JANUARY BIBLE STUDY – 2023

Biblical Eldership: *The Function of Elders*

OVERVIEW

* Review FAQ’s
* Answer questions
* Review qualifications
* Male Headship in the Bible

MALE HEADSHIP IN THE BIBLE AS A FOUNDATION TO ELDERSHIP

* The biblical qualifications for both elders and deacons are written to men. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9)
* The Bible rejects and condemns:
  + Male and female distinctions as a result of the Fall
  + Male passivity in leading in marriage and family
  + Male only representation of their image of God
  + Male superiority over women
  + Male domination of women
  + Male only use of gifting in kingdom service
  + Subordination as denigration
* The Bible affirms:
  + The Fall denigrated God’s design for marriage and is the cause of ongoing sin and disharmony in the home (Genesis 3:16-19 ; 1 Timothy 2:13-14)
  + Men and women are made in the image of God, are equally valued in representing the image of God and in kingdom service. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18, 20)
  + The hierarchy in the family is a living witness of Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:22-33)
  + The hierarchy in the family and church is grounded in creation. (Genesis 2:23-24; 1 Tim 2:11-12; 1 Cor 11:11-12)
  + In the divine economy, men and women play different roles in marriage and family as well as in church life.

The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

The "Danvers Statement" summarizes the need for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and serves as an overview of our core beliefs. This statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988. Rationale We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

**Affirmations Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:**

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1- 7, 12, 16).
5. In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
6. In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
7. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11- 15).
8. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse. o In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7). In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
9. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
10. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
11. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7- 21).
12. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

**FAQs – Elders**

**How will this structure differ from our current one?**

The primary change will be in moving from a single elder model to a plurality of elders. The New Testament terms for pastor, overseer, or elder are never used to talk about a single person leading or governing the church alone. A plurality of elders strengthens and serves the church by:

* Embodying and expressing the New Testament principle of interdependence and the diversity of gifts in the body of Christ (Rom 12:4–6; 1 Cor 12).
* Acknowledging human limitations by recognizing no one man can possess all the gifts, wisdom, and abilities needed to lead the church (1 Cor 12:21).
* Creating a leadership structure where the leaders must model the unity to which God calls the whole church (John 17:23; Rom 15:5; Eph 4:3, 13; Col 3:14).
* Providing a community of care, support, and accountability that guards the calling, life, and doctrine of church leaders (1 Tim 4:14; Titus 1:6–9; James 5:16).
* Contradicting the “Great Man” theory of leadership and replacing it with “an abundance of counselors” who collaborate, lead, and guide the church together (Prov 11:14; 24:6).

Within this structure, we will continue to have a Senior Pastor who will serve as one of the Elders. The Senior Pastor shall be recognized as the spiritual leader of the church and President of the Corporation, and as such, he must meet the biblical standards found in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and adhere to the Articles of Faith of the church.

He shall serve as the primary preacher and senior Bible teacher by virtue of his calling, bearing responsibility for all worship and other public services of the church. The Senior Pastor shall also direct the work of the church staff in cooperation with the Elder Board.

**Will the congregation still vote on matters?**

Yes, absolutely. Faithbridge Church is to be recognized as a Jesus ruled, elder led, and congregationally accountable church in accordance with the principles laid down in the New Testament.

The following matters shall continue to be brought before the church in conference for affirmation:

1. The budget; (the annual overall operating expenditures of the church);
2. The purchase or sale of real property;
3. The assumption of any loan or encumbrance;
4. Amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, or Articles of Incorporation;
5. The plan of merger, consolidation, or dissolution and any amendments thereafter; any matter related to disassociation of the church from the Southern Baptist Convention, the Florida Baptist Convention, or First Coast Churches (formerly Jacksonville Baptist Association); any merger or consolidation with any other Baptist convention, fellowship, or association;
6. The recommendation to call, appoint, or terminate a Senior Pastor or Elder Board Member;
7. Terminating membership as a result of church discipline;
8. Any transfer of authority, even temporarily, to another church or entity.

**Who is eligible to serve as an elder?**

All men serving on the Elder Board must meet the biblical standards found in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and adhere to the Articles of Faith of the church. The Elder Board shall consist of the Senior Pastor plus a combination of congregational and staff elders; however, the board shall not exceed seven (7) nor have fewer than three (3) in total.

In order to qualify to serve in this role, men must have been members or served on staff of Faithbridge for at least three years.

The names of new candidates for the Elder Board will be shared with the congregation at least one month prior to joining the Elder Board. If any member of the congregation has cause to believe the candidate is unqualified to serve, they should bring this concern to the attention of the Elder Board during this 30-day period.

**Will all the pastors on staff be serving as elders?**

No, but in addition to those Pastors serving as Staff Elders, other men may serve as Pastors at Faithbridge Church. Every Pastor shall meet the biblical standards found in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and adhere to the Articles of Faith of the church.

These Pastoral Staff members shall assist the Senior Pastor and Elder Board in overseeing the ministries and programs of the church. They shall serve at the discretion of the Senior Pastor and Elder Board within the guidelines and job description created for their position. Members of the Pastoral Staff are accountable to God, the Senior Pastor, their immediate supervisor, and the church.

**Will elders have term limits?**

Congregational Elders on the Elder Board shall serve terms of three years, at the end of which they may be reappointed for a second term. A Congregational Elder shall be allowed to serve two consecutive terms, after which a lapse of one year must occur before they may be considered for reappointment. Terms shall be staggered such that no more than two Congregational Elder terms end in any one year.

There is no limitation on the length of service for Staff Elders on the Elder Board; however, Staff Elders may elect to rotate off the Elder Board at the end of a given term. These Elders may only be considered for reappointment after a lapse of one year has occurred.

**Will women be eligible to serve as elders?**

As our Articles of Faith, the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, state, “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor [elder] is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”

The Bible is extremely straight-forward in this regard: an elder must be “the husband of one wife,” or translated literally, a “one-woman man.” Just as God calls men to be the heads of their households, so he calls faithful men to lead his church.

Male-only eldership is certainly, and sadly, a hot-button issue in our culture, but we strive to lead in a way consistent with Scripture that honors the Lord and affirms the value and dignity of every member of our congregation. While eldership remains limited to men, we also seek to elevate and empower women in every other area of church life.

**When will these changes take effect?**

The initial Elder Board shall be selected by the Senior Pastor and appointed by the church in conference within one calendar year of the revised Bylaws being adopted by the church.