

A Statement Concerning Rule by Elders

Written by Phil Markert

The Holy Scriptures make clear that the local church is to be ruled by a *plurality* of elders. The purpose of this statement is to make clear what is involved in this, and in particular, *what this looks like in practice*.

First, the church is to be *ruled*. God is a God of order. The local church is to be a place wherein God's work is conducted in an *orderly way*. All things that He has created reflect God's love of order. The church is no exception.

Second, the church is to be ruled by *men*. God has not chosen to rule the church by *angels*. If he had, many of the problems which the church has encountered throughout the ages might have been avoided. However the Scriptures make clear that this is not God's way. It stipulates rule by *human beings*.

However these men, these *elders*, are not *autonomous*. They do not rule as a law unto themselves. Rather they are answerable to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore their authority must be exercised in accordance with His revealed will as it is found in the Scriptures.

Third, since the church is to be ruled by men who are *themselves answerable to God*, He has set forth *qualifications* by which the church is to choose its elders. His object in doing so is to rule by men who are *properly submitted to Him in their own lives*.

Fourth, these elders are to *rule*. That means that *authority is to be delegated to them* and is to be *exercised by them*. Their decisions are therefore *their own* and are not subject to being *second guessed* by members of the congregation. To the extent to which they deem it appropriate the elders may share specifics of a particular decision with the congregation. However they are not required to do so.

Fifth, since all men are fallible there should be a *plurality* of elders. We live in a fallen world where even the best of men err on occasion. The presence of many elders makes it less likely that the *plurality* would err in the same way at the same time.

Adam and Eve gave in to being ruled by their feelings and the results were catastrophic. In contrast, the people of God are being transformed into a *new humanity* ruled by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. May He grant that this truth be reflected in the corporate life of the people of South Baptist Church of Laconia. Amen.