

## Eldership

\*Eldership slightly deviates from the 9 steps.

While Eldership is not greater than any other position in the church, the qualifications for being in Eldership are greater than any other position. Before anyone is able to serve as an Elder, we must make sure that they are qualified for the task.

There are two extremes that we must guard ourselves from while looking for qualified men. First, we must guard against letting the unqualified into Eldership. My definition of Eldership (from chapter 1) is one who “Listens to the Lord for His vision and sets up organizational systems for deacons and members to accomplish the vision”. Anyone can say, “I heard from the Lord”, but as Paul lists out the qualifications for Elders/Pastors in 1 Timothy 3, each qualification is a characteristic that is proven over time. It is not a checklist to be marked off at a given time, but rather a list of qualifications that the man should be consistently engaged in. In many ways, to approve an Elder, you must look at everything his life touches and evaluate his impact. I like to say that an Elder is qualified by his wife: if a godly women believes her husband is a good pastor to her and their kids, then her husband could be on his way to becoming an Elder. You could almost do interviews for Eldership without ever speaking to the candidate—all you need is the testimony of those around him. The second extreme that we must guard ourselves from is setting the bar high in efforts to disqualify instead of to disciple. Our hope should be that every man in our churches would be qualified for the position of Elder, even if he doesn’t desire it. Therefore, make every effort to disciple men towards the standard, rather than treating it as a line that just shows who won’t make the cut.

The standard of Eldership is not perfection, but rather living so fervently in the love of God that confession and repentance come naturally. What ultimately qualifies an Elder is not his behavior, but rather the grace of Jesus. When looking for Elders, I don’t look for men with perfect behavior, I look for those who are continually living in confession and repentance—not the sins that happened five years ago, but rather the sins that they committed today and are already tempted to do tomorrow. Men who live in the love of God with this kind of resolve know their great God. At Redeemer we have called our Elders “Chief Confessors” because they are the men that set the stage for

living in the love of God so whole heartedly, that they are unafraid to confess and repent.

To help you recognize the work of an Elder, I would suggest you go back and read chapter 1 in *Engage the Church* titled “The Leader Myth”. While every church and denomination may have a different definition of Elder, Pastor, Deacon, and member, here are the definitions we are using in this book:

| Title  | Role  | Status |
|--------|---|--------|
| Elder  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listen to the Lord for His vision for the church</li> <li>Set up roughly outlined organizational systems for the pastors, deacons and members to accomplish the vision</li> </ul>  | Unpaid |
| Pastor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take the vision and roughly outlined organizational systems that have been set up by the Elders, and begin to build a more comprehensive plan so that deacons and members can be involved.</li> <li>Some pastors serve as paid deacons, while other pastors serve as paid Elders.</li> </ul> | Paid   |
| Deacon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage organizational systems that the Elders and Pastors have set up so that the members can be involved and care for one another.</li> </ul>   | Unpaid |
| Member | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be involved and care for one another under the direction of the pastors and deacons as prescribed by the Elders</li> </ul>   | Unpaid |

It is important for any Pastor to make sure that they are not carrying out their own agenda within a church, but rather that they have received their ‘marching orders’ from the Eldership. This needs to be especially clear when a pastor also serves as an Elder.

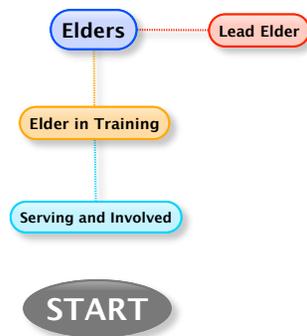
Elders work as a plurality to make single unified decisions. There is no Elder that is above another Elder, although the Eldership might have a ‘Lead’ Elder who sets up the agenda for the Eldership. The Lead Elder is typically also the Lead Pastor. Though this man leads both the Eldership and the church, he is still an equal amongst the other Elders. Some have referred to this position as a ‘first amongst equals’.

There are many books written on the qualifications and roles of Elders. My task in this book is not to state the doctrinal and theological arguments for Eldership, but is rather to guide you in helping men who have a desire to serve as Elders ‘prove’ they meet the qualifications to serve by discipling them over a period of time. Anyone can keep a man from becoming an Elder, but the true win for the church is when we disciple men until they are qualified for Eldership. My second task is to help you understand their role and to train them to listen for vision from the Lord, and set up organizational structure so that the whole church can be involved in the life of the church.

So what is the strategic plan for finding and training qualified Elders? In using the GEM, you will keep the title of Elder in front of the church. This will help your church know that Elders exist, and help those who are looking to become Elders know that there is a path. There are several steps that need to be completed before actually diving into the GEM (STEPS 1-3), and then steps that are completed with the GEM (STEPS 4-7), and finally a last step, which is evaluation (STEP 8).

### **STEP 1: Build a Path to becoming an Elder:**

This step deviates from every other chapter regarding specific ministries. While in other areas of ministry we have prayed, dreamed and built org charts , in Eldership our work is not to create levels by which one Elder is over the other (Elders are all equals), but rather our work is to create a path to becoming an Elder. So, the first step is to build a written document that will allow men to see the path to becoming Elders. Although you might expand your org chart to show that certain Elders oversee certain ministry areas, I would rather keep the area of Eldership simple so that ‘listening to the Lord for His vision for the church’ remains the number one goal of the Elders. Here is an example path to Eldership:



The path to Eldership follows the GEM and basically shows men who desire Eldership how they can become Elders. This path also shows you, as an Elder, how to raise up Elders. As men are interested in serving in this capacity, I would recommend that you show them this path.

### **STEP 2: Define each Level**

Once you have defined the path, you then need to define each level of the path. You need to clearly articulate what you mean by “Serving and being Involved”, “Elders in Training” and “Elders”.

One of the greatest detriments towards people serving is that they do not know what is expected in the position. If you can define the position in terms of time requirements, responsibilities, prerequisites, and training, you’ll be able to encourage those who desire Eldership get to the next step. Here are some examples of what I mean by defining each position:

## **Eldership**

### **Serve & be involved**

The Bible is clear that not many should desire Eldership because of the responsibility. In other words, walk carefully into this step and confirm God's call, through the confirmation of others. Elders are appointed by God to govern and lead the church. Their primary tasks are to "Listen to the Lord for the vision He has for the church, and then set up roughly outlined organizational systems so that the whole church can be involved in this vision." Men who meet the qualifications set in I Timothy and Titus, have served faithfully at Redeemer, and who have been through the Eldership Training Program, will be assessed by the current Eldership and then appointed to the position of Elder. Eldership is comprised of paid and unpaid Elders, and our hope is to train and appoint both. The path to Eldership begins by actively showing a servants heart to the body and serving faithfully in an area of ministry.

#### **PRACTICALITIES:**

The first step is to pick another part of the gospel explosion, serve in that part of the ministry, and show yourself faithful there.

#### **PREREQUISITES:**

- Must be a believer, and a member of Redeemer who has a track record of regular attendance, serving and giving of 10%.

#### **NEXT STEP:**

- Serve within a ministry and through training and experience, grow in your leadership skills.

Contact Info: [info@theredeemerchurch.com](mailto:info@theredeemerchurch.com)

## **Eldership** **Elder in Training**

While you are serving within the fellowship, and growing that area through purposeful discipleship, the next step in becoming an Elder is to be part of the Eldership Training Program (ETP). ETP is a training program that meets over a 12 month period, following a typical school schedule. The group meets weekly from 6-7 AM as scheduled, and follows various subjects that will be necessary to understand as an Elder. These subjects include theology, doctrine, discipleship, teaching, organizational structure, financial structure, and other issues related to Eldership.

### **PRACTICALITIES:**

As you enter this level, the desire is that you are teaching and equipping others to do the work of the gospel. At this point, you can express your desire to become an Elder at Redeemer to one of the existing Elders. When they believe you are ready, they will invite you into Redeemer's "Eldership Training Program" (ETP). The ETP is not a mandatory course for becoming an Elder, but this step is left to the discretion of existing Elders.

### **PREREQUISITES:**

- Serve and Lead in a ministry at Redeemer
- Eldership Training Program (1-2 hours weekly) (1 year commitment)

### **NEXT STEP:**

- Work with leaders of existing ministries to learn and do their roles.
- Eldership Training Program (1-2 hours weekly) (1 year commitment)

Contact Info: [info@theredeemerchurch.com](mailto:info@theredeemerchurch.com)

## Eldership

The final step in this part of the Gospel Explosion is to be appointed as an Elder. An Elder is responsible for listening to the vision that God has for the church, and setting up organizational structure and systems so that deacons and members can live within this vision.

### **PRACTICALITIES:**

- Elders meet once monthly, or as scheduled.
- Elders meet with various ministry leaders throughout the month to ensure the health of the ministry leaders, and their ministries.

### **PREREQUITES:**

- Has completed Eldership Training Program (1-2 hours weekly) (1 year commitment)
- Approval by Existing Eldership.
- Has been presented before the church for approval as an Elder with no recourse.

### **NEXT STEP:**

- After you have met requirements for Eldership, you will be conformed as an Elder.

Contact Info: [info@theredeemerchurch.com](mailto:info@theredeemerchurch.com)

Now that you have defined each level, you are now ready to develop training.

### **STEP 3: Develop Training**

At this point in the process, you have still not invited anyone to start the Eldership process; you are still working behind the scenes. Your task now is to develop the training system, so that as men head towards Eldership, you'll be ready. Since you have developed training in every other area of ministry, the first step is to let them go through the training that is in those ministries. Once they have completed that training, you will need to set up an Eldership Training Program of some sort.

The best tool for developing Elders is to let them be disciplined by existing Elders. Encourage your Elders in Training who are attending the training program, to connect with existing Elders for discipleship often.

While training Elders, don't forget to teach them how to live on mission inside and outside the church. The training you are doing has ramifications for building the kingdom that goes beyond the church. The skills that people have as a result of what you have just taught can be used in their homes, neighborhoods, communities, and beyond! Isn't it wonderful to think that this training could have so many potential practical uses? In order to make this a reality, you'll have to help your Elders connect the dots because most of them would never have dreamed these things are possible.

With all the training you are giving these men, they could serve on a local non-profit board, the school board, or the City Council. It is imperative that we give our leaders a dream for what they can do outside the church, as well as inside, so that they can build purposeful relationships that will grow the kingdom. Since your Elders in Training will not believe they are qualified for such tasks, the important part is to make

your training comprehensive enough that they'll realize the potential. This means you may need qualified men to help you train your Elders. If you have no financial or organizational training, it would be helpful to bring in men (like CPA's and Project Management professionals) to help you train. In doing so, you will set the bar high not only for the Elders in training, but also for yourself. We need godly people to serve in these positions in our cities, but they need to be qualified for the tasks before them. If they are not qualified for these positions, why would we let them serve in the similar position within the church?

## **USING THE GEM**

Now that you have done the behind the scenes work, you are ready to start working with the GEM. Keep in mind that the GEM has two purposes: First, it serves to show people how to get connected into the church. Second, it serves to help you (as the leader) know how to get people connected and onto the next level.

### **STEP 4: Get People involved using the GEM (Attract)**

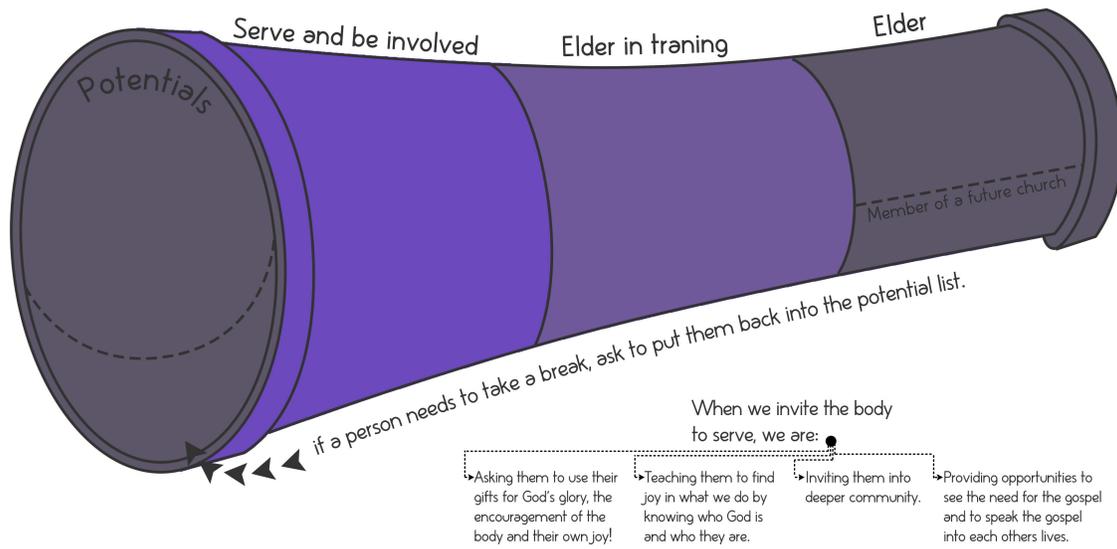
Since there are 10 ministry areas represented on the GEM, one idea is to divide up the year, giving each ministry one month for promotion and articulating their purpose during that month's Sunday services. This does not mean that you need to promote that particular area of ministry from the stage for four weeks in a row, but you might take one week to promote from the stage, another to have a table in the foyer, and yet another to talk about the ministry in Community Groups. Be creative!

During the designated month for Eldership, you may take time to explain the work of Eldership before the church, and pray for the Eldership. This might also be a good time to confirm any new Elders. In doing this, you'll be able to keep the faces of the Eldership before the church, and help the church understand their role. Take time during this presentation to invite men who desire to be Elders to start on the path to Eldership. You might print the path in the bulletin, or put it on a slide that you can use to show the path. The result of this will be that the church will know the existing Elders are trained and qualified, and those who desire Eldership will know how to start the journey.

Although sharing from the stage is an important discipleship tool for the church, personal invitation is, by far, still the best methodology for getting men into Eldership. The key to doing personal invites in an ever growing church is to make sure that you are training all your Elders to do the invitations. As the church grows, your ability to know or reach everyone is only limited to how much you include your team. In *Engage the Church*, I introduced the concept of "Pipeline" as a way to help your whole team do the work of personal invitation. The idea is to list each person already serving, circle those who are potentials for moving to the next level (towards the Eldership Training Program), and then use a portion of your Eldership meetings to share the pipeline so that all existing Elders are aware of those who are on (and not on) the list. Here's an example of the Pipeline for Eldership. It is the same Pipeline that is used in every area of ministry:

## BUILDING THE KINGDOM TOGETHER

Who can I invite to do this work with me? Who can work with me today?  
Who's needs to find their joy by serving the body in the Eldership?



Remember that the GEM has two purposes in terms of attracting people. First, to get people from the “START” to involvement in the Eldership. The second so that you can disciple people, taking them to the next level. As you think about promotion of Eldership and using the pipeline, don’t forget to keep both of these purposes in mind.

### STEP 5: Get People Trained Using the GEM (Build)

Once you have recognized those men who desire to become Elders, it is now time to put your training system (developed in step 3) to work. Remember the phrase “more is caught than taught”? This is a good reminder to us that training needs to include modeling/mentoring as well as teaching. This is why the next step is so critical.

### STEP 6: Get People Connected Using the GEM (Connected)

In my experience, most men who have not served in Eldership are very intimidated to do so. They seem to think that Eldership is more like a secret meeting where we wear cloaks and use secret passwords and do weird rituals. Eldership is nothing of the sort. Eldership is where a group of humble godly men gather to pray, listen to the Lord, discuss, and make decisions for the good of the church.

Since bizarre visions of Eldership exist, to help men through the intimidation phase, it is helpful to connect potential elders with existing Elders for discipleship. This shouldn’t just occur throughout training, but also during the first few months that the new Elder is appointed. When a new Elder starts to serve, he will have to learn how the Eldership meetings work, as well as how Elders serve throughout the church all the time.

Although some of this will be taught through the ETP, there is nothing like having a friend who can model this for you while you are learning.

Make sure you take time to connect potential Elders with existing Elders until they are confident in their work.

### **STEP 7: Get People to the Next Level Using the GEM. (Developed)**

The path for Eldership is all about getting to the next level. When a man recognizes the desire to for Eldership, he is to go from the “START” to “Serving and Involved” and then, once he has proved himself there, onto “Elder in Training”. Although the path is clear, your work is to make sure that the men who have recognized the calling don’t get stuck along the way. Make sure you are keeping a written list (the Pipeline document is helpful), and that you are constantly encouraging men to step up.

One of the biggest mistakes in any organization is to wait to attract and train until there is an opening. In other words, we don’t start looking for Elders until our existing Elders tell us they need a break or that they just got transferred. We have all been there. In short, we don’t attract and train until we are in the middle of a problem. Why is this? We know that God said he will build his church, we know that we are called to make disciples, and we also know that the men who are currently serving will need a break. It is baffling to me when we think that the current situation will continue indefinitely, when we know this has never happened in all of human history.

No matter what your current need is, your role in the church (more specifically in Eldership) is to raise up men to lead this church, and future church plants. Imagine the day when a man can say “I feel led to start a church but want to take qualified Elders with me”, and you can reply “no problem” without grimacing or immediately panicking because you have been training men for this task. This day is possible when you don’t wait to invite men to start their path to becoming Elders, and work to continually to help them get to the next level.

One of the great push-backs I receive on constant training is “if I train more men to be Elders, won’t our existing Eldership get huge?”. The verse that comes to mind when I hear this is Matthew 9:37 where Jesus tells the disciples that “the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few”. The very next verse Jesus tells them “therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest”. The earthly argument might be what comes first, the workers or the harvest? Jesus says that the harvest is plentiful, but our immediate job is to pray that God would send out laborers. So according to Jesus, worry about the harvest...it is plentiful! There will be plenty to do. Let’s spend our time praying, discipling men, and God will make it very clear how he wants to use them.

### **STEP 8: Evaluate Constantly**

The term evaluate refers to assessment or measurement. So in order to evaluate, you have to know what you are assessing or measuring. In reference to Eldership, we want to assess and measure if our efforts in using the GEM are actually working. We want to look at our results and evaluate whether or not are systems need to change.

One of the easiest evaluation tools is to look at the path you built to Eldership and see if people are on route. By looking at who is on this path, you can evaluate STEP 4 (Get people involved) and STEP 7 (Get people to the next level). If you are not seeing progress in having people join the Eldership, then you need to revise the way you are doing STEP 4. If you are not seeing people progress to the next levels of the GEM, then you need to revise the way you are doing STEP 7.

Outside of the org chart, another easy evaluation tool is a simple survey. Once, a year, you might ask your Elders and Eldership in Training to fill out a short survey to help you evaluate the training they have received and the connectedness they feel. This survey will help you evaluate STEPS 2, 3, 5, and 6. Here’s a sample of a survey that you might use:

### Redeemer Eldership Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: Elder in Training   Elder (circle one)

Answer the following using the scale:  
1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree.

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1. I understand my role and my duties as an Elder                             | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. The training I received for my role as Elder enabled me to do my job well. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. I feel like I am part of the team.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. I got to know other Elders by serving                                      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. I understand how to get to the next level in serving                       | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6. We used the 'pipeline' to help get others on the team                      | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7. I feel like I could take a break from serving if I needed to.              | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| I suggest that...   |           |
| Comments:   |           |

When you receive the results of the survey, this will help you evaluate what needs to change in the training and the way in which people feel connected in the Eldership. The survey is not conclusive evidence that something needs to change, but it is a great starting point for discussion.

Both these tools are great for creating a way to evaluate what you are doing. There are several methods by which we can evaluate, and each method comes with its own built in biases. Whatever you do, don't see evaluation as an attack, but rather that somebody is taking the time to help the ministry improve.

---

Now that you have a basic understanding of each step you might be feeling overwhelmed! As you look at what needs to be done, remember the way to eat an elephant is always one bite at a time. With everything else you have on your plate, it might seem difficult to spend this much time working on this one ministry. The answer is to divide and conquer! If you have an existing Eldership, ask them to help in setting up the steps in this chapter. If you do not have an existing Eldership, ask Elders from another church to be your provisional Eldership and assist you while you set up your own.

Eldership is a great calling! It is a great privilege to listen the voice of the Lord to hear His vision for the church and to set up organizational systems to accomplish this vision. As you think about this work, remember the impact that Eldership has on every other area of ministry. In essence, this is the foundation that all other ministries will stand upon. Take time to do this well.