tested and proven - 1 Tim 5:22 - made a mistake in the early days, too hasty in laying on of hands. A mess emerged afterwards. Key that people voice before not after!

Presented to the local church, season of prayer and fasting Acts 13:3; Acts 14:21

Laying on of hands.

Application

Big vision which will need us to grow into big people in the Lord. God's mighty men and women!

Next week we will be launching 3 new life groups and praying for the leaders.

Challenge You are a saint if you believe in Jesus. Are you living like one.

Are you aspiring to leadership? Character, Competency and Chemistry

Looking for more elders. Kees and I praying about it and got our eyes on a few guys. Would love to hear who you think too!