



PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- You can watch the sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.

Welcome: *Icebreaker – When you were only a child, what is one thing that you dreamed of becoming?*

Study Context: This week's guide discusses the role of elders and all the implications that come from this important discussion. Here are some helpful biblical references to look at as we navigate the difference between male elders in the church and the role of both men and women in the congregation of the church.

Adam and Eve (Genesis 1): Adam authoritatively names Eve, Eve referenced as a *helper*, God confronts Adam for the serpent's temptation of Eve, equal punishment given to Adam and Eve. This is the foundation for the discussion of equal dignity between the sexes (Galatians 3:28) yet the beginnings of male headship.

Old Testament: Male Presiding Counsel (Ex. 18) Aaron and Sons male roles in the priesthood (Ex. 28 ; Lev. 9) Miriam (Ex 15:20-21), Zelophehad's daughter inherit (Num. 27:1-11), Rahab (Josh. 2), Deborah and Jael (Judg. 4) Huldah (2 Kgs. 22:11-20), Lady Wisdom (Prov. 9, 31), Esther and Ruth, Wise woman of Tekoa (2 Sam. 14)

Jesus: 12 male disciples + Inner core of males (Mk. 14:33) Matthews Genealogy includes women (1:1-17) Elizabeth and Mary (Lk. 1-2) Mary and Martha (Lk. 10:38-42), Samaritan Woman at the well (Jn. 4)

Early Church: Male Elder Passages (see below) Peter's First Sermon (Acts reference to Joel 2:28-32), Tabitha (Acts 9:36-42), Lydia (Acts 16:13-15) Women converts + Damaris (Acts 17:4,12,34), Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18-26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19), Phoebe, Junia, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persa (Rom. 16).

What's Going on This Week

This week, pastor Danny Strange brought us into the fifth week of our series titled *A Church that Pleases God*. Pastor Danny directed our attention to *1 Peter 5:1-4* to call our attention to the structure of leadership and authority in the organization of the church, particularly as it pertains to the role of elders. Pastor Danny explains that while the group of elder/overseer are scripturally reserved for males, we desire that ALL people can find flourishing and proper expression of spiritual gifts within the walls of our church. As you read this study guide, we challenge you to feel the weight of the role overseer and step into the challenge that YOU are being called to use your gifts of the spirit as we grow the list of things non-elders can do!

“Our prayer is that the community of faith at 3Crosses would bring glory to God, reflect the Biblical mandates and be a place where men and women can flourish and use the gifts of the Spirit to accomplish the important work of life transformation through following Jesus Christ.”
– Excerpt from the Elder statement on Gender and Leadership



GROUP MEETING (60 – 90 minutes)

Worship (10 – 15 minutes)

Take time with your group and prepare your hearts as you enter into the presence of God for this meeting.

Option 1: Worship Music Have someone share their favorite song. You can find it online, play it, and even sing along with your group! Have them explain why the lyrics have impacted them!	Option 2: Proclaim the Gospel The Gospel is not just something for the point of salvation, it is something we need to remember every day! Ask one of your group members to define the gospel and share its implications.	Option 3: Priesthood of all Believers 1 Peter 2:1-10: It's easy to forget that all of us are called to build our lives upon Jesus the cornerstone as the priesthood of believers. What do you believe is your role in the priesthood?
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Word #1: Discuss Your Experience with Church Authority (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Text: 1 Peter 5:1-11; Titus 1:5 – 2:15; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; – Listed are several of the texts that are most often alluded to when discussing the position of Elder. While much of the debate around these texts revolve around gender-specific male leadership and the many abuses of elder character traits, it is helpful to remember that Peter and Paul are speaking to churches that desperately need structural authority when it comes to organizationally caring for and overseeing a hurting flock (1 Peter and the scattered church) as well as the protection of sound doctrine (1 Timothy and Titus). **What is your past or current experience with church authority structures governed by Elders? What stands out to you the most about these texts? What stands out to you about this 3Crosses position statement: *At 3Crosses, we believe women and men are created in the image of God with equal dignity, worth and possession of spiritual gifts (Gen. 1:26; 1 Cor. 12:7). We live out this truth by equipping and deploying men and women alike to use their gifts in the work of the ministry. As we follow Scripture's teachings, we see that only one role in the church is gender-specific in its design: the office of Elder. When the church is functioning as it was designed, with Christ at the head and men and women using their gifts, the church grows and builds itself up in love.***

Host Tip: This question may hit a particular nerve as far as the abuse of the elder role or gender differentiations. Our challenge for HOSTs is to humbly allow a safe place to **discover** ideas alongside of each other. If disagreements arise, use the church's pastoral staff as resources for further discussion!

Word #2: Pray for Elders and Activate Your Role (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Texts: Acts 20:17-38; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 13:17-18; James 3:1 – The Acts passage is a beautiful insight into the *deep affection* Paul has for the church at Ephesus. The Elder's commission is to oversee the flock and guard it from fierce wolves of opposition. At the same time, the role of the church leadership is to *equip the saints* as we all activate our roles in the priesthood of all believers. Therefore, we are called to humbly submit to our leaders knowing their task as teachers and overseers comes with a heavy responsibility. **In what ways would you say these passages describe your relationship with the elders of your local church? How might your group take steps to actively pray for your elders? "Obey and submit" to them (Heb. 13:17)? How would you like to continue to be equipped toward your role in the priesthood of all believers?**

Host Tip: Challenge your group to proactively support and encourage your elders in this season. If you don't know them yet, our challenge would be to reach out and touch base with them whenever you can!



Witness (20 – 25 minutes)

- Pray for the Unfolding Events in the [Russia – Ukrainian crisis](#).
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would empower our Elders here at 3Crosses.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would lead us into our role as the priesthood of all believers.
- Pray for any individual prayer request that comes up in your group.
- **Pray for the entire group and how they may be able to participate in future group meetings.**
- **Pray for an interaction with someone who you can invite into your next group meeting!**
- **Pray for God's hand in the multiplication and revival of your group!**

Stay up to date with our Prayer Ministry by signing up to be an intercessor online at 3Crosses.org/pray!

Throughout the Week

-Follow up between group members: Have each member of the group pick one other group member to follow up with about how they are growing in their faith as they learn to keep in step with the Holy Spirit

--Join relief efforts locally and around the world: Looking to contribute to what is going on both locally and around the world? Visit our website and volunteer in our [neighborhood resource center](#) or help sponsor an [indigenous missionary](#)!

-Life Groups 2022: For more information about joining a group, hosting a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at avanegas@3crosses.org or Carmela at carmela@3crosses.org