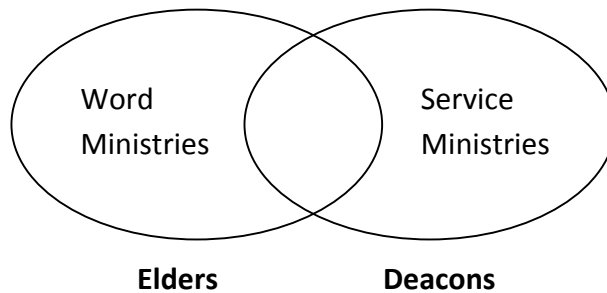


Implications of Biblical Eldership

Biblical Eldership is related to leading or overseeing the congregation. This is a Word based ministry. It's about seeing the gospel at work in the life and lives of the church. It overlaps but is different to deacons, whom are servants meeting body-life needs.



The Story in Many Baptist Churches

Baptist churches have often found themselves without elders for prolonged periods of time. Sometimes an unofficial patriarchal or matriarchal figure will rise up to fill the leadership vacuum. Sometimes the deacons take on many of the roles of eldership. It is my observation that the deacons fulfil many eldership functions at Tamworth Baptist Church. Over time the diaconate assumption of eldership roles can become the normal practice, even the expectation or normal way of thinking. Reliance on the professional pastor can also minimise the role of elders. Eldership often becomes tokenistic; sidelined to issues like pastoral care or as a recognition of service. Sometimes eldership becomes extinct altogether.

The Change to Biblical Eldership

As a result of this, the change to Biblical Eldership can be a big change. It is not just about picking one or two elders.

Changes in understanding and practice need to be made

Deacons will need to surrender power to the new eldership

Elders will need to be equipped and trained and then step into authoritative leadership positions

The congregation will need to understand and embrace the differing roles.

Challenges in Tamworth Baptist Church

Eldership has been confused with pastoral care.

Deacons have become de facto leaders.

Biblical Eldership has perhaps been mentally divorced from Word ministry.

Prospective elders are serving as deacons, also important work, but not eldership.

Godly men aspire to the diaconate, not the eldership.

Eldership is not seen as necessary.

Positives at Tamworth Baptist Church

We almost start with a blank slate with respect to eldership

We do have godly men who could be equipped and called to eldership

We have a serving congregation

We have a desire to live the Scriptures

Next Steps

We need to separate the issues of pastoral care and eldership.

We need to be sure that Biblical eldership is really what we want.

We need to prioritise major changes and issues and limit our church stress.

We need to ask whether creating a pastoral care committee would resolve some of the issue and give us time to implement eldership in a thoughtful and effective process.