

# The Role of the Elder

The following document outlines the biblical role of Elders and the practical principles applied by the Elders at Watermark Community Church.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE ELDER

- It is the model in Scripture. (Acts 6:2-4; 15:1-2; 20:17, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4, James 5:14)
- It is the means of leading individual churches. (Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23)

## FUNCTION OF THE ELDER

- **Daily concern for the church** (2 Corinthians 11:28)
- **Model 1 Peter 5:3**
- **If counseling from experience, you want to be able to say this is how I did it in line with Scripture.**
- **Teach/know doctrine** (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9, Acts 6:2-4)
- **Protect against/refute false doctrine**
- **Shepherd/spiritual care** (1 Peter 5:2, Hebrews 13:17)
  - Sexual sin is most commonly dealt with.
- **Discipline** (Matthew 18)
  - Divorces, drugs, and porn are most commonly dealt with.
- **Practical Care** (James 5:14)

## QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

- Above reproach
- One wife: If you don't have a good marriage, how are you going to lead the bride of Christ?
- Sober-minded/self-controlled
- Respected in the church
- Hospitable
- Able to teach
- Not a drunk
- Not quarrelsome
- Not a lover of money
- Manages household well
- Not a new Christian
- Respected by non-believers
- Humble
- Holy/set-apart
- Disciplined
- Knows the Bible and firm in doctrinal conviction
- Able to refute false doctrine boldly

## BECOMING AN ELDER

- 3 M's
  - Maturity: general and spiritual
  - Marriage: healthy and spouse's maturity
    - If there is not a ministry at home, then there is not a ministry with others.
  - Margin: time
- Several personal meetings
- Time with family, community, and business associates
- 35 doctrinal and current event questions: written and oral "exam"
- Group setting with other core leaders for multiple weeks
- Staff feedback
- Church body feedback

### WHY BECOME AN ELDER?

- Prayer and asked/called
- Aspiration to do whatever God wants (1 Timothy 3:1)
- Counsel of trusted, faithful friends (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 20:18)

### WHAT IS MOST CHALLENGING?

- Doing the hard things that need to be done—the last one percent (Galatians 1:10). Silence is support.
- Account to God/higher call (James 3:1)
- Time commitment (Acts 6:1-4)
  - Elder meetings/prayer
  - Various teaching opportunities
  - Daily people stopping to talk
- Prioritization
  - With wife?
  - With family?
  - Part of Elder role?
- Need to know doctrine deeply and broadly
- Pastoral care situations

### WHAT IS MOST REWARDING?

- Serving the King
- Being encouraged by all the stories of life change
- Seeing the gifts God has given as He uses them
- Spending time with other godly men
- Increased motivation and desire to practice spiritual disciplines
- Other people praying for you

### DISTINCTIVES OF WATERMARK'S ELDERS

- Selection is not just a vote but includes doctrinal testing and years of modeling faithfulness, among other elements.
- The Elders are not an approval board but primarily focus on shepherding the flock.
- There is no defined term.
- Significant time commitment
  - Weekly prayer time: 1.5-3 hours on Fridays
  - Weekly meeting on theology, staffing, partnering requests, etc.: approx. 3 hours on Mondays
  - Community issues: counsel and support
  - Care, correction, and discipline (requires a lot of time)
  - Leadership requests from staff
  - Special events
  - Fellowship time with the other Elders
  - Estimates on weekly time commitment:
    - Light: 10 hours
    - Medium: 15 hours
    - Heavy: 30-40 hours
- Relational component
  - Deep authenticity and accountability
  - Spend time together to enjoy one-another

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* by Alexander Strauch
- *Introducing our Elders: A Great Day or the Beginning of the End* (available at watermark.org)
- *Leadership Like None Other* (available at wordsfromwags.com)
- *Come & See: Everything You Ever Wanted in the One Place You Would Never Look* by Todd Wagner

# Elder Questions

*Please give a short paragraph answer as well as a longer more in-depth answer of each of the following. Answers should be given both pastorally and theologically. Be able to defend and explain your position from Scripture. Be able to explain the weakness of your position as well as articulate the best arguments against each of your beliefs.*

## Orthodoxy

1. What is the purpose and calling of an Elder? What role and function does one have in the local church?
2. What is the role and purpose of the Church? How do you measure its success?
3. What is the gospel? How would you articulate the gospel to a non-believer?
4. What is the Bible? How is it different from other religious texts? How should a Christian use the Bible?
5. What is the Trinity?
6. Who is Jesus? Discuss the significance of Jesus in detail. What is the hypostatic union? How is it significant?
7. Who is the Holy Spirit? What role does the Holy Spirit play in the life of a believer? What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? What are spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit, and how are they used?
8. What is the doctrine of redemption? How do you reconcile man's responsibility and God's sovereignty in the salvation of a believer?
9. What is discipleship? How is it relevant to a believer, and how would you go about the process of discipleship?
10. What is baptism? Who is it for? What does it do, mean, or symbolize? What is your view on infant baptism?
11. What is your view of Creation? How does your view compare to other views? How is a believer's answer to this topic significant to their Christian life?
12. What is your view on God's plan for the nation of Israel? Has the Church replaced Israel?
13. What is your eschatological view? How does your stance on this matter impact your theological views?
14. What are three or four areas (orthodoxy) where Watermark disagrees with other major denominations (i.e. Methodist, Catholic, PCA, Lutheran, etc...)? What are three or four distinctives (orthopraxy) of Watermark that differ with other major denominations (i.e. Methodist, Catholic, PCA, Lutheran, etc...)?
15. Why do trials occur? What is the purpose of suffering?

## Othopraxy

16. What role in leadership do you believe women should have within the church? In what context should they teach? Are there any restrictions?
17. On what basis, if any, are divorce and remarriage allowable? Explain. Can a person who has been divorced be remarried? How do you interpret the "exception clause" found in the Gospel of Matthew? Can a man who has been divorced serve as an Elder?
18. What is your understanding of God's design for human sexuality? How does your understanding coincide with the present LGBTQ+ movement? How should believers act regarding this issue? How would you respond to the assertion that Christians today are on the "wrong side of history" when it comes to gay marriage?
19. What is Church Membership? How would you support it biblically? What makes one a member of a church?
20. What is biblical community? Should a church require it, and if so, why?

21. What is biblical accountability? Are there any areas that are off-limits within an accountability relationship? Why or why not? Are there any topics that are off limits within your current community group?
22. What is church discipline? How would you support it biblically? How should it be used within the body?
23. What role does the Old Testament Law play in the life of a believer today?
24. How should a Christian think about politics? What is the framework a believer should use to decide who to support politically?
25. What is the will of God? How can a believer discern God's will in the day to day matters of life?
26. Is it okay for believers to drink alcohol? What are "areas of conscience," and what does the Bible say about them? What are areas of conscience where you have decided to restrict yourself where Scripture allows for freedom? In other words, what are some personal convictions in your life?
27. What happens to babies who die in infancy or early childhood? Do they go to heaven?
28. What is a biblical view of monetary giving? Is tithing biblical? What is different between giving in the Old and New Testament? Do you have a personal framework for giving to the church versus giving to other ministries? What other philosophies about charitable giving do you hold that would be beneficial for us to understand?
29. What does it mean to be pro-life? How would you counsel a couple or individual who was considering an abortion? How would you counsel a couple or individual who was considering adoption or foster care?
30. Is it okay for believers to use contraception? Artificially inseminate? Freeze embryos? Why or why not?
31. Is debt biblically allowable? Should Christians have debt? Are there different types of debt? What personal debt do you currently have? Who spoke into the decision to take on that debt, and how did you get comfortable doing so?
32. Should we be a place that is "confidential" or "safe"? What is the difference?
33. What role should counseling have in the life of a believer? What should counseling look like and in which contexts should it occur? Should we ever recommend a licensed counselor?
34. Are there any aspects of Watermark's Seven Essentials or Full Doctrinal Statement that you either disagree with or lack a firm position on?
35. Are there any beliefs, lifestyle, habits or history that would surprise the Elders or are inconsistent with their values?