

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE AUTHORITY OF CHURCH ELDERS

In this chapter, the exegetical results of the previous chapters are synthesized. The combined evidence is examined to determine if elders possess four basic types of authority. The first two are types authority *de jure*: authority as position and authority as responsibility. The last two are types of authority *de facto*: authority as power and authority as influence.¹

Authority as Position

Office

There are several reasons to conclude that elders fill a recognized position within the church.² Most of the New Testament references to elders in the church denote a distinct group of leaders, not simply older men (Acts 11:27–30; 15:1–35; 20:28–35; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1–7; 5:17–25; Titus 1:5–9; Heb 13:7, 17, 24; Jas 5:14). Furthermore, these leaders carried out clearly defined responsibilities. It is possible, though, for a distinct group of leaders to carry out definite responsibilities within a community without holding an

¹ See the discussion on the semantics of authority in chapter one.

² Wayne Grudem writes, “A church officer is someone who has been publicly recognized as having the right and responsibility to perform certain functions for the benefit of the whole church.” Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 905. See also Carl A. Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 13.

official position.³ Passages such as 1 Cor 16:15–16 and 1 Thess 5:12–13, for example, appear to depict leaders who are functional, but not official. However, passages such as Acts 14:23, 1 Tim 3:1–7; 5:17–25; and Titus 1:5–7 demonstrate that Paul intended for elders to have a recognized position. He and Barnabas appointed elders in several churches, and he instructed Titus to appoint elders in Crete. Paul also advised Timothy about appointing elders by the laying on of hands. Elders do not exist merely by functioning in a certain way; they are appointed to the position and thus recognized by others.

That elders hold a recognized position is also confirmed by the fact that they must meet certain qualifications before they are appointed (1 Tim 3:1–7; 5:22–25; Titus 1:5–9).⁴ In addition, that elders may be confronted for failure to maintain these qualifications implies that they may be removed from their position (1 Tim 5:19–21). The existence of functional, but not official, leaders does not contradict the evidence that elders hold a recognized position.⁵ It is probable that such functional leaders provided guidance for

³ Alastair Campbell makes some valid points in trying establish his thesis that elders “constituted a form of leadership that was collective and representative, with an authority derived from their seniority relative to those they represented, whether household, clan, tribe or nation. ‘The elders’ was shown to be a term of honour for those whose power was based on relationships that already existed, rather than a precise office, entered through appointment, election or ordination.” Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 238. Indeed, the authority *de facto* of influence precedes and maintains the ministry of an elder. However, the final claim that elders do not have recognized positions is not supported by the New Testament evidence as discussed in this work. See also Benjamin Merkle’s important work *The Elder and Overseer: One Office in the Early Church* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

⁴ See David C. Verner, *The Household of God: The Social World of the Pastoral Epistles* (SBL Dissertation Series 71; Chico, California: Scholars, 1983), 159.

⁵ Some argue that there were always offices in all the early churches even if they were not called elders. See Ronald Y. K. Fung, “Charismatic versus Organized Ministry,” *EvQ* 52 (1980): 200; Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Lund: LiberLäromedel/Gleerup, 1978), 111–12; and Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*, 118–19. However, in order to conclude that church elders held a recognized position, it is not necessary to argue that all transitional leaders did as well.

churches before elders were appointed.⁶ In addition, some of the ministries for which elders are responsible are not limited to elders. Believers may minister as teachers, leaders, or shepherds without necessarily being elders (Act 15:22; Rom 12:7–8; Eph 4:11).

The passages that address elders demonstrate that those holding this position are also referred to as overseers (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7; see also 1 Pet 5:2).⁷ While this term conveys the responsibility of elders to watch over and care for the church, it was also commonly used as a title for those who held positions of leadership and responsibility.⁸ The use of the definite article with overseer in Titus 1:7 and with elders in 1 Tim 4:14 gives the impression that a particular category of people were in view, such as those who hold a recognized position.⁹ It is important to remember, however, that the

⁶ “It is true that there is some organizational development found in the New Testament.” Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*, 90. See also Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 302–303.

⁷ See John S. Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches: A Contemporary Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 161–63; Joseph Barber Lightfoot, “The Christian Ministry,” in *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1913, 1953), 193; Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Nashville: Nelson, 2000), 161; Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Colorado Springs: Lewis and Roth, 1995), 177–80; James R. White, “The Plural-Elder-Led Church: Sufficient as Established—The Plurality of Elders as Christ’s Ordained Means of Church Governance,” in *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity* (ed. Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 270. Even if one argues, as Hort does, that ἐπίσκοπος is not a title but a function, the terms still describe the same person. Hort, *Ecclesia*, 190–91.

⁸ ἐπισκοπή and ἐπίσκοπος are both in domain “53. Religious Activities,” sub-domain “I. Roles and Functions,” and domain “35. Help, Care For;” sub-domain “D. Care For, Take Care Of.” Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:462, 541. See also BDAG, 379.

⁹ The definite article with “overseer” (τὸν ἐπίσκοπον) in Titus 5:7 “identifies . . . ‘the overseer’ as a special class appropriate for a general statement.” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 170. Kevin Giles writes, “The existence of a formally constituted council of Christian elders at Ephesus is attested to in 1 Timothy 4:14.” Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry among the First Christians* (Melbourne, Australia: Collins Dove, 1989), 87; See also John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon* (Calvin’s Commentaries; ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. T. A. Smal; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1964), 247; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 262; Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 205.

existence of recognized positions does not contradict the charismatic nature of the church.¹⁰ Ministry in the church may include both gifting and office. While not all those gifted hold an office, those who hold an office function in their giftedness.¹¹ However, there is validity in the suggestion that a governmental hierarchy would inhibit the intended spiritual operation of the body.¹² It is possible for someone to have authority *de jure* of office without having governing authority. These aspects of authority are addressed in the section on authority as power.

Number and Parity

In the twelve passages that mention church elders and overseers, all references but three are in the plural.¹³ Several passages indicate that there was a plurality of elders within a single local church or town (Acts 14:23; 15:1–35; 20:17, 28; 21:18; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 5:17–25; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14; see also 1 Thess 5:12; Heb 13:7, 17, 24).¹⁴ The use of ἐπίσκοπος as a singular noun in 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:7 need not contradict this plurality of elders since it may be considered a generic singular agreeing with τίς.¹⁵ It is likely that the

¹⁰ See Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 2:435; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159; and Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 301.

¹¹ See Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 540; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 165.

¹² See the extended discussion of the relationship of gifting and office by Sohm, *Kirchenrecht*, and A. Harnack, *The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries* (ed. H. D. A. Major; trans. F. L. Pogson; New York: Putnam, 1910) and later by Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Two Centuries* (trans. J. A. Baker; Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1969); and Ernst Käsemann, "Ministry and Community in the New Testament," *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964).

¹³ See George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 155; and Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 163.

¹⁴ White, "The Plural-Elder-Led Church," 271.

church in a large city would meet in several houses for worship,¹⁶ and it is possible that there was an elder or elders at each of these meetings. However, one may not assume from this possibility that a single elder was assigned to and responsible for smaller congregations within a city.¹⁷ There is no evidence of such a structure in the New Testament.¹⁸ What is clear is that no matter how believers in larger cities met, they were always considered a single local church that was led by one group of elders.¹⁹

Leadership by a plurality of elders in local churches is confirmed by the occasions in which elders functioned together as a group. The elders met as a group with the apostles to consider the question of circumcision (Acts 15); all the Jerusalem elders met with Paul and discussed the crisis at hand (Acts 21:17–26); a council of elders laid hands on Timothy (1 Tim 4:14); and a group of elders prayed over a sick believer (Jas 5:14). While there is no direct instruction on the matter, it appears that local church elders existed and functioned as a group of equals.²⁰ Acts 15 and 21:18 reveal that James played a leadership role among the Jerusalem elders. Whether or not James held a particular

¹⁵ See I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 160, 477; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 163; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 387; and Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 187.

¹⁶ See Verner, *The Household of God*, 154.

¹⁷ See Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*, 132–34.

¹⁸ Strauch writes, “Such claims are pure guesswork, however. The fact is, there is absolutely no biblical evidence that a single overseer presided over an individual house church. There is, indeed, evidence to the contrary.” Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 142.

¹⁹ See Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*, 160–61; Phil A. Newton, *Elders in Congregational Life: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 68; Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 143; and Verner, *The Household of God*, 154.

²⁰ The leadership of the Twelve and the new leaders that were appointed in Acts 6:1–6 also provide examples of leaders functioning as a group and not as individuals. See also Fee, *Philippians*, 67; Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*, 160–61; and White, “The Plural-Elder-Led Church,” 280.

position among the elders is unknown, but these passages do not indicate that he exercised decision-making authority within the group. In Acts 21:18, the elders functioned as a group after the initial mention of James.²¹ In Acts 15, James provided leadership among the apostles and elders, but the final decision of the counsel was made by consensus (“having come to one accord,” Acts 15:25; see also vv. 15:23; 16:4). It is notable that even the words of Peter and Paul did not resolve the matter.

That particular individuals ministered within a group of elders in varying degrees of influence and skill is confirmed in 1 Tim 5:17. Some elders put more time and effort into teaching than others.²² Such varied giftedness or function does not necessarily indicate that there were head elders or different types of elder offices. Although some were laboring in preaching and teaching, all were expected to teach (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:9).²³ Those who labored in preaching and teaching were not a separate group from those leading well; instead, this was a particular way in which elders led well.²⁴ Without any other evidence of structures within elder bodies, one may be content to assume that various gifts, skills, and levels of influence are exercised among elders.²⁵

²¹ Since Paul interacted with the elders as a body, it seems that the elders are not coincidentally present. After v. 18, James is not mentioned again, and the personal pronouns and verbs are plural.

²² See Gerald P. Cowen, *Who Rules the Church?: Examining Congregational Leadership and Church Government* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 82; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 915; Lightfoot, “The Christian Ministry,” 195; Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1924), 62; Benjamin L. Merkle, *40 Questions About Elders and Deacons* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 85–86; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 308; and Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 209.

²³ See Cowen, *Who Rules the Church*, 82; and Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 132–33.

²⁴ See Andreas Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy, Titus*, Expositor’s Bible Commentary 12 (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 548; and Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 207.

²⁵ Lightfoot argues, “Nevertheless there is no ground for supposing that the work of teaching and the work of governing pertained to separate members of the presbyterial college. As each had his special

Jurisdiction

The sphere in which elders were appointed and identified is the church of God that existed in a particular location (Acts 14:23; 15:1–35; 20:17, 28; 21:18; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 5:17–25; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14; see also 1 Thess 5:12; Heb 13:7, 17, 24). Peter’s language also suggests that the relationship between the elders and the church was defined by proximity (ἐν ὑμῖν, 1 Pet 5:1–2; cf. Acts 20:29). Added to this is the evidence from Acts 15 that although local churches related to one another they also functioned autonomously.²⁶ The resolution of the council was not a congregational or regional decision but a matter of doctrine that was discussed, agreed upon, and taught by respected teachers.²⁷

The church in Corinth also functioned as an autonomous body. Paul’s letter reveals that although Paul had judged what should be done with the evil person among them, it was only the assembled and cooperative effort of the church in Corinth that could carry out church discipline (1 Cor 5). While there is no explicit teaching on the jurisdiction of elders, the consistent New Testament pattern is that the leadership of elders was limited to local, independent congregations. This is also confirmed by the accountability of elders to the community. If there were accusations against the elders,

gift, so would he devote himself more or less exclusively to the one or the other of these sacred functions.” Lightfoot, “The Christian Ministry,” 194–95. See also White, “The Plural-Elder-Led Church,” 280–81.

²⁶ In matters of congregational action in both locations, such as sending representatives from the church (15:2–3, 22), the corporate local church had decision-making authority. The whole Jerusalem congregation was present at the council (and may have even participated in the debate, 15:7) and the whole congregation in Antioch was gathered to hear the letter (15:30). The letter was written to the Gentile brothers, not to the elders (which had already been appointed in Antioch, 14:23). The positive reception of the resolution by both congregations was also noted (15:22, 25, 28, 31).

²⁷ D. L. Bock explains, “The letter does not represent a pattern of activity between the churches but is a specific letter for this specific issue. Once this decision is made, local implementation is assumed.” Bock, *Acts*, 510.

they were brought by two or three witnesses before the whole congregation (1 Tim 5:19–20).

Authority as Responsibility

The elders' authority *de jure*, which exists in the form of a recognized position, includes specific responsibilities. These responsibilities are directly delegated to the elders by God. Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that it was the Holy Spirit who made them overseers for the particular purpose of shepherding his flock (Acts 20:28). Peter also indicated that people are entrusted to the care of elders, who are to serve according to God's will (1 Pet 5:2–3). The people that elders shepherd are God's people (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2), and Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 2:25; 5:4). Accordingly, God holds elders accountable for their fulfillment of these responsibilities (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:4).

The overarching responsibility delegated to elders is described as shepherding and overseeing. Those who hold this position of leadership are called overseers (ἐπίσκοπος) in Acts 20:28, Phil 1:1, 1 Tim 3:2, and Titus 1:7 and are exhorted to watch over (ἐπισκοπέω) God's people in 1 Pet 5:2. They are also told to shepherd God's people in Act 20:28 and 1 Pet 5:2 (cf. Heb 13:17). ἐπισκοπέω modifies ποιμαίνω as an adverbial participle of means in 1 Pet 5:2, indicating that the elders are to shepherd God's flock by means of watching over and caring for them. The primary objective of elders, then, is the well-being of the flock. They are not to serve with any motivation of gain for themselves (Acts 20:33–35; 1 Pet 5:2).

One of the roles of a shepherd that is also delegated to elders is to protect the sheep. False teaching is the danger from which elders protect the church. They give warnings, correction, and provide accurate teaching in response to false teaching. The

apostles and elders wrote a letter in response to those who claimed that Gentiles must be circumcised to be saved (Acts 15). Paul alerted the Ephesian elders that men would speak twisted things to draw away the disciples. They were to follow his example by tirelessly and compassionately warning the congregation (Acts 20:29–31). Paul explained to Titus that elders must be able to correct those who contradict sound doctrine (Titus 1:9–16). Protecting the church from false teaching is a part of the larger responsibility of teaching sound doctrine (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9; Heb 13:7–17).²⁸

Another role of a shepherd that is also delegated to elders is leading (προΐστημι; 1 Tim 3:3–4 and 5:17). In Heb 13:17, those who were keeping watch over their souls were referred to as “your leaders.” In Acts 21:17–26, the elders provided leadership by giving counsel concerning a potential crisis. Elders are also to lead by providing an example for the church to follow (Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:3). That elders are authorized to provide guidance is also signified by the instructions given to the church to follow, submit to, honor, and recognize those who are leading in the church (1 Cor 16:15–18; 1 Thess 5:12–13; 1 Tim 5:17; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 5:5). The receiving and administration of gifts from other congregations (Acts 11:30) and praying for sick believers in the community (Jas 5:14) are examples of how elders may lead and care for the church.

Some responsibilities traditionally given exclusively to elders are noticeably absent from these passages. In particular, the New Testament does not assign specific activities such as presiding over the Lord’s Supper or baptism exclusively to elders.²⁹

²⁸ “Leadership is the apostolic church was largely based on proper teaching (cf. 1 Tim 3:2).” Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 392.

²⁹ Banks writes, “Nowhere in Paul’s letters, disputed or undisputed, is anyone identified as the presider or celebrant of this meal. . . . Baptism also took place through other than leading figures in a group (1 Cor 1:14–17).” Banks, “Church Order and Government,” 134. See also Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 113.

More broadly, “ministry” is not reserved for elders and deacons, but is the responsibility of the entire body of Christ (Eph 4:7–16; 1 Cor 12).³⁰ Instead, the role of the leaders is to equip the body for the work of the ministry.³¹

Authority as Power

Church Discipline

Church discipline may be characterized as authority *de facto* of power because it is the authorized ability to enforce a standard of behavior within the community.³² Jesus outlines the process that leads up to the removal of a person from the community in Matt 18:15–17. The first step is for a brother or sister to confront a fellow believer about his sin (Matt 18:15). Every believer is authorized to respond to sin in his or her community.³³ If the one in sin does not repent, the brother or sister is authorized to bring other witnesses to appeal to him (Matt 18:16). If he still does not repent, then the brother or sister is authorized to bring him before the church so that the church may appeal to him. If the one in sin still does not repent, then the brother or sister is authorized to regard him as one who does not belong in the community any longer (Matt 18:17). Although the focus in v. 17 is still on the original confronting individual, the implication is that all the believers in the church would respond in the same way.

³⁰ See Barth, *Ephesians*, 2:479–80.

³¹ The idea that elders have exclusive ministry rights is parallel to the function of the priesthood under the Old Covenant. Sometimes this parallel is made intentionally, as by John E. Johnson, “The Old Testament Offices as Paradigm for Pastoral Identity,” in *Vital Church Issues: Examining Principles and Practices in Church Leadership* (ed. Roy B. Zuck; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1998). Such paradigms fail to take account of critical differences of leadership under the New Covenant. The conclusions proposed here reinforce an understanding of the priesthood of all believers.

³² See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 887–88.

³³ See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 692.

The involvement of the whole church is confirmed by Paul's description of church discipline in 1 Cor 5. He instructed the Corinthians to remove the evil person from among them by taking two courses of action. First, they were to remove corporately the man from the spiritual protection of Christ within the community through prayer (1 Cor 5:4–5; cf. Matt 18:20).³⁴ Second, they were not to associate or eat with such a one (1 Cor 5:11).³⁵ These instructions reveal that the power of church discipline is necessarily corporate, requiring the assembly of the community and everyone's subsequent cooperation in disassociating with the person thus removed (cf. 2 Cor 2:6).³⁶ Therefore, no individual or group within the community, such as elders, may possess the power of church discipline.³⁷

The power of church discipline is also spiritual and social in nature.³⁸ The social action helps keep the church pure and may motivate the sinner to return to the protection and comfort of the community. The spiritual action, however, represents the real power behind church discipline. Jesus promises in Matt 16:19 and 18:18 that if a person does not repent when he is confronted with his sin and offered God's forgiveness by a human agent then he remains in a state of unforgiveness before God. If he repents, he is forgiven

³⁴ See John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (trans. John W. Fraser; Calvin's New Testament Commentaries; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1960), 108; and Pfitzner, "Purified Community," 43.

³⁵ Eating together probably included more than just the common meal, or the Lord's Supper, enjoyed by the assembled community. See Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 132; Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 114; Garland, *I Corinthians*, 189; and Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 415.

³⁶ Cowen, *Who Rules the Church*, 85–6.

³⁷ See Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 107.

³⁸ Grudem describes church discipline as spiritual power. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 887–89.

by God (Matt 16:19; 18:18) and is allowed to enter into the kingdom/community (the keys, Matt 16:19) or remain in the community (Matt 18:15; Luke 17:3–4).³⁹ If the person does not repent then he or she is not allowed into the kingdom/community (Matt 16:19) or is excluded from the community (Matt 18:17). Therefore, a person's place inside or outside the community should reflect his or her actual state of forgiveness before God.

The ultimate power of church discipline is that God will hold people accountable for their response to confrontation by individual members and the assembled body. The corporate, social, and spiritual nature of church discipline does not depend, therefore, on any governmental structure within the community. In addition, as members and leaders of the community, elders are also subject to the local church's authority to discipline (1 Tim 5:19–20).

Decision Making

The authority to make decisions in the church may be considered authority *de facto* because it is the ability to determine the action taken by the church. Decision-making authority does not necessarily require power to enforce the decision if a government structure has been established by a higher authority that holds involved parties accountable for the structure.

It is often concluded that elders possess decision-making authority based on passages that appear to indicate that elders rule the church.⁴⁰ The term προΐστημι is used

³⁹ John McKenzie explains, "The nature of authority in the Church and the use of authority are determined by the mission of the Church, which is to proclaim the gospel. . . . The mission of proclamation is the mission of the whole Church; it does not belong exclusively to the organs of authority in the Church. . . . Authority in the Church belongs to the whole Church and not to particular officers." John L. McKenzie, *Authority in the Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1965), 84–85.

⁴⁰ προΐστημι is often translated "rule" in 1 Tim 3:4–5; 5:17. See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 915; Lock, *Pastoral Epistles*, 34; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 159, 162; and some Bible translations in 1

in 1 Tim 3:4–5 and 5:17 to describe the activity of the elders and in 1 Thess 5:12 with reference to unidentified leaders.⁴¹ προϊσθημι may refer to ruling, leading, or caring for others.⁴² As is noted in the exegetical discussion of these passages, a semantic distinction should be made between leading and ruling. A ruler necessarily possesses decision-making authority over a group of people and the governmental or coercive power to enforce his decisions.⁴³ A leader may show the way or direct action without decision-making authority or accompanying power.

Those who are leading or ruling in 1 Thess 5:12 are not given titles, and no formal positions are mentioned. Paul was probably instructing the Thessalonians to recognize those who were informally functioning in the ways he described.⁴⁴ Since legitimate rulers usually hold recognized positions, προϊσταμένων ὑμῶν is best translated “those

Tim 3:4–5 (ASV, KJV, NKJV) and 5:17 (ASV, ESV, KJV, NASB, NKJV, NRSV). See also Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy*, 517; and Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 481. In 1 Thess 5:12, προϊσταμένων ὑμῶν is often translated “those who are over you” (ASV; AMP; ESV; KJV; NIV; NKJV). This translation, and the rendering of the NRSV, “have charge of you,” imply positional leadership and authority. See Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men?” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 187.

⁴¹ προϊσθημι is also listed as a gift in Rom 12:8.

⁴² See BDAG, 870; cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:464, 458.

⁴³ Louw and Nida note such a distinction when categorizing domains and sub-domains. They write, “The meanings in sub-domain A *Guide, Lead* imply a willingness on the part of others to be led. They also imply a minimum of control on the part of the one guiding or leading (compare Domain 37 *Control, Rule*).” Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:414. An examination of the definitions of rule, ruler, lead, and leader in *The Oxford English Dictionary* demonstrates their basic conceptual difference. For example, rule may be defined, “To govern, to exercise sovereign power over, to control with authority,” and lead may be defined, “To guide with reference to action or opinion; to bring by persuasion or counsel to or representation to a conclusion; to induce to do something.” J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary* (vol. 14; 2d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 230–31, 745.

⁴⁴ See L. Coenen, “προισθημι,” *NIDNTT* 1:197–98; Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 32; G. L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 247–48; Merkle, *The Elder and Overseer*, 98; Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 165; C. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 192; and Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 160.

who lead you” instead of “those who are over you.”⁴⁵ There is nothing in the context that specifies that Paul was referring to rulers. In 1 Tim 3:4–5, προϊστημι may mean ruling or leading. Both senses fit well and nothing in the context requires one or the other.

In 1 Tim 5:17, those who labor in preaching and teaching are described as a subset of οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι. Since preaching and teaching are more accurately described as activities of leading rather than ruling, then οἱ καλῶς προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι is best translated “the elders who lead well.”⁴⁶ In Rom 12:8, Paul included ὁ προϊστάμενος in a list of how members of the body have various functions and gifts (vv. 4, 6). Since ruling implies an official position, it does not seem to be a strictly functional spiritual gift. Therefore, ὁ προϊστάμενος is better understood as “the one who leads.”⁴⁷

Another term sometimes understood to refer indirectly to the ruling authority of elders is ἀθροιστέω in 1 Tim 2:12.⁴⁸ However, an examination of the context and structure of this passage reveals that ἀθροιστέω refers specifically to the authorization to teach.

Paul taught that only men are authorized to teach the community. Since elders are

⁴⁵ While “those who care” could also fit this context, the parallels in 1 Cor 16:15–16 and 1 Tim 5:17 suggest that “those who lead” is probably the sense here.

⁴⁶ P. T. O’Brien writes, “Their elders and leaders were to rule over the church, teaching the members, and urging them to follow the apostolic gospel and traditions (1 Thess 5:12–13; 1 Tim 3:5; 5:17; cf. 1 Cor 16:15–16).” P. T. O’Brien, “Church,” in *DPL* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 131. O’Brien’s description of ruling by teaching and urging reveals a question of semantics. It is suggested here that the term rule has clear governmental meanings and that teaching and urging are not ruling activities.

⁴⁷ Bruce writes, “In Rom 12:8 ὁ προϊστάμενος comes fourth in a series of five distinct categories of ministers. . . . Here too ὁ προϊστάμενος cannot be regarded as an official designation.” F. F. Bruce, *I and II Thessalonians* (WBC 45; Waco: Word, 1982), 118. See also L. Coenen, *NIDNTT* 1:197–98.

⁴⁸ See Moo, “What Does It Mean,” 187; and Thomas Schreiner, “Women in Ministry: Another Complementarian Perspective,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (ed. James R. Beck; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 311.

responsible for teaching the whole flock (Acts 20:28–33), then based on 1 Tim 2:11–15 a woman is not be permitted to be an elder.⁴⁹

Another passage often cited in support of ruling elders is Heb 13:17. A common translation is that the church is to “obey” its leaders. Since *πείθω* has the overall sense of persuasion,⁵⁰ then the response of obedience is of one who is convinced. It is possible that the translation “obey” does not best convey this meaning in English since its definition generally does not require understanding or persuasion.⁵¹ Instead, the community should “follow” its leaders. In concurrence with “follow,” the act of submission (*ὑπέικω*) also allows for freedom to yield (see discussion on *ὑποτάσσω* in 1 Cor 16:15–16).⁵² The survey of words that indicate submission to leaders in the qualifying passages demonstrate that submission may be offered voluntarily in love, based on functional ministry or order of authority as responsibility, without implying a governmental structure (1 Tim 2:11–12; 1 Thess 5:12–13; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:5).

⁴⁹ See Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 141.

⁵⁰ See BDAG, 791–92.

⁵¹ Lane writes, “This verb certainly demands obedience. But the specific quality of the obedience for which *πείθεσθαι* asks is not primarily derived from a respect for constituted structures of authority. It is rather the obedience that is won through persuasive conversation and that follows from it.” W. L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13* (WBC 47B; Dallas: Word, 1991), 554. Koester translates *πείθομαι* “heed.” He explains, “Some take the verb in a rigorous sense for the kind of obedience that would suit a servant or child . . . but this seems overstated.” C. R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 572. See also Bill Patterson, *Christ-centered Servant-team Leadership* (Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2006), 89; and Timothy M. Willis, “Obey Your Leaders’: Hebrews 13 and Leadership in the Church,” *ResQ* 36/4 (1994): 316–26.

⁵² Louw and Nida present *ὑποτάσσω* and *ὑπέικω* as synonyms with the same meaning. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:467. See also Samuel Bénétreau, *L’Épître aux Hébreux* (Vaux-sur-Seine, France: Edifac, 1989-1990), 230; John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter* (Calvin’s Commentaries; ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance; trans. William B. Johnston; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 207, 213; Getz, *Elders and Leaders*, 175–76; G. H. Guthrie, *Hebrews* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 442; Koester, *Hebrews*, 578; and Willis, “Obey Your Leaders,” 316–26.

While several passages contain terms that could legitimately convey the concept of ruling authority, based on the context of each one, none unequivocally grants ruling authority to elders. Instead, the church is called to submit to and follow the godly teaching and example of the elders. Furthermore, there are passages that may explicitly prohibit church elders and leaders from ruling the church. The term translated leader in Heb 13:7, 17, 24 (ἡγέομαι) also appears in Luke 22:26, where Jesus teaches that the prominent and leading positions among his followers are to be characterized by service, rather than control or rule (Matt 20:25–28; Mark 10:35–45; Luke 22:24–27). Based on the parallels and contrasts identified in this passage, ὁ ἡγούμενος should be translated “the leader” instead of “the ruler.”

It is also notable that all six terms used to describe the authority of the Gentiles as rulers are never used to describe Christian leadership anywhere in the New Testament. In fact, two of them are used to indicate how a Christian does not or should not lead (κυριεύω in 2 Cor 1:24 and κατακυριεύω in 1 Pet 5:3). The best translation of κατακυριεύω is “rule” instead of “lord it over.”⁵³ The translation “lord it over” implies that elders have governing authority.⁵⁴ Instead, Peter explained that elders are to serve by example, not by ruling over those entrusted to them (1 Pet 5:3).⁵⁵

⁵³ For “rule” as a legitimate translation see BDAG, 519; and Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:477.

⁵⁴ See Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, 316; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 915; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* (New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 192; and Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 248.

⁵⁵ See discussion of 1 Pet 5:1–5. See also Kenneth Willis Clark, “Meaning of [kata] kurieuein,” in *Studies in New Testament Language and Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 100; J. H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (AB 37B; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 830.

Another indication that elders primarily exercise teaching and leading authority and not ruling authority is that the common danger and source of insubordination they face is false doctrine (Acts 20:29–30; Titus 1:9–10). When there is such insubordination in the church, the solution is not legislation but correction and sound teaching (Acts 20:31–32; Titus 1:11, 13; cf. Acts 15). It is also notable in Heb 13:17 that no indication is given that the leaders possess any power of discipline with which to respond to insubordination. A failure to submit only results in groaning on the part of the leaders, instead of joy, and unprofitability to the believers (v. 17). This may be contrasted with the consequences of disobedience to “the governing authorities,” which may execute judgment with the sword (Rom 13:1–4).

The proposal that elders do not possess decision-making authority is also substantiated by observing the New Testament examples of decision making in the church. The selection of the Seven in Acts 6:1–6 is an example of a decision made in the community by the community. The action of the church in Antioch to send aid was the voluntary, collective action of its members (Acts 11:27–30; cf. 2 Cor 9:7). In matters of congregational action in Antioch and Jerusalem, such as sending representatives from the church, the corporate local church had decision-making authority (Acts 15:2–3, 22; cf. 2 Cor 8:19). The exercise of church discipline upon a member can only be carried out by the whole congregation (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5).⁵⁶ When settling disputes between brothers, the community, or at least the two parties involved in a dispute, may agree upon a

⁵⁶ “Evidence for the autonomy of the local church is garnered from the key role the congregation is given in the process of church discipline. . . . Because the final step in the church disciplining process is given to the church, this indicates that the local congregation is to deal with its own problems and does not need a higher ecclesiastical body making decision for it. As believers who are filled with the Holy Spirit and gifted according to God’s wisdom, they are capable of following God’s Word and God’s will.” Merkle, *40 Questions*, 41. See also Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 107; and O’Brien, “Church,” 131.

qualified arbiter from among the brothers to decide their case (1 Cor 6:1–8).⁵⁷ Finally, the whole congregation is responsible for discerning true teaching and valid prophecy in public worship (1 Cor 14:29).

One example cited as evidence of decision-making by church leaders is Acts 15. However, the resolution of the Jerusalem Council was the teaching of respected teachers, instead of the legislation of a ruling body. Another possible example of decision-making in the church by leaders is the appointment of elders by the apostles. The example of the appointment of the seven servants in Acts 6:1–6 is helpful because a distinction is made between their selection and appointment. The congregation selected the servants, and the apostles appointed them. Therefore, the appointment of elders by Paul and Barnabas, Timothy, or Titus does not necessarily indicate that they selected them.⁵⁸

The qualifications of the servants in Acts 6:3 and the elders in 1 Tim 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 demonstrate the importance of the involvement of the whole congregation in affirming the godliness and respected reputation of the leaders.⁵⁹ First Timothy 5:22–25 also emphasizes the importance of observing prospective elders over time to ensure their purity. The New Testament records of elder appointment implies that the elders were members of the community who had proven their qualifications and skill.⁶⁰

The involvement of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas, Timothy, and Titus does not provide examples of decision-making by leaders. Instead, it demonstrates the importance of the initiative, teaching, and guidance of the leaders in the appointment of new

⁵⁷ See Cowen, *Who Rules the Church*, 89–91.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁵⁹ See Larry Kreider, *The Biblical Role of Elders for Today's Church: New Testament Leadership Principles for Equipping Elders* (Ephrata, PA: House to House Publications, 2004), 48.

leadership. Respected leaders within a community guide the congregation in making wise choices and represent the congregation as they confer leadership authority by appointing them. The commissioning of Timothy by the council of elders in 1 Tim 4:14 presents the possibility that elders are an appropriate group of leaders to teach about, oversee the selection of, and appoint new leaders.

The appointment of elders in the church provides a good illustration of the dynamic and spiritual decision-making process presented in the New Testament. Not only are the congregation and current leadership involved, but the prospective elders must also serve freely of their own conviction (1 Pet 5:2; 1 Tim 3:1). The elders' willingness, however, is not merely a matter of personal desire. They serve "according to God" (1 Pet 5:2). It is God who entrusts portions of his flock into the care of the elders (1 Pet 5:2). The Holy Spirit made the Ephesian elders overseers (Acts 20:28), just as he called Paul and Barnabas to their mission (Acts 13:1–3) and Timothy to his ministry through prophesy (1 Tim 1:18; 4:14). Jesus Christ sovereignly bestows the gifts of leading, shepherding, and teaching (Rom 12:8; Eph 4:7–11). Accordingly, elders will be held accountable for the care they provide to God's church (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:4).

That Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd of the flock and the head of the church is not presented in the New Testament as a sentimental idealism but as a dynamic reality. The supreme goal of the Jerusalem council was to discern the will of God, not to create human rules. The ultimate authority among the apostles, elders, and the whole church was God and his will for his people (Acts 15:1–35). Although God gives teachers and leaders to his people, they are not to be exalted above the rest of the brothers and

⁶⁰ See Kreider, *The Biblical Role of Elders*, 16.

sisters.⁶¹ God is to remain in focus as the one Father and Jesus Christ as the one teacher of his people (Matt 23:8–12). Human leadership in the church, then, does not include ruling and legislation⁶² but a body of believers following Christ together with the benefit of the leadership of godly, gifted members.⁶³

If Jesus Christ can truly lead the local church through his Word and Spirit then there is no need for rulers in the church.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the nature of the gospel and the community of faith do not permit rulers in the church.⁶⁵ Wayne Grudem writes:

In the new covenant, membership in the church and allegiance to Christ must be voluntary. They cannot be compelled by family or by the state. In fact, faith in Christ, to be truly held and practiced, cannot be compelled by force. If it is compelled, it changes its essential quality and is no longer a voluntary act of the individual, and cannot be true faith.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Barth writes, “Their place is not above but below the great number of saints who are not adorned by resounding titles. Every one of the special ministers is a *servus servorum Dei*. He is a ‘pastor’ of God’s flock, who understand himself as a minister to ministers.” Barth, *Ephesians*, 2:481.

⁶² “The church does not have authority on its own to legislate what is morally right and wrong in an absolute sense, for the authority to define right and wrong belongs to God alone (see Rom 1:32; 2:16; 3:4–8; 9:20; Ps 119; 89, 142, 160; Matt 5:18). The church can only declare and teach what God has already commanded in his Word.” Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 891.

⁶³ See Merkle, *40 Questions*, 99–100.

⁶⁴ Lightfoot acknowledges the teaching of the priesthood of believers, but then claims that it does not work. “It must be evident that no society of men could hold together without officers, without rules, without institutions of any kind; and the Church of Christ is not exempt from this universal law. The conception [of the priesthood of all believers] in short is strictly an *ideal*.” Lightfoot, “The Christian Ministry,” 181.

⁶⁵ McKenzie writes, “In a sense far more profound than in democratic constitutions, authority in the Church must be supported by the free consent of those whom it governs. There is an irremovable opposition between love and constraint. This element of the mystery is surely the most difficult to incorporate into practice. There are so many other ways in which authority can make decisions, all of them recommended by good political, or military, or commercial experience, all much quicker and more expeditious, and all protecting authority from the need of humbling itself before those whom it governs—that is, from adopting the attitude recommended by Jesus in the gospels. All of these ways achieve the end of The Organization more surely than the way of the mystery can achieve it; all these ways fail to achieve what the way of the mystery achieves, the fulfillment of each person in the Church.” McKenzie, *Authority*, 181.

⁶⁶ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 892.

Since there are no decisions made or actions taken in the church that are not a matter of faith, then the voluntary yielding of each member to one another, to leadership, and to Christ is imperative.

Authority as Influence

Elders have authority *de jure* of position that grants them the authorization to carry out certain responsibilities. The authority *de facto* that elders possess is not that of power but that of influence.⁶⁷ According to the New Testament, the kind of influence that elders are to exercise is based on their credibility, character, relationships, and skill.⁶⁸ This is in contrast to influence based on power of persuasion, charismatic personality, or political maneuvering. In the case of church elders, their authority *de jure* of position is, to some extent, dependent upon their authority *de facto* of influence.

Before a man is recognized as an elder, he exercises authority *de facto* of influence in the church.⁶⁹ Since the gifts of shepherding, leadership, and teaching are not confined to the elders' office (Eph 4:11; Rom 12:8; 1 Cor 16:15–18; 1 Thess 5:12), members of the community may demonstrate their abilities in these areas before

⁶⁷ Campenhausen writes, "The dispensation of the Spirit and of the new righteousness . . . possesses in its gentleness and moderation a different, more powerful and more resplendent glory than that of the old Mosaic law, with its letter that killed, because this dispensation is effected through candour, love, and patience, and the winning and reconciling power of forgiveness, and no longer through punishment and destruction, imposed by an external authority." Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 51.

⁶⁸ Calvin connects these qualifications with authority. "He ought not to be marked by any disgrace that would detract from his authority. . . . Thus, in order that the bishops may not lack authority, he gives charge that those who are chosen should be of good and honourable reputation, and free of any extraordinary fault." Calvin, *The Epistles to Timothy*, 223.

⁶⁹ "The policy of Paul and his colleagues seems to have been to wait until qualities of spiritual leadership displayed themselves in certain members of a church and then to urge the others to acknowledge and respect those as leaders. One of the most obvious qualities of leadership was a readiness to serve the church and care for its needs. Such leaders did not do the appropriate work because they had been appointed as leaders; they were recognized as leaders because they were seen to be doing the work." Bruce, *I and II Thessalonians*, 120.

becoming elders. This is implied by the prerequisites of leading and teaching given by Paul (1 Tim 3:2–4; Titus 1:9). The community may also observe the ability to lead and care for others by his ministry to his family (1 Tim 3:3–4; Titus 1:6). These qualifications also require elders to relate rightly to others and to have established credibility inside and outside of the community (1 Tim 3:2–3, 7; Titus 1:6–8). Such relational skills and credibility establish and maintain the elders’ ability to lead others effectively. This again emphasizes the fact that prospective elders were members of the community in which they were to serve. They were observed as men in ministry and proven as men of character (1 Tim 5:22–25).⁷⁰

Not only are their character and ministry skills prerequisites for becoming elders, they are also necessary for carrying out their responsibilities. Elders are uniquely authorized to teach and lead, but since these are not governmental responsibilities enforced by structure or power, then this authorization does not guarantee success. The reason given for why the church should honor and submit to their leaders is the work that they do, not their office (1 Cor 16:15–18; 1 Thess 5:12–13; 1 Tim 5:17–18; Heb 13:7, 17).⁷¹ They are called upon to pray for the sick because of their exemplary righteousness and faith (Jas 5:14–18). They are to lead by the example of a godly life (Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:3). Therefore, although elders are authorized to lead, the real influence of their leadership is based upon sound teaching, wise leadership, and godly character. Elders

⁷⁰ Kreider writes, “The early church did not recruit elders from a distant seminary. Seminary experience was not a prerequisite to leadership in the New Testament church. . . . Elders were found from within the local church and developed into leaders over time on the basis of their willingness to serve and their moral and spiritual maturity.” Kreider, *Biblical Role*, 16.

⁷¹ “The congregation was responsible for discerning true from false ministries. Ecstatic utterances notwithstanding, ministers of the word were subject to the community for confirmation of their authenticity; false teaching or immoral conduct would lead to a negative verdict.” Brash, *Pastoral Authority*, 211.

must also maintain their purity of character in order to keep their position in the church. If they do not, they may be disqualified from their positions by being publicly rebuked on the evidence of two or three witnesses (1 Tim 5:19–21).⁷²

That elders in sin are to be confronted demonstrates that the church is not to submit to their leaders blindly. Instead, they are to follow as those who are persuaded (Heb 13:17).⁷³ Elders and leaders who teach twisted things are not to be tolerated (Acts 20:29–31; Titus 1:9–16). The ultimate basis of the authority of an elder, therefore, is not his office or his authorization to lead and teach. The basis for his authority is the alignment of his life and teaching with the truth of God’s word.⁷⁴ While elders have authority *de jure* of position and responsibility, the primary authority that elders exercise in the community is authority *de facto* of influence based on sound teaching, wise leadership, and godly character.⁷⁵

⁷² See David A. Mappes, “Studies on the Role of the New Testament Elder: The Discipline of a Sinning Elder,” *BSac* 154 (July–Sept 1997): 338–39; and Strauch, *Biblical Eldership*, 218.

⁷³ The dynamic of Paul’s authority as a teacher is also true of elders. “However imperiously Paul the apostle may demand a hearing for Christ, however ingenuously he may put himself forward as a pattern for imitation, yet he cannot simply give orders. He does not himself create the norm, which is then to be obeyed without further ado, but instead the congregation of those who possess the Spirit must follow him in freedom; and it is this freedom which he has in mind when he addresses them. They must themselves recognize in his instructions the ‘standard of teaching’ to which they are committed, and to which Paul in a sense merely ‘recalls’ them, in order that they may affirm it for themselves, and freely and joyfully make it their own once more.” Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority*, 47.

⁷⁴ Schreiner explains, “Leaders in the churches exercised authority, but their authority is always subordinate to the gospel. . . . Even Peter (and Barnabas!) are to be resisted and rebuked if they ‘do not live in accord with the truth of the gospel’ (Gal 2:14). Authority ultimately resides in the gospel, not the ministers themselves.” Schreiner, *Paul*, 393. “Paul’s emphasis upon models rather than positions itself indicates that it is the person, not the office, that is central for him and that government of the church has more to do with a way of life than a designated post.” R. Banks, “Church Order and Government,” in *DPL* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 133. See also Merkle, *40 Questions*, 97.

⁷⁵ Schreiner writes, “The overseer-elders . . . are to teach and lead. These two functions . . . provide the superstructure under which overseer-elders do their work. Their primary calling is to pass on the tradition and truth of the gospel. Their leadership, in other words, is not primarily bureaucratic Overseer-elders exert their leadership through their teaching ministry and by their adherence to the gospel (1 Tim 5:17).” Schreiner, *Paul*, 389–90.