

The Difference Between an Elder Board and an Elder Body

This week I had the opportunity to speak at the Kentucky Baptist Convention Evangelism Conference. It was a great thrill as I was able to be with old friends and to speak to church leaders from around the state. As part of my talk I shared the difference between an elder board and an elder body. Many have contacted me asking for this list.

For those of you in attendance at the conference... Because it was a Southern Baptist audience whose system normally utilizes deacons in the oversight of the church I used the word deacon in the talk. As you read this, feel free to use whatever term denotes the highest level of leadership in your church.

An elder board and a body are not the same animal. There are enormous differences in the two.

An elder board utilizes business principles and practices to manage the church.

An elder body systematically seeks out biblical principles and practices then utilizes them in the protection and oversight of Jesus' bride, the church.

An elder board asks the question, what will the majority think of our decision?

An elder body asks the question, what is God directing us to do in this situation?

An elder board works hard to "keep the right people happy."

An elder body will do what's right even if it means some prominent individuals leave to join another congregation.

An elder board sees themselves as the supervisor of the senior pastor.

An elder body sees themselves as confidants, co-laborers, and trusted friends of the senior pastor.

An elder board tends to suck the life out of senior leadership through unnecessary scrutiny and an unwillingness to consider methodological modification.

An elder body encourages senior leadership to freely seek God's direction and to continually pursue new methods that will aid the church in being missional.

An elder board separates themselves from the staff and tends to analyze the staff member's work from a distance oftentimes asking for revision without understanding.

An elder body partners with church staff seeing them as co-laborers with a different but vital responsibility and trusts them to carry out the ministry they are called to do.

An elder board and a elder body are not the same animal. One of these animals eats away at the organism Christ died for, keeping her from the freedom and joy that Jesus' offers His body, the church. This group is known for rules and regulations, They keep those who are the church from experiencing the ride of their lives. The other breathes life into those who make up her ranks. This type pursues and brings nourishment from God to her constituency. These types exhibit the exuberance of those who don't just know about Jesus but know Him personally. They are on the ride of their lives and are inviting everyone else to discover the thrill of it themselves.