

SOVEREIGN GRACE

PERSPECTIVES

Reflections on Doctrine and Practice in the Local Church

Polity

Serving and Leading the Local Church

Dave Harvey



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Sovereign Grace and the Glorious Mystery of Election by C.J. Mahaney with Kevin Meath
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Each issue of *Sovereign Grace Perspectives* attempts to communicate our current understanding of the topic addressed. Our theology continues to develop as we seek to grow in our understanding of Scripture.

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Polity

Serving and Leading the Local Church

Dave Harvey

Polity. A small word towing large freight. A strange word that defines, unites, and divides. By it churches have been formed, and because of it churches have fallen. Polity is often controversial, occasionally neglected, but always significant in the vigor or demise of local churches.

Etymologically, the word comes from the Greek term πολιτεία (politeia) meaning “citizenship, government, constitution, polity.”¹ In church history, it has come to describe the governing structure through which local churches are organized and led.²

Polity is unavoidable; all churches organize themselves into some form of government. It may be eclectic and hard to pin down, springing from the history, biblical study, and even the bad experiences of each group represented. Or it may be quite clear. Some groups have identified so strongly with their polity that it is announced in their self-designation—Episcopalian, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and the like.

Like most church associations, Sovereign Grace Ministries has a defined form of church government based upon our best attempts at biblical theology. While our convictions have been formed and applied during two decades of church ministry, no polity warrants

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the passion that should be reserved exclusively for Christ and him crucified. Indeed, we have endeavored to reflect Wayne Grudem's attitude and approach to this important but controversial subject.

...At the outset it must be said that the form of church government is not a major doctrine like the Trinity, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, or the authority of Scripture... And church history attests that several different forms of government have worked fairly well for several centuries... It seems to me, then, that there ought to be room for evangelical Christians to differ amicably over this question, in the hope that further understanding may be gained.³

Tempered by the wisdom of Grudem's maturity and civility, we resist all impulses to canonize our polity.⁴

This paper presents a narrow look at some ingredients that form the foundation for local-church polity within Sovereign Grace Ministries. While it is only introductory, it should provide the reader with a sufficient understanding of the theology behind our methodology. The Sovereign Grace Ministries apologetic stands upon a tripod of principles that lift and support our local-church government:

- 1) The Principle of Plurality Among Elders⁵
- 2) The Principle of the Presiding Pastor
- 3) The Principle of Partnership with Apostolic Ministry

The Principle of Plurality among Elders

The apostolic churches seem, in general, to have had a plurality of elders as well as deacons.⁶

Thus we begin with an assertion that will ground and guide this entire document. *Local-church leadership in the New Testament was a shared endeavor.* Churches were formed and leaders were appointed to the offices of elder and deacon. These leaders for local-church ministry did not stand alone or independent, but were called and formed into teams of two or more. Thus, it is said that the New Testament leadership, particularly eldership, was not singular but

plural.⁷ (For the overwhelming evidence on plurality in ministry in the New Testament, note Addendum I, “Biblical Evidence for Plurality of Leadership.”)

In observing this evidence of plurality, Alexander Strauch has written, “Jesus Christ gave the church plurality of leadership.”⁸ Kenneth Gangel adds, “The plurality of team leadership...surface[s] very early in the New Testament text.”⁹ But what exactly is this “plurality” that appears so common in New Testament leadership? And what implication does the principle of plurality raise for those committed to building local churches? These are important issues that deserve our serious consideration.

What Exactly is Plurality?

The term “plurality” simply reflects the scriptural evidence that New Testament churches were led by more than one leader.¹⁰ Because the apostles, elders, and deacons of the New Testament are found laboring together as partners on a team, they are said to be enjoying “plurality” (see Addendum I). Within Sovereign Grace Ministries, we call this principle of plurality “team ministry.” It is the strength and unity of team ministry that provides the foundation from which elders serve the church and stand accountable for their lives and doctrine.

Why is Plurality a Central Feature for Local-Church Government Within Sovereign Grace Ministries?

- 1) Because it is strongly supported in Scripture (see Addendum 1).
- 2) Because it embodies the New Testament principle of the interdependence and diversity of gifts among members of Christ’s body (Ro 12:4-6; 1Co 12)
- 3) Because it disseminates the authority and responsibility for the church to more than one person, thereby protecting both the church and the elder.

It is important to note that the entire eldership is entrusted with the responsibility to govern and lead the church, not simply the senior pastor.¹¹ In other words, the responsibility inheres in the group, not the man.¹² That God assigns the responsibility to a group is not a new approach to church polity,

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for it has long been the practice and approach of our Reformed brethren. In describing this approach, Wayne Grudem reminds his readers that the session (the body of elders in a Reformed church) holds the actual governing authority for the local church:

“In this system, each local church elects elders to a session.¹³ The pastor of the church will be one of the elders in the session, *equal in authority to the other elders. This session has governing authority over the local church*”¹⁴ (emphasis mine).

Indeed, Berkhof goes a step further by indicating that it is the Reformed practice of co-equality among elders that distinguishes their polity from other groups. He writes,

Reformed churches differ, on the one hand, from all those churches in which the government is in the hands of a single prelate or presiding elder, and on the other hand, from those in which it rests with the people in general. They do not believe in any one man rule, be he an elder, a pastor, or a bishop; neither do they believe in popular government. They choose ruling elders as their representatives, and these, together with the minister(s), form a council or consistory for the government of the local church.¹⁵

- 4) Because no one elder possesses the full complement of gifts that God uses to bless and build the church.
- 5) Because it creates a structure where men must model the unity that should ultimately characterize the church (Jn 17:23; Ro 15:5; Eph 4:3, 13; Col 3:14).
- 6) Because it creates a “multitude of counselors” (Pr 15:22; 24:6) for leading and guiding the church.
- 7) Because it creates a defined venue of accountability for life and doctrine among the leaders (1Ti 4:16; Titus 1:6; Jas 5:16).

Bill Hull summarizes the essential point well in saying, “Regardless of what polity conclusions one draws, the leadership structure of the local church placed authority in the hands of a small group of men, not just one man.”¹⁶

Is a Plurality Possible for Church Planters?

Perceptive church planters can become confused, even discouraged, when trying to reconcile the New Testament pattern with the realities of limited personnel and finances in a new church.

Nevertheless, we believe that church planters can uphold the spirit and principle of plurality by launching a new church with the explicit intention of identifying and positioning a second elder as quickly as possible. One method of supplementing the church-planting elder in the absence of a plurality has been to establish a “leadership team.” This non-governmental group is composed of men with character and insight, drawn from the church-planting team. Their charter is to provide the single elder with an alternative voice of counsel, a context for relationship, and a forum for accountability. These groups are often disbanded upon the achievement of plurality with the addition of a second elder.

Within Sovereign Grace Ministries, plurality in new or smaller churches is also served by more direct access to apostolic involvement.¹⁷ Propelled to the fields without the benefits or blessing of a plurality, church planters draw heavily from the care and counsel of the apostolic team. The apostolic delegate becomes an additional voice of influence for the church planter as the latter goes about forming a plurality of local leadership.

Does a Plurality Necessitate That Elders Be Paid Staff?

While there is plenty of evidence that leaders are worthy of remuneration and that a compensated clergy was a New Testament reality (see Mt 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1Co 9:8-14; Gal 6:6; 1Ti 5:17-18; cf. 1Pe 5:2; Titus 1:7,11), there is no biblical mandate requiring elders to fill salaried positions. Indeed, there are some situations, such as church poverty or persecution, in which the financial support of full-time elders may become impractical or impossible. Such elders are servants of whom this world is not worthy, laboring diligently on earth for treasure laid up in heaven.

However, neither the deep respect we hold for these men, nor the polity flexibility that Scripture allows, should minimize the strategic benefits of a full-time eldership. Sovereign Grace Ministries adopted this practice near its inception, and the

resultant fruit has only emboldened us to advocate this approach wherever possible. This fruit includes:

- 1) An efficient eldership—strategic planning and decision-making are greatly enhanced by having men united in schedule and locale.
- 2) A connected eldership—relationships and biblical fellowship are greatly facilitated through working together closely.
- 3) An undistracted eldership—men are not adding the burden of governing and pastoring the local church to the demands of their vocation.
- 4) A compensated eldership—the church is afforded the opportunity to apply the many passages that command financial remuneration for those dedicating their lives to pastoral ministry.

For these reasons, the pastors of Sovereign Grace Ministries operate, where feasible, in a plurality of full-time elders. From the corridors of this structure, we are positioned to lead the church functionally and model our values effectively. Yet the concept of “plurality” is not entirely sufficient to describe our approach to eldership rule. Indeed, our plurality is modified in a strategic way to reflect some vital themes in Scripture, enhance our order, and elevate our efficiency as servants of Christ.

What’s the modification?

The Principle of the Presiding Pastor

The presiding pastor, or senior pastor, is a role drawn generally from the broad pattern of order resonant in Scripture, and is specifically informed by the summons to humility displayed through Christ’s example from the second chapter of Philippians. While neither the pattern nor the application carries in itself sufficient force to sustain an apologetic for senior pastors, they unite to bring greater understanding of the role. Central to this understanding is the fact that the role of presiding pastor must always be based on the foundation of plurality. As Bill Hull said,

“...the permission for that person [the senior pastor] to lead comes from a plurality of leaders.”¹⁸ Otherwise, the senior pastor may drift towards autocracy and the eldership can squander the opportunity to demonstrate the unity of biblical leadership.

Leaders have always been essential players on the stage of redemptive history. If Scripture is a record of God’s activity, that activity has often been carried out through the agency of human leadership. For reasons locked in the eternal counsel, when God chose to penetrate the earth with his purpose—revealing his heart, releasing his blessing, mobilizing his people, etc.—he often began with a single leader.

The Old Testament offers a gallery of names that remind us of God’s practice of using *one* to influence *many*. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Nehemiah, Jeremiah; the list is quite long. In the Gospels, we are informed that Christ chose the twelve (Luke 6:12–16), but ordained Peter to fill a uniquely prominent role.¹⁹ In New Testament times, the Jewish synagogues were ruled by a council of elders, but each council had a chairman, or “ruler of the synagogue” (Luke 8:41; Acts 18:8, 17). The early church enjoyed a plurality of elders, yet it appears that James’ role carried unique authority (Acts 15:13; 21:18; 1Co 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:12.). In like manner, Paul led a growing team of apostolic men. In the Trinity there is a head (1Co 11:3), in the church there is a head (Eph 5:23), and in the home there is a “head” (Eph 5:23).²⁰ These examples, and many others, illustrate the notion that biblical leadership, although shared, is most frequently organized and facilitated by a central figure.²¹

Historically, this concept of a “leader leading leaders” has been captured by the Latin phrase “*primus inter pares*,”²² meaning “first among equals.”²³ Reverend Eleazer Savage offers us a Baptist perspective on this designation from the mid-nineteenth century:

“The want of united action among the different presbyters of the same church when they were all of equal authority,” and the order of public deliberations requiring that there should be some one “invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments and executing the resolutions” of the church, led to the appointment of one of their number as permanent president or moderator. The title bishop, which was applied to all the elders, came after a while to be applied exclu-

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sively to the president, —elder, as Justin in the middle of the second century still calls him, merely to distinguish him from his equal co-elders. He was not superior to them, but only “first among equals.”²⁴

There is little originality in Sovereign Grace Ministries; the appointment and designation of senior pastors hardly sets us apart. However, this practice does represent our attempt to recognize and apply the “*primus inter pares*” theme that flows through Scripture and history. It is also a sincere effort to create local churches distinguished by their order, innovation, and effectiveness. While we still have a long way to go, the initial returns are encouraging. Yet the institution of this role within our ranks springs from more than a conviction that the role is biblically supported, theologically permissible, and methodologically efficient. To these points we add a final piece of evidence: the testimony from our own past.

Within the Sovereign Grace churches it was not uncommon, early in our history, for local-church polity to follow the Reformed model of coequal plurality, i.e. elderships unadorned with senior pastors. This was an instructive season, and has built in us a respect for all churches that endeavor to exalt Christ through a coequal eldership. Our experience, however, was less than God-exalting, and our “polity postmortem” resulted in the following conclusions:

- 1) A plurality with no senior pastor is better structured for protection than for expansion. This model is often appealing to those seeking to prevent the repetition of past leadership mistakes, but the perceived safety often carries a trade-off: protection for productivity, and preservation for progress.
- 2) A plurality with no senior pastor often results in “churches within a church.” When no one voice unites the eldership and speaks authoritatively on its behalf, church members can gravitate to particular elders, cultivating independent identities within the church. Congruent direction for the church is often absent when there is no “first shepherd” to gather and move the sheep.
- 3) A plurality with no senior pastor dissipates responsibility

and makes accountability difficult. In other words: *where everyone is responsible, no one is responsible.*²⁵

- 4) A plurality with no senior pastor inevitably keys off of the most vocal or most gifted elder. This man becomes the de-facto senior pastor, but without the nameplate and business card. He possesses the elders' confidence but not the role. This gradual slide towards the most gifted elder compromises the integrity of the eldership in their attempts to model their unity through the purity of their plurality.²⁶
- 5) A plurality with no senior pastor denies a legitimate avenue of service to elders with a distinct gift of leadership.
- 6) A plurality with no senior pastor creates a vacuum of care for the elders and their wives because it is inconsistent to entrust this charge to any one elder in a co-equal eldership.

These are just a few of the obstacles we have experienced within Sovereign Grace Ministries and seen elsewhere in the Body of Christ. Certainly, where the humility of a co-equal eldership is high, the difficulties of this form of plurality diminish, at least temporarily. However, elders are shepherds, thriving on the active care and forward momentum of the flock. Restlessness, and even exasperation, occurs when the pastoral burden is set within an inefficient structure. Our experience in Sovereign Grace Ministries has been that eldership effectiveness is maximized with the identification of a senior pastor.

So, the broad theme is that leaders exist for order and that specific leaders have always been appointed to enhance the governing process. But are there any doctrinal themes that inform the practice of building pastoral teams led by senior pastors? Here we are helped by returning to the glorious example of the Son of God.

Elders within a local church are offered an extraordinary opportunity by God. This opportunity comes in the summons to humility, through the blessing of deference, modeled by the person of Jesus Christ. In Philippians 2:3-7 Paul says:

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among

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yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7) but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Theologians use this passage to describe the *functional subordination of Christ*, a term that “sees the role of the Son...as temporarily subordinated to the Father during a period of ministry.”²⁷ In other words, although Christ was co-equal with the Father (v.6), he did not grasp at this prerogative, but submitted and subordinated himself to the Father. It was not a subordination of equality, but of function. The Son wasn’t demoted; the Son chose servanthood (v.7).

The senior pastor must always remember that his ability to lead is based upon the willingness of the other elders to follow his direction joyfully. In response to Christ’s humility, church elders are offered the opportunity to recognize the gifting, character, and anointing of the senior man and defer to him. Stirred by their trust in God, their understanding of Scripture, and a desire to serve, elders set aside personal ambitions and self-serving agendas and subordinate themselves under the care and leadership of the senior pastor. In doing so, the senior pastor then becomes “first among equals”—not because he demanded, negotiated, or campaigned, but because his character and gifting commends him to the role and his co-responsible elders affirm this. These qualities inspire deference and humility; further magnifying Christ in the outworking of the plurality.

Now to keep our application on the proper rail, let’s affirm a crucial point: Senior pastors do not exercise headship over an eldership, nor do they possess the right to elevate themselves. They should never act independently or create a subtle culture where hyper-deference to their wishes is the norm. The senior pastor is called to build a team, not a personal ministry. His effectiveness should be measured by the maturity of his plurality, not his tape sales.

How does the plurality, indeed the entire church, benefit from having a senior pastor? In short, dramatically! Springing from their trust in God and their confidence in the man called to lead them, the eldership charges the senior pastor to maximize their potency in the following ways:

- 1) By developing the eldership into a leadership team.
- 2) By providing pastoral care for the eldership.
- 3) By facilitating decision-making.²⁸
- 4) By identifying and deploying spiritual gifts among the elders.
- 5) By encouraging efficiency.
- 6) By coordinating the eldership training.
- 7) By acting as a spokesman for the elders.²⁹

If you doubt the significance of these functions, talk to any elder who lives without them. God created leadership not only because it is necessary, but also because it is a tremendous blessing. Effective senior pastors have been proving that point for a long time.³⁰

Wisdom dictates that we neither ignore nor exaggerate the importance of the presiding pastor. Yet the crying need for men who lead elders should not tempt us to exalt this role above the plurality. Remember, the senior pastor's role is based upon the plurality and exists to serve the plurality. Anything less dilutes the God-glorifying opportunity that this form of polity offers.

So, if the governing responsibility is equally shared, on what basis do we set apart the "first" among equals? How to identify the man uniquely anointed to lead the elders? Dick Iverson once said, "Not everyone can function as a senior elder. A specific gift-mix is required to coordinate the ministry of an entire team."³¹ So what is this unique gift-mix?

The short answer is character and competence. No surprise here. It seems obvious that the senior pastor must possess a personal example and ministry skills that are compelling, particularly to the elders around him. But there are two recognizable qualities that often accentuate the presence of God's prior grace for leading a team of elders. That grace arrives bearing a cluster of gifts: the gift of leadership and the gifts for preaching.

"Primus Inter Pares" and the Gift of Leadership

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7) if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8) the one who exhorts, in

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his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; **the one who leads, with zeal**; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (emphasis mine)

Romans 12:6-8

Few roles demand a leadership gift more distinct than that of senior pastor,³² and few passages give us greater clarity on the nature of that gift than Romans 12:6-8. Let's penetrate deeper into the passage so we can appreciate its relevance to our discussion.

The Greek word for "leadership" is "προϊστῆμι" (*proistemi*) meaning "... 'to lead,' 'to direct,' 'to assist' ... 'to arrange,' 'to apply oneself to'."³³ Curiously, the verb translated "govern" in the NIV is not present in the original language and was only added to clarify the application of "diligently." According to John Murray, a more accurate rendering would be, "he that ruleth, with diligence,"³⁴ a translation much closer to the English Standard Version above.

Let's track Paul's progression of thought here:

- 1) We all have different gifts (v.6a).
- 2) Our gifts are the result of a prior work of grace (v.6b).
- 3) The grace God has given determines the boundaries of our gifts and service (v.6).³⁵
- 4) Some have been given a distinct grace to lead (v.8).
- 5) The grace to lead is exhibited by a "zealous and diligent concern"³⁶ (v.8).

How does this progression apply to the senior pastor? Quite simply, it introduces a helpful principle for charting the effect of the leadership gift on a local church. The principle says: *the eldership's effectiveness will often be proportional to the senior pastor's leadership gift.* Please ponder this because it forms an important point and helps us immeasurably towards comprehending the stakes. Most importantly though, it reminds us that identifying the scope of grace and diligence—the leadership gift—and positioning men accordingly, is a key factor in competent elderships and healthy local churches.

So what does a leadership gift look like when operating in a local church? How do we identify this grace in a man? The answer

is drawn more from experience than exposition, but should prove helpful nonetheless. Four irreducible minimums emerge:

- 1) The ability to define and apply cross-centered values.
- 2) The ability to inspire a God-exalting response that builds the church.³⁷
- 3) The ability to administrate the leader's own gifting and the gifting of others.³⁸
- 4) The ability to lead and care for other leaders.

A thorough examination of these points would take us beyond the present discussion. Suffice it to say, however, that an ability to define values, inspire vision, administrate gifts, and lead leaders will ultimately guide the eldership to a Godward orientation and build the church infrastructure, creating efficient leadership and an effective church. Release the leadership gift to serve, and the church grows qualitatively; ignore it, and the church may limp along without aim or impact.³⁹

Alexander Strauch brings a cogent summary when he says, "The advantage of the principle of 'first among equals' is that it allows for functional, gift-based diversity within the eldership team without creating an official, superior office over fellow elders."⁴⁰

God has arranged elderships in such a way that local churches may rise on the tide of this gift, or languish due to its lack. As Tom Marshall notes, "People do not generally follow visions or dreams or schemes or ideas, they follow leaders."⁴¹ And leaders lead best when they are led.

"Primus Inter Pares" and the Gifts for Preaching

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

2 Timothy 4:1-2

The charge issued to every eldership is splendidly summarized in these words of Paul to Timothy. Elders must preach relentlessly,

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courageously, and patiently, executing their charge as ones who steward the very words of God. To guarantee the potency of this call and the certainty of its fruit, God has bestowed a cluster of gifts on particular men. These are the gifts that make for rich preaching, whether in the Sunday-morning service or a mid-week Bible class. *All elders should possess these gifts; senior pastors should exemplify them.*

It is difficult to overstate the centrality of the role of preaching. John MacArthur observes,

The God-ordained means to save, sanctify, and strengthen his church is preaching. The proclamation of the gospel is what elicits saving faith in those whom God has chosen (Ro 10:14). Through the preaching of the Word comes the knowledge of the truth that results in godliness (John 17:17; Ro 16:25; Eph 5:26). Preaching also encourages believers to live in the hope of eternal life, enabling them to endure suffering (Acts 14:21-22). The faithful preaching of the Word is the most important element of pastoral ministry.⁴²

While the New Testament cites no specific “gift of preaching,”⁴³ the prominence of preaching is unquestionable,⁴⁴ and therefore, this noble duty remains at the heart of pastoral ministry.⁴⁵

But if there is no specific gift of preaching, what gifts make a good preacher? And what cluster of gifts testifies to the call of *primus inter pares*? This question is easier asked than answered, in that not all senior pastors possess all these gifts (about to be discussed) to the same extent. Nevertheless, we have found that the most effective senior pastors will exercise each of these gifts to some degree. Therefore, the following list may prove helpful in three ways: by serving any eldership seriously evaluating their ranks for one called to lead them; by clarifying the basis upon which Sovereign Grace churches identify and position senior pastors; and by identifying a cluster of gifts that result in good preaching.

1) An Aptitude for Understanding and Applying Sound Doctrine

What should we identify as the most serious problem faced by the churches depicted in the New Testament? Some might say demonic resistance, or perhaps a need for greater fullness of the Spirit. Another group might point to political impotence and an inability to mobilize as a cultural force. Such views overlook what was by far the most prevalent problem of New Testament times—the insidious impact of false teachers and false doctrine. It is both sad and revealing that the primary problems of the New Testament are summarily ignored as battlegrounds within the American church. Are we really more enlightened, or are we just less discerning?

The senior pastor is called, not simply to create programs and conduct services, but to unite people around, and establish people in, the truth. This leader’s first obligation is “to do [his] best to present [himself] to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (emphasis mine, 2Ti 2:15). If all elders are called to “hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine” (Titus 1:9), then the senior pastor must exemplify the fulfillment of this vital task.

Sound doctrine is central to the role of senior pastor because false doctrine is the greatest obstacle to building healthy local churches. Thus, the presiding pastor must be able to understand and transmit sound doctrine. He must continually grow in knowledge without becoming proud, and must excel in methodology without drifting from theology. He must understand the difference between a solid foundation and a faulty one, and be capable of producing the former while avoiding the latter. Through the grace of sound doctrine, the senior pastor rallies the elders to the walls of the church, together discerning any influences—from within or without (Acts 20:29-30)—that could obstruct its progress in growth and godliness.

Darius Salter once observed, “Just about any brand of heresy can be marketed in America if it is rightly packaged by the highly committed.”⁴⁶ The elders, along with the discerning leadership of the senior pastor, exist to ensure that it won’t be marketed in their church!

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2) The Capability to Communicate

Therefore an overseer must be...able to teach (1Ti 3:2).

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:10-11a)

Whatever you may know, you cannot be truly efficient ministers if you are not 'apt to teach.'⁴⁷

The senior pastor is called to be a communicator. Although neither eloquence nor dynamism are necessary in a high degree, this man must recognize that he leads and builds largely through words, and that his gift for communication must match the demands of his task. According to Paul, he must be competent in at least these six areas:

- 1) "able to teach" (1Ti 3:2)
- 2) "to equip the saints" (Eph 4:12)
- 3) "to give instruction in sound doctrine" (Titus 1:9)
- 4) "correcting his opponents with gentleness" (2Ti 2:25)
- 5) "do the work of an evangelist" (2Ti 4:5)
- 6) "set the believers an example in speech" (1Ti 4:12)

In addition to the general call to communication evident in this list, senior pastors often distinguish themselves from other elders through the dual gifts of teaching and exhortation.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them... The one who teaches, in his teaching (Ro 12:6-7).

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching (1Ti 4:13).

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke and exhort with complete patience and teaching (2Ti 4:2).

This does not mean that such gifts are absent in the other elders. Indeed they must be present in order for such men to be

effective in their call to eldership. Yet these gifts will exist to a greater degree within the senior pastor, and it is the presence of these strengths that mark his fitness to lead the other elders.

The pulpit yearns for men with the ability to organize thoughts and communicate doctrine in ways that display God’s glory and incite corresponding affections. The above passages call for men who can speak God’s words after him—men who use language skillfully, like a doctor wisely choosing the best treatment after studying the affliction. Be it in preaching or in leading elders’ meetings, the senior pastor must be a man who makes God’s word plain, understandable, applicable, and compelling. Above all others, he must “labor in preaching and teaching” (1Ti 5:17).

“To be able to gather a congregation,” says Charles Chaney, “is the seal of one’s call.”⁴⁸ Indeed, congregations do gather around effective preaching, because the right words—wise and godly words—draw people and lift their vision to God. The gathering and returning of people to hear exposition is a biblical and a time-tested validation of the call to be “first among equals.”

The Principle of Partnership with Apostolic Ministry

In the interest of avoiding misunderstanding over the phrase “apostolic ministry,” let’s begin with a brief apologetic. Although a full treatment of the biblical, theological, lexical, and historical issues involving present-day apostles are well beyond the scope of this paper, an introductory defense is necessary to justify the principle behind our polity.

Many evangelicals today resonate with the conviction and logic of O. Palmer Robertson, who said, “Nothing in Scripture explicitly indicates that the apostolate ever would come to an end. Yet it is generally recognized that no one in the church today functions with the authority of the original apostles . . .”⁴⁹ To paraphrase this common perspective, present-day apostles may be unpopular, but they are not unscriptural. While Sovereign Grace Ministries heartily agrees that “no one in the church today functions with the authority of the original apostles,” let us not hastily extrapolate on Dr. Robertson’s phrase to conclude that no one today functions as

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an apostle of any kind. Such a conclusion inflicts considerable harm on attempts to build the church and preach the gospel.

If one equates being “apostolic” with enjoying the clout of the original twelve, exercising the authority of the pope, or having your letters canonized as Scripture, then alarm at the notion of present-day apostles is entirely understandable. However, as F.F. Bruce has said, “Paul’s use of the term ‘apostle’ embraces more than the twelve.”⁵⁰ That is, Scripture appears to offer a second type of apostle—one who neither writes Scripture nor possesses an authority like that of the twelve. In fact, within the New Testament there seem to be at least eight other apostles, apart from Paul (Acts 14:4, 1Co 9:5-6, Gal 1:19, 1Th 1:1, 2:6, 1Co 4:6, 9, Php 2:25). Additionally, Ephesians 4:7-16 indicates the ongoing validity and necessity of the apostolic gift as given to the Church by the ascended Christ.⁵¹

Let’s take a moment to build a few additional fences. Clearly, the twelve will always hold a unique place in the annals of eternity (Rev 21:14).⁵² Moreover, the apostle Paul remains distinct from any and all present-day apostles in several important respects. Some of these discontinuities include the following. Unlike Paul, present-day apostles:

- 1) Do not write Scripture.
- 2) Do not experience the appearance of the Risen Lord.
- 3) Do not enjoy an unparalleled revelation of the gospel.
- 4) Do not wield Paul’s spiritual power.
- 5) Do not enjoy spiritual experiences on the magnitude of trips to the Third Heaven.

With these caveats, how do we draw meaningful links between the apostolic culture of Paul and present-day apostolic ministry? Regarding the distinction between the spiritual gifts of today and New Testament-era gifts, Vern Poythress has offered a general paradigm that may aid our discussion: “Modern gifts...are analogous to but not identical with apostolic gifts... and Messianic gifts...”⁵³ Thus, today’s gifts are ectypal,⁵⁴ a dimmer reflection of the archetype.⁵⁵

Jack Deere, writing from a charismatic perspective, echoes Poythress:

It is simply not reasonable to insist that all miraculous spiritual gifts equal those of the apostles in their intensity or strength in order to be perceived as legitimate gifts of the Holy Spirit. No one would insist on this for the non-miraculous gifts like teaching or evangelism... Who today would claim to be Paul's equal as a teacher? ... Therefore, since no one has arisen with the gift of teaching that is equal to the apostle Paul's, should we conclude that the gift of teaching was withdrawn from the church? Likewise, should we assume that everyone who has the gift of evangelism is going to evangelize like the apostle Paul? Who has planted as many churches or started as many new works with the depth and authority that the apostle Paul did? We can admit to varying degrees of intensity and quality in ... other gifts. Why can't we do that with the gift of healing? Or the gift of miracles? Or the gift of prophecy?⁵⁶

Or, the gift of apostolic ministry?

Whether it is the evangelical scholarship of Vern Poythress acknowledging that present-day gifts are analogous but not identical to Paul's, or the more charismatic voice of Jack Deere saying that these same gifts differ in intensity and quality from Paul's, both reinforce an enduring truth that has profound relevance for this discussion: *Apostolic ministry can exist today without comparing its authority or impact to Paul.*

To acknowledge the vast differences between Paul and present-day apostles is only a start. We must also note the similarities that call us to apostolic faithfulness today. What is the common ground between Paul and, say, Sovereign Grace Ministries? How is it that we dare mention both in the same sentence? Some of the similarities can be organized under three general headings:

- The Message
- The Method
- A Metaphor

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1. *The Message of the Gospel*

Apostles exist for the gospel. They are sent forth to preserve and proclaim its glorious message. In the New Testament, the gospel is never reduced to “The Roman Road to Salvation” or the “Four Spiritual Laws.” Rather, it is the power of God’s unfathomable grace for unbeliever and believer alike. Jerry Bridges expresses this point far better than most by saying,

The gospel is not only the most important message in all of history; it is the only essential message in all of history. Yet we allow thousands of professing Christians to live their entire lives without clearly understanding it and experiencing the joy of living in it.

I believe part of our problem is our tendency to give an unbeliever just enough of the gospel to get him or her to pray a prayer to receive Christ. Then we immediately put the gospel on the shelf, so to speak, and go on to the duties of discipleship. As a result, Christians are not instructed in the gospel. And because they do not fully understand the riches and glory of the gospel, they cannot preach it to themselves, nor live by it in their daily lives.⁵⁷

Apostles are given to ensure the gospel is preached and applied in the daily life of the church.⁵⁸ The apostle’s purpose proceeds from and orbits around the *euangelion*—the gospel. Remove the gospel, and true apostolic ministry disappears. Preserved in the New Testament is a rich record of how the gospel specifically defines and directs the apostolic office.

From the writings of Luke and Paul, one might draw the following conclusions:

- 1) Apostles are set apart for the gospel.⁵⁹
- 2) Apostles are sent forth with the gospel.⁶⁰
- 3) Apostles protect the gospel.⁶¹
- 4) Apostles build with the gospel.⁶²

Yet on this topic the gospel offers more than a mere instrument to apostolic ministry. It supplies the continuity between New Testament-era apostolic ministry and the ministry of apostles today. P. T. O’Brien has said, “...We believe that it is the gospel of

our Lord Jesus Christ within God's purposes which serves as the *bridge between Paul's own missionary activity and that of others*. The apostolic kerygma appears to be the *critical link* between the two..."⁶³ This is a profound point, the logical conclusion of which may be stated more explicitly: As the gospel bridges Paul's missionary activity with that of others, it likewise bridges Paul's apostolic ministry with that of apostles today.

So, while there certainly are profound differences between the apostolic role then and now, Paul's ministry nevertheless shares substantial similarities with that of present-day apostles. These similarities must be understood, for they are central to church health. The following definition may help summarize how present-day apostolic ministry maintains continuity with the apostolic ministry of Paul:

*Apostle: Called by the Ascended Christ⁶⁴ and armed with the gospel, present-day apostles plant and build local churches for the conversion of the lost, the sanctification of the believer, and the expansion of the mission.*⁶⁵

II. The Method: Service

Discussions about apostolic ministry can accelerate quickly into debate over present-day apostolic authority. This is understandable in that Paul often pulled rank to protect the unity of the church and the purity of sound doctrine. Also, illustrations abound of contemporary "apostles" who have used Paul's example in an effort to justify unwise or self-serving leadership practices. But war stories of apostolic abuse are poor evidence against the legitimacy of present-day apostles. We must move beyond anecdote to wrestle with the realities of this office.

The best place to center this discussion is not in authority, but in responsibility. Authentic apostolic ministry does not begin with an apostle's rights over churches, but with an apostle's calling to serve churches. When an apostle acts "apostolically," his motivation must spring first, not from a positional authority to act, but from a God-given responsibility to serve and a passion to provide care. Emphasizing responsibility as a precursor to apostolic care shifts the historical discussion from the apostle's "rights" to the apostle's "obligations." The shift also fixes the first priority for all apostolic ministry, indeed all Christian leadership—to serve. As Jerry

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Bridges has observed, "...Human authority is not a status or privilege to be exploited for personal goals, but a responsibility to be borne for the benefit of others."⁶⁶

This service-orientation of responsibility keeps the apostle from becoming a "professional" church leader. He is aware he has been given a sacred trust. As a bond-slave of the Master, his call is inextricably bound to the leaders and people in his sphere. He will serve them. He will sacrifice for them. He will carry their burdens as his own. They are neither the tools of his ministry, nor a means to God's purpose. Rather, "the people and their spiritual growth are God's purpose."⁶⁷

So, whereas Paul may be justified in referencing his apostolic authority, apostolic models today are better served by emphasizing the responsibility of servanthood that is essential to the calling. But how do apostolic leaders within Sovereign Grace Ministries know where that responsibility begins and ends? If one cannot—must not—adopt the full scope of Paul's authority, what biblical guidelines establish the appropriate level of present-day apostolic responsibility? This question leads to additional practical questions.

- 1) Does the authority of the apostolic team ever change?
- 2) To what extent are the local churches within Sovereign Grace Ministries autonomous?
- 3) Does apostolic authority differ with respect to churches wishing to be adopted by Sovereign Grace?

These are important questions. How they are answered, in theory and practice, may ultimately define Sovereign Grace Ministries on into the future.

III. A Metaphor for Service

The New Testament occasionally employs metaphors to describe apostolic ministry. While no one metaphor can control or define the apostolic role fully, some metaphors may bring particular clarity. In dealing with the nature of an apostle's relationship with a local church over time, the metaphor of fatherhood seems particularly helpful. While the fathering metaphor cannot be

authoritative for determining practice, this biblical image may help explore some contours of apostolic responsibility.⁶⁸

It is clear that the level of responsibility exercised by an earthly father over his children tends, in the aggregate, to decrease over time. That is, as a child matures and the father-child relationship evolves, a father's responsibility and functional authority are gradually reduced. The level of that authority is typically inverse to the maturity level of the child, with the former diminishing at about the same rate the latter increases. Because a child's maturity may grow sometimes rapidly, sometimes haltingly, sometimes "two steps forward/one step back," there will be some ebb and flow to this responsibility/maturity dynamic. But overall, the trend will be toward decreasing paternal authority. Along the way, certain milestones—such as leaving home for college, marriage, and the birth of grandchildren—will tend to be permanently reduce paternal authority. Here, a wise father in a healthy family recognizes that the child's increased maturity has altered his role and changed the nature of their relationship. Indeed, where levels of responsibility and authority appropriate to pre-adolescent children are exercised on adult children, the results are typically disastrous.

Thus, a father's responsibility is not an "unalterable package" from God, but a role that changes relative to the needs and maturity of his children. As his responsibility changes, his functional authority may diminish as well. Certainly he will always retain the privilege and honor of fatherhood. But with the emerging maturity of a child the hands-on stage of responsibility and authority passes with time.

Musings on the Metaphor: Apostolic Responsibility and Local-Church Autonomy

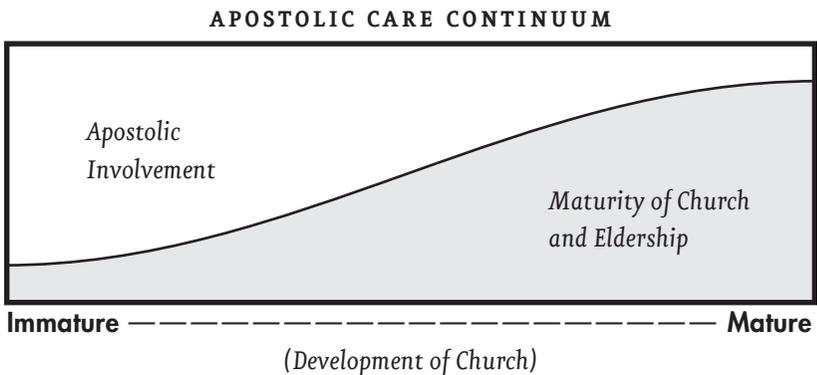
Do apostles hold ultimate responsibility for the local church? While Scripture does not appear to answer the question exhaustively, it does provide substantial guidance. If "ultimate" is understood as "unchanging," then the answer is no. But if "ultimate" is seen as an authority that is ongoing and never fully relinquished, even in the case of a quite mature local church, then the answer is yes. In keeping with the fatherhood metaphor, we might say that apostles enjoy primary responsibility only during a formative

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season in the local church. After this season, the practical responsibility transfers gradually to the elders of that local church. However mature the church may become, the apostolic team will always retain sufficient responsibility to deal with heresy or immoral leaders. But within a maturing church, the base of responsibility must eventually transition from the apostles to the elders. When it comes to the leadership and direction of the local church, elders must increase, apostles must decrease.

While there is never a complete removal of responsibility, the apostle's role in a strong church becomes narrower and is eventually expressed primarily in counsel and crisis. This model, therefore, does not affirm the absolute autonomy of the local church (as per the Reformed and present-day models) but rather the growing autonomy of a healthy church. As the church matures, it maintains its commitment to the apostolic team, thereby entrusting the team with functional responsibility for service. However, if a mature eldership elects to withdraw its support, removing a seasoned church for reasons other than heresy or immorality, the apostolic team should relinquish their role in a God-honoring manner and grant that church the freedom to withdraw. This assumption undoubtedly influences the perspective of Barney Coombs when he writes, "...Apostolic authority is relational authority. In other words, it is limited to those churches who recognise it."⁶⁹

The following graph presents a continuum that seems to be consistent with the "apostle as father" paradigm here proposed:



Naturally, in a healthy family, the father never relinquishes his parental identity.⁷⁰ However, his position as a directive authority gradually evolves into that of a partner who advises, counsels, and loves, all the while retaining the cherished role of father. This partnership phase is not characterized by the exercise of authority but by a support that flows both ways. It is interesting to note that, in a biblical family model, as a child matures the emphasis shifts from the father's responsibility over the child to the blessing the child can receive by honoring the father.

As a church matures, the local leaders grow in skill and discernment, becoming better equipped to serve their people and less dependent on the fatherly function of apostolic care. Indeed, Paul's churches seemed to follow a pattern: Paul supported unhealthy churches until they became healthy churches supporting him. A comparison of 1 Corinthians 4-6 with passages from Philippians is instructive. While the Philippians' maturity made them less dependent on Paul's fatherhood, it did not lead to independence from Paul. Rather, their maturity produced a heartfelt commitment to return his investment by supporting and funding his ministry (Php 2:25, 4:15-16,18). It created a partnership (Php 1:5). This relationship between the apostle and local church then provided a critical base of support from which to expand the mission, penetrating the world with the gospel. A maturing local church experiences an increasing emphasis on and awareness of the blessing that flows from being related to apostolic authority, and a decreasing focus on subservience to that authority.

Are all churches speeding along in the fast lane of the "maturity freeway"? Sadly, no. Might a developed church confront seasons of substantial immaturity that require fresh applications of apostolic authority (Rev 2:4)?⁷¹ Certainly. But God's general intention is for churches to grow and mature in godliness. In fact, the maturation of a local church can resemble the less-than-linear process of sanctification seen within individual believers, and aptly depicted by David Powlison as the up-and-down action of a yo-yo in the hand of a man—but a man who is ascending a flight of stairs. A maturing church's progress will inevitably have its ups and downs, but the controlling trend is an ascent toward godliness.

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So, if we were to chart the natural progression of effective apostolic care, it might look something like this (note that both manifestations are expressions of servanthood):

Father → Partner

A Brief Discussion of Adoptions

In a way most humbling and unexpected, Sovereign Grace Ministries regularly receives inquiries from existing churches about the possibility of becoming part of our family of churches. This aside is pertinent to this paper in that, should such a church be adopted, the Sovereign Grace apostolic team does not presume to become a father to that church (although such a relationship could certainly develop over time). On the contrary, the apostolic team seeks to affirm the unique and historical role of the local eldership so that attention and honor are never diverted from them and given inappropriately to the apostolic team. Here the biblical metaphor of partnership (Php 1:5; 2Co 1:24) becomes even more helpful towards defining our role and relationship with a newly adopted church. Like most partnerships, this arrangement exists for mutual benefit and carries responsibilities for both parties.

How does a partnership with Sovereign Grace Ministries develop? Quite simply, it starts with time. Through meetings, conference attendance, exposure to Sovereign Grace Ministries materials, and strategic dialogue with an apostolic delegate, an interested church gradually becomes more familiar with the doctrine and practice of Sovereign Grace Ministries. The church forms an increasingly accurate portrayal of us—strengths, weaknesses, warts and all—and the apostolic delegate has opportunity to assess the compatibility of the inquiring church with Sovereign Grace Ministries.

The goal of this process is not merely relational warmth, and not simply doctrinal agreement, but an essential blending of the two. The apostolic team is looking for a truth-based relationship upon which to unite and build. The presence of the following three elements suggests to the apostolic team that such a relationship has begun:

- 1) Substantial theological harmony with the interested church.
- 2) Methodological agreement on Sovereign Grace structures that seem central to reproducing some of the core distinctive attributes of Sovereign Grace churches (small groups, certain polity features, etc.).
- 3) A faith towards God—resident in both the apostolic team and among the local-church elder(s)—for the formalizing of the relationship.

Conclusion

Let's draw some final, perhaps even profitable, conclusions from this discussion:

- 1) New Testament leadership within the local church has always been a shared endeavor. The custom of a plurality of elders is well documented and a sound, biblical practice.
- 2) As “first among equals,” the senior pastor of a local church carries on the biblical legacy of order flowing through defined responsibility and gifts.
- 3) Senior pastors are distinguished from other elders by their gifts of leadership and communication.
- 4) Apostles exist today to plant and build local churches for the sanctification of the believer, the expansion of the mission, and the exaltation of God.
- 5) The “fatherhood” metaphor is one of the more helpful ways to portray the nature and extent of apostolic ministry.
- 6) As a local church matures, apostolic responsibility for that church will diminish, without disappearing.
- 7) The “partnership” metaphor may be more helpful in describing the relationship between Sovereign Grace Ministries and an adopted church, at least initially.

In its reflections on matters of church polity, Sovereign Grace Ministries remains in its infancy. Still, we enjoy the humbling yet exhilarating satisfaction of knowing that our methods, however flawed, are drawn from Scripture and substantiated by fruit. Yet

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our polity is not our passion. Such affection is reserved exclusively for the person and work of Jesus Christ. To our amazement and delight, it seems our polity has served to advance the gospel. May it ever be so!

Soli Deo Gloria.

Endnotes

1. Oxford English Dictionary.
2. “Polity. The organization or governmental structure of a local church or fellowship of churches.” Erickson, 130.
3. Grudem, 904.
4. Writing more than 300 years ago, Richard Baxter noted, “Most of the matters that keep us divided are our church government: its right form and order.” Baxter, 53. This is still largely true today; all the more reason polity should be discussed in a way that honors legitimate differences in conscience and conviction.
5. In the New Testament, the term “elder” is presented as an office to which a gifted man is appointed based on his character qualities. Although there are several descriptive references for this role, such as bishop and pastor, it appears that Scripture often uses elder, overseer, and pastor interchangeably. Note the synonymous use of these words by Paul, Peter & Luke in Titus 1:5-7, 1 Peter 5:1-2 and Acts 20:28.
6. Reynolds, 349.
7. For the overwhelming evidence on plurality in ministry in the New Testament, note Addendum I, “Biblical Evidence for Plurality of Leadership.”
8. Strauch, 36.
9. Gangel, 55.
10. “On the local church level, the New Testament plainly witnesses to a consistent pattern of shared pastoral leadership. Therefore, leadership by a plurality of elders is a sound biblical practice.” Strauch, 37.
11. The apologetic for senior pastor is contained in the discussion of the next principle.
12. “Today, whatever form of church government a church may have, the officers who have the highest governing authority in the local church (whether they are called elders, pastors, deacons, the vestry, the church board, the governing council, or any other name) are the ones who most closely correspond to the office of elder at the time of the New Testament. They do in fact have governing authority (of varying degrees) in their churches.” Patterson, 256.
13. While Samuel Miller omits any reference to apostolic care, he accurately represents the classical Reformed position in saying, “And as the whole spiritual government of each church is committed to its bench of elders,

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- the session is competent to regulate every concern, and to correct everything which they consider amiss in the arrangements or affairs of the church which admits of correction.” Miller, 15.
14. Grudem, 925-926. (Sovereign Grace believes that it is apostolic ministry, not the congregation, which selects and ordains elders for the local church.)
 15. Berkhof, 589.
 16. Hull, 78.
 17. Sovereign Grace Ministries’ position on apostolic ministry and oversight will be discussed later in this paper.
 18. Hull, 84.
 19. Peter appears first in all four lists of the apostles’ names: Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Ac 1:13. Peter also possessed a unique charge to “strengthen his brothers” in Lk 22:32 and appears to be a chief spokesman throughout the early part of Acts (Ac 1:15; 2:14; 3:1; 4:8; 5:3, 15, 29; 8:14-24).
 20. “According to Paul, the fundamental principles regarding the structures of the human family are to be applied to the church as God’s household (1 Timothy 3:15).” Poythress, *Church as Family*, 239.
 21. For additional evidence and biblical study, refer to Addendum II.
 22. “Primus inter pares—‘first among equals’—refers to a certain primacy, even among equals.” Bretzke, 96.
 23. “Therefore, those among the elders who are particularly gifted leaders and/or teachers will naturally stand out among the other elders as leaders and teachers within the leadership body. This is what the Romans called *primus inter pares*, meaning ‘first among equals...’” Strauch, 45. “Every elder-ship team must have a head or senior elder. As the captain of the team he is a ‘first among equals’ and is responsible to keep everything functioning smoothly and steadily. This role is vital to team ministry.” Iverson, 55.
 24. Williams, 532.
 25. “Responsibility is a unique concept; it can only reside and inhere in a single individual. You may share it with others, but your portion is not diminished. You may delegate it, but it is still with you. Even if you do not recognize it or admit its presence, you cannot escape it. If responsibility is rightfully yours, no evasion, or ignorance, or passing the blame can shift the burden to someone else. Unless you can point your finger at the man who is responsible when something goes wrong, then you have never had anyone really responsible.” Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, quoted in Robertson, John.

26. "Some churches claim to have a plurality of elders, with no single leader. But objective observation clearly demonstrates one person stands head and shoulders above the rest. While there may be accountability, debate, give and take on issues, the leader remains." Hull, 79.
27. "Subordinationism. The doctrine that in essence and status the Son is inferior to the Father, or the Spirit is inferior to the Father and the Son. This is to be distinguished from functional subordinationism, which sees the role of the Son or the Spirit as temporarily subordinated to the Father during a period of ministry." Erickson, 161.
28. "Decision making is a fundamental responsibility of leaders." Blackaby, 178.
29. "The presiding elder is a player-coach. Besides moving in his specific spiritual gift to edify the whole body, He serves the other team ministers by moderating, coordinating, encouraging, expediting, evaluating, alerting, and motivating." Iverson, 55.
30. Effective senior pastors also lead with an awareness that it is often more difficult to be submitted than to lead. Churchill's words should echo in the ears of every senior pastor: "In any sphere of action there can be no comparison between the positions of number one and numbers two, three, or four... The duties and problems of all persons other than number one are quite different and in many ways more difficult." Winston Churchill, quoted in Hayward, 74.
31. Iverson, 55.
32. "George Barna conducted a survey of senior pastors from across various denominations. When asked if they believed they had the spiritual gift of leadership, only 6 percent responded yes. The fact that 94 percent of the senior pastors surveyed did not believe they were gifted to be leaders may explain the sense of desperation many church leaders express as they examine their ministry and its current effectiveness." Blackaby, 31.
33. Verlag, 938.
34. Murray, 126.
35. "Your sphere of action, your ministry in the service of Christ, is marked out by the gifts Christ has given you." Clowney, *Called*, 28.
36. The Greek word for zeal is "σπουδῆ" (*spoude*) and is translated as "zealous and diligent concern." Translation drawn from Verlag, 1070 and Bauer, 762.
37. "The gift of leading is found in people who have a clear, significant vision and are able to communicate it in such a way that they influence others

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- to pursue that vision.” Malphurs, 95.
- “In the Christian context, the process of selling a vision is flawed. If a vision must be sold to others, it is not a compelling vision and is probably not from God. Spiritual leaders don’t sell vision; they share what God has revealed to them and trust that the Holy Spirit will confirm that same vision in the hearts of their people.” Blackaby, 75.
38. “The primary role of spiritual leaders is not to merely accomplish tasks, but to take people from where they are to where God wants them to be.” Blackaby, 220.
39. The irrepressible Margaret Thatcher once stated, “Consensus is the absence of leadership.” Kaltman, 67.
40. Strauch, 48.
41. Marshall, 35.
42. MacArthur, 250.
43. “I do not believe that there is a gift of ‘preaching’ listed among the spiritual gifts in any of the ‘gifts lists’ in the New Testament.⁵
- ⁵1 Peter 4:10 speaks of the spiritual gift of *lalein*, ‘speaking.’ But I think this is a general term describing a whole category of ‘speaking gifts’—teaching, evangelism, exhortation, and so on.” Keller, 52.
44. Mt 4:17; Mk 1:14; Lk 4:43; Ac 14:21-22; 1Co 1:17-25; 1Ti 4:13-14, 16; 2Ti 4:1-4 to name just a few passages.
45. “The highest worship of God is the preaching of the Word.” Martin Luther, quoted in Whitney, 70.
46. Salter, 109.
47. Spurgeon, 28.
48. Chaney, 227.
49. Robertson, O. Palmer, 80.
50. Bruce, 211.
51. “Paul, too, uses ‘apostle’ not only in the restricted sense (Gal 1:1, 17; Ro 1:1, 11:13; 1Co 15:9; Eph 2:20, 3:5, 1Ti 2:7), but also more generally to identify fellow-missionaries (Ro 16:7) and emissaries of the churches (2Co 8:23; Php 2:25). They are his fellow-workers, watering where he has planted, building where he, a master-builder, has laid the foundation (1Co 3:5-15).” Cloney, *The Church* 77. “The very fact that the name ‘Apostle’ means what it does would point to the impossibility of confining it within the limits of the twelve.” J.C. Lambert, quoted in Peters, 256.
52. Sovereign Grace would fully affirm these words of Abraham Kuyper: “This unique significance of the apostolate is so deeply embedded in the

heart of the Kingdom, that when in the Revelation of St. John we get a glimpse of the New Jerusalem, we see that the city has twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb – Revelation 21:14. Hence their significance is not transient and temporary, but permanent and including the whole Church. And when its warfare shall be ended and the glory of the New Jerusalem shall be revealed, even then, in its heavenly bliss, the Church shall rest upon the very foundation on which it was built here, and therefore bear, engraved on its twelve foundations, the names of the holy apostles of the Lord” (Kuyper, 154). Within Sovereign Grace, our convictions regarding present-day apostles will in no way diminish (much less usurp) the unique role and honor reserved exclusively for the twelve.

53. Poythress, *Modern Spiritual Gifts*, 6.
54. A reflection or representation of the original. (author’s definition of “ectypal”)
55. “The original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies.” *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “archetype.”
56. Deere, 67.
57. Bridges, *Discipline of Grace*, 46.
58. “It will be shown that the gospel is the bridge between Paul and contemporary Christians.” O’Brien, *xiii*.
59. Ac 15:7, 20:24; Ro 1:1,9; 1Co 1:17, 4:15, 9:16; Gal 1:11, 2:2,7; Eph 3:7; 1Th 2:4, 1Ti 1:11; 2Ti 1:10.
60. Mt 24:14; Mk 13:10; Lk 9:6; Ac 8:25,40, 16:10, 20:24; Ro 1:15, 15:19,20; 1Co 1:17; 2Co 2:12, 8:18, 10:14,16; Gal 2:7; Eph 6:15; Php 1:12, 1Th 1:5, 2:2, 3:2; Rev 14:6.
61. 1Co 15:1; 2Co 11:7; Gal 1:6-8, 2:7; Php 1:16.
62. Ro 15:20; 1Co 1:17, 2:2, 15:1; Gal 1:25; Php 1:5, Col 1:5,6,28; 1Th 2:4,8; Phm 1:13; 1Pe 4:6.
63. O’Brien, 55.
64. Present-day apostles are gifts that appear to have been specifically inaugurated and released subsequent to Christ’s ascension. “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift... And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers...” (Eph 4:7, 11).
65. See Addendum III for a more thorough job description of the apostle.
66. Bridges, *Joy of Fearing God*, 141.
67. Blackaby, 273.

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68. 1Co 4:15; Php 2:22; 1Th 2:11; 2Co 6:13; 2Co 12:14-16; Gal 4:19; 1Jo 2:1,12,13,18,28; 1Jo 3:7,18; 1Jo 4:4; 5:21.
69. Coombs, 196.
70. It's interesting to note that there were times where Paul perceived he had authority but voluntarily elected not to use it: 1Co 9:3-6,12; 2Co 11:7-9; 1Th 2:6b-8; Phm 13-14. In these instances, it is evident that Paul believed it was in the best interest of their relationship to forgo the assertion of his right of apostleship.
71. If church history proves anything, it proves that churches decline. Therefore, ongoing "responsibilitybased care" remains essential for churches to continue in a pattern of health.

Biblical Evidence for Plurality of Leadership ***Addendum I***

Evidence of Plurality Among Pastors/Elders/Shepherds

A. *Where Elder/Pastor/Overseer/Shepherd are mentioned in the New Testament, it is overwhelmingly referenced in the plural form.*

Jerusalem Church

1. Acts 11:30 And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.
2. Acts 15:2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.
2. Acts 15:4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.
3. Acts 15:6 The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.
4. Acts 15:22-23 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, [23] with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.
5. Acts 16:4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.
6. Acts 21:18 On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

Lystra, Iconium and Antioch Churches

1. Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.
2. 1Ti 4:14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

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Ephesian Church

1. Acts 20:17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.
2. Acts 20:28 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.
3. 1Ti 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

Philippian Church

1. Php 1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons...

Cretan Churches

1. Titus 1:5 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.

Other Churches

1. James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
 2. 1Pe 5:1 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...
 3. 1Pe 5:2-3 ...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; [3] not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.
- B. *There is no instance where there is a clear indication of a single Elder/Pastor/Overseer/Shepherd over a church.*
- C. *All singular references to Elder/Pastor/Overseer/Shepherd are fully compatible with plurality.*

1. 1Ti 3:1-2 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. [2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach...
2. 1Ti 5:19 Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.
3. Titus 1:6 ...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.
4. Titus 1:7 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...
5. 1Pe 5:1 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...

Evidence of Plurality Among Deacons

A. *Where deacon(s) are mentioned in the New Testament, the office is overwhelmingly referenced in the plural form.*

1. Acts 6:1-7 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. [2] And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. [3] Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. [4] But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." [5] And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. [6] These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. [7] And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly

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in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

2. *Php 1:1* Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus... To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons...
3. *1Ti 3:8* Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.
4. *1Ti 3:10* And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.

The one reference to Deacon (singular) is fully compatible with plurality.

1. *1Ti 3:12* Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.

Evidence of Plurality Among Apostolic Men and Their Delegates

A. Jesus chose twelve apostles.

1. *Mt 10:2* The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother...
2. *Mark 3:14* And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach.
3. *Luke 6:13* And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles...
4. *John 6:70a* Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve?"

B. Apostle(s) are often referred to in the plural in Acts and the Epistles.

1. *Acts 1:2* ...until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.
2. *Acts 1:26* And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

3. Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”
4. Acts 2:42-43 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43] And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.
5. Acts 4:33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
6. Acts 4:35 ...and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.
7. Acts 4:36-37 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, [37] sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.
8. Acts 5:2 ...and with his wife’s knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet.
9. Acts 5:12 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico.
10. Acts 5:18 ...they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.
12. Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.
13. Acts 5:40 ...and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.
14. Acts 6:6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.
15. Acts 8:1 And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
16. Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John...

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17. Acts 8:18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money...
18. Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.
19. Acts 11:1 Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.
20. Acts 14:4 But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles.
21. Acts 14:14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out...
22. Acts 15:2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.
23. Acts 15:4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.
24. Acts 15:6 The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.
25. Acts 15:22-23 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, [23] with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings.
26. Acts 16:4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.
27. Ro 16:7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

28. 1Co 4:9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.
29. 1Co 9:5 Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?
30. 1Co 12:28-29 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. [29] Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?
31. 1Co 15:7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.
32. 1Co 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
33. 2Co 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.
34. Gal 1:17 ...nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.
35. Gal 1:19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.
36. Eph 2:20 ...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone...
37. Eph 3:5 ...which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.
38. Eph 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers...
39. 1Th 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.
40. 2Pe 3:2 ...that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles...
41. Jude 1:17 But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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- C. *There is occasional evidence of singular ministry, yet an ongoing accountability to the plurality is compellingly clear.*

Singular References

1. Ro 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God...
2. Ro 11:13 Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry...
3. 1Co 1:1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes...
4. 1Co 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord?
5. 1Co 9:2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.
6. 1Co 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
7. 2Co 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia...
8. 2Co 12:12 The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.
9. Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead...
10. Eph 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus...
11. Col 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother...
12. 1Ti 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope...
13. 1Ti 2:7 For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.
14. 2Ti 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus...

15. 2Ti 1:11 ...for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher...
16. Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness...
17. Heb 3:1 Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession...
18. 1Pe 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...
19. 2Pe 1:1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ...

Accountability Explicit

1. Gal 2:1-15 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. [2] I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. [3] But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. [4] Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—[5] to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. [6] And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. [7] On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised [8] (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), [9] and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was

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given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. [10] Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. [11] But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. [12] For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. [13] And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. [14] But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" [15] We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;

2. Acts 15:2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.
3. Acts 15:4 When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.
4. Acts 15:6 The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.
5. Acts 15:22-23 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, [23] with the following letter: "The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings..."
6. Acts 16:4 As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

- D. *Even in the appearance of a singular ministry, there remains a team context and reference.*

Paul and Barnabas

1. Acts 14:14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out...
2. Acts 15:2 And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

Paul and Others

1. Acts 16:17 She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation."
2. Acts 16:19 But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.
3. Ro 16:21 Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you; so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.
4. 2Co 8:23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ.
5. Php 2:25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need...
6. Col 1:7 ...just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf...
7. 1Th 3:2 ...and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith...
8. Col 4:7 Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.
9. Phm 1:24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

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My thanks to Paul Buckley who assembled these passages, drawing on the study of Alexander Strauch (“Shared Leadership,” in Biblical Eldership, Lewis and Roth Publishers, Littleton, CO, 1995, p. 35 ff.), in accomplishing this service.

Biblical Evidence for the Presupposition of "First Among Equals"

Addendum II

First Among Equals Demonstrated

A. Among Elders

1. 1Ti 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

B. Among Deacons

1. Stephen prominent among the seven of Acts 6 & 7.

C. Among Apostles

Peter appears particularly prominent

1. Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, [32] but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."
2. Matthew 10:2 The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother...
3. Matthew 17:1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.
4. Acts 2:14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.
5. Acts 8:14 Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John...

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6. *Galatians 2:7* On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised...

James, the brother of Jesus, appears particularly prominent

1. *Acts 12:17* But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell these things to James and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place.
2. *Acts 15:13* After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brothers, listen to me."
3. *Acts 21:18* On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.
4. *1Co 15:7* Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.
5. *Galatians 1:19* But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.
6. *Galatians 2:9* ...and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.
7. *Galatians 2:12* For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.

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Apostolic Job Description

Addendum III

Position: Apostle

Function: Commissioned by the Ascended Christ and armed with the gospel, present-day apostles plant and build local churches for the sanctification of the believer, the expansion of the mission, and the exaltation of God.

Responsibilities:

A. Church Planting

1. To break new ground for the gospel (Acts 14:21; 6:9-10; 9:21-22; 20:22-24; 2Co 10:13-16)
2. To identify strategic locations for church plantings (Acts 14:21-28; 16:6-10; 19:21; 23:11; Ro 15:24-28)
3. To develop leaders for mission initiatives (Mt 28:19-20; Acts 6:1-7; Acts 16:1-4; 2Ti 2:2; Acts 16:40)

B. Church Development

1. To identify and communicate doctrinal foundations (Acts 2:42; 15:6; 18:11; 1Co 3:10-11; Eph 4:14; 1Ti 4:6; 1Ti 6:1,3; Titus 2:1,7; 2 Peter 3:2; the epistles of the NT)
2. To strengthen and encourage local churches through travel and teaching (Acts 14:21-22; 11:22-23; 15:31; 15:36; 16:4-5; Eph 4:11-16)
3. To bring wisdom to the building process (1Co 3:10; Acts 6:1-7; 15:19)
4. To ordain elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5)
5. To bring incremental oversight based on the maturity of the church (1Co 4:21; Gal 4:19-20; Compare the Corinthian church with the Philippian church)
6. To assist elders by discerning and exposing negative influences which may affect the local church (1Co 5:1-5; Gal 1:7-9; 1Ti 1:20; 2Ti 2:14-19)

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7. To supplement the care and accountability of the local-church pastor (Php 2:19,25,28; Eph 6:22; Col 4:8; 1Th 3:2,5; 2Ti 3:10-17; Col 4:17)
8. To manifest the unity of the faith by involving local churches in the broader Body of Christ (Col 4:7-9; 2Co 8; Acts 14:27; Eph 4:11-16; Ro 16:16; 1Co 16:19)

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