



How to Choose Elders

B. Nelson

April, 2018

Luke writes in Acts of the practice of the early church: “*Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers...*” (Acts 15:22, ESV). It was the early church practice and therefore our authoritative example, to choose Elders to serve among us at the Landing. This we will do, Lord-willing, at our April 29th Member’s Meeting.

My aim in this short article is to help you and I make that choice in a manner that would please the Lord who owns, designs, runs and receives all glory among His blood-bought local church.

How to Choose Elders

From this one verse you can see five features of Elder-choice very plainly.

1) Current Elders lead the choosing. That is the already-active elders, those whose lives and wisdom are known to all, are expected to know the members well enough to suggest to the corporate body who the future elders should be.

2) The whole church chooses the elders. Whether it was a vote or a discussion we don’t know, but it is as clear as can be that it seemed good “to the whole church” that certain men be appointed to leadership.

3) The men they choose are brothers. Their faith in Christ is active and well known.

4) They are leaders among the brethren. In other words they are not chosen for leadership, they are identified because they already lead. In the local church leadership is not an office, but a lifestyle.

5) They are plural. The New Testament never holds up as a final goal a church led by a singular local elder. The singular elder model, which may be familiar to some, came to popularity in the west in the last century, but finds no foundation in Scripture. God’s good design for a plurality of elders supplies many blessings such as: balance, wisdom, unity, longevity and health.

Guidelines

So at The Landing the following guidelines for choosing our Elders are helpful:

Anyone involved with The Landing, including members of the active Elder Council, can recommend an individual for consideration to serve as an Elder.

The active Elder Council will decide when and how many people need to be set apart as an Elder for the next term.

The active Elder Council will screen individuals who aspire to serve or who have been recommended to serve. They may interview individuals to determine whether they meet the Biblical qualifications and share a heart for The Landing's mission and vision. Consideration will also be given to the skills and abilities needed on the Elder Council at the time.

Once the Elders have screened potential candidates, they will recommend to the church those they believe would best serve the interests of The Landing for the next term.

These individuals must be affirmed by the church before they can begin their service. This typically constitutes a presentation of potential Elders to the congregation along with a request for feedback to be provided over following two weeks. Any questions or objections should be considered and addressed within that period (the time period could be extended if necessary)—and the Elder Council will make a final decision after all feedback is received/resolved.

The Elders may be comprised of both staff and non-staff individuals.

The Scriptures

Here are the most important passages of Scripture I would ask you to read and pray through as you prepare to come to the Member's Meeting at The Landing on April 29th.

Acts 20:17-38,

"Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he

obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship."

Titus 1:5-16,

"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."

1 Timothy 3:1-7,

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

1 Peter 5:1-5,

“So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

From these key passages of Scripture we can succinctly describe what qualifications Elders must possess in increasing measure and what kinds of activity they engage in. First their qualifications.

Qualifications

Elder qualifications can be summarized this way:

- A. Believing men whose private and public lives are above reproach because they are men demonstrating the Spirit’s gift of self-control.
- B. Men who, if married, are serving well their wives and children to lead them to trust and serve the Lord Jesus Christ with joy.
- C. Men whose character under pressure points to faithfulness in Jesus Christ.
- D. Men who lead, not motivated by the praise and influence of others; but lead consciously and chiefly motivated to serve the honor of Christ.
- E. Men who love with Christ’s love the flock he purchased with his own blood under their care. Nurturing and equipping their increasing joy in Christ must be the Elders’ main aim.
- F. Men whose security and hope are not in money, but in Christ.
- G. Men whose high level of self-awareness leads them to an ever-increasing humility and suspicion of their own opinions and experience mingled with an ever-growing confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture and skill in applying God’s grace and truth.
- H. Men whose reputation in society is as that of a steady, authentic, zealous witness for Jesus Christ.
- I. Men who refuse to posture themselves for self-advancement, but would rather decrease than increase, whose keen sense of weakness magnifies Christ’s perfect strength.
- J. Men for whom the glory of God in their lives, among their families, the church, the local community and on the earth is the highest and best conceivable good.

The Activity of Elders

- A. Elders will focus primarily on the ministry of the Word of God and prayer. This means they will be responsible for the doctrinal, teaching, vision and pastoral care direction of The Landing (Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:12).

- B. Elders are responsible to equip the church members for the work of ministry. (Ephesians 4:11-16). Leadership development comprises the on-going work of the Eldership to ensure the healthy longevity The Landing and Christ's glory.
- C. Elders are responsible to provide general oversight to the church. (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3),
 - 1. In matters concerning the heart of the church, such as vision, character and values
 - 2. In matters of doctrine (Acts 15; 16:4)
 - 3. In matters of church discipline (Hebrews 13:17)
 - 4. In practical matters (Acts 6:1-6; 11:29-30; James 5:14)
 - 5. In decision-making authority
 - 6. In matters of staff and ministry team oversight
 - 7. In concert with the staff and volunteer ministry, the oversight of ministry programming.

Few acts any local church undertakes carry as much weight and influence as choosing for itself leaders. God has final sway and can overcome any resistance; but rarely do churches with biblically unqualified leaders thrive for a long time. Similarly, churches that choose carefully, under the Spirit's clear guidance, godly leaders can often expect decades and decades of blessings to come. May it be so for The Landing!

In fulfillment of these biblical instructions and in response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, I want to put forward these three men as qualified, proven and willing candidates for Eldership at The Landing.

Paul Anderson
Howard Hayes
Keven Johnson

Because our constitution calls for definite terms for active Elder service, this appointed Elder Council will actively seek to identify, train and affirm new elders as a regular part of its perpetual ministry. In this way the continuity of leadership is well served.

If you have any questions, observations, or reflections on this process or on Scripture or on each of these brothers, feel free to contact them or me. We are glad to have any discussion with you because we are eager to serve your faith in this important act of choosing our church leaders

Warmly in Christ's Love,

Brent