

# Following Our Leader: Biblical Pictures of Local Church Leadership

(a guide for selecting new members of the Shepherding Board)  
Acts 15 & Acts 20:28

March 2, 20087  
by John Miller

<p><b>Big Idea:</b> Shepherds help us understand and pursue God's will, and they guard against any person, doctrine, or activity that would take us away from God.</p>
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## Introduction: Choosing Our Leaders

History tells us we should choose our leaders carefully. Can you name the man who lost the presidency of the United States by a vote of Congress? He became Vice-President but was later arrested for treason – accused of plotting to overthrow New Orleans to set up a base for invading Texas, where he would then establish his own private kingdom. Who was he? ... It was Aaron Burr, Vice-President under Thomas Jefferson – who Burr tied with in the electoral college vote for President in 1800, but who was selected over Burr by Congress. Jefferson was also the man who later had Burr arrested for treason! Aaron Burr had a rather checkered life as one of our early national leaders. Some people say we dodged a bullet with Burr. We know that we do best when we choose our leaders carefully.

This is no less true for the church than for a nation. I think it matters more in the church who we put in a position of leadership. It's the church that handles the holy things of this world – primarily the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the proclamation that declares Jesus Christ to be crucified, resurrected, and coming again to take unto Himself everybody who will believe in Him and follow Him through life, and through death and into heaven. It's the church which is entrusted with the Gospel, so it matters greatly that we choose the right people to be our leaders.

Who are these people? Every year, you get a chance to start the process of identifying them. Today and next Sunday, I'm going to invite you to name one or two people who would make outstanding leaders on our Shepherding Board for the next 3 years. On the last two pages of your sermon guide, you'll find a form to use to make your nomination. I've also given you a list of every person who is an active member of Trinity Bible Church. These are the people you will choose from.

But it will help you to know exactly what we're asking our Shepherds to do. So today I'm going to describe two responsibilities we ask of our Shepherds, and I'm going to ask you to begin identifying one or two people who might do these two things best. I don't want weak leaders on our Shepherding Board. I want our best! So let me tell you what we're going to ask them to do, and you tell me who they might be. Here are two responsibilities the Scriptures command our Shepherds to fulfill!

## Two Key Responsibilities of the Shepherding Board

**Responsibility #1 – Help this church understand and pursue God’s will for us.** Let me start this conversation with a blunt statement – maybe too blunt, but I want to make sure we start from the right perspective. What you desire this church to be – what I desire this church to be is of no significance – unless what you and I want is identical to what God wants this church to be. This church does not exist to serve you. It does not exist to serve me. It exists to serve the will of God. We will get a bit kitty-wompas with God if we try to make the church a servant of its own desires. We serve God’s desires, and by faith, we believe that our best future lies in serving the will of God. Therefore, we ask our leaders to help this church understand and pursue God’s will for this church.

The shepherds you elect will need to be people who pray. They will need to be people who study the Bible. They will need to be people who spend time with other people in our church and are listening to see what God is saying to other people. And then they will need to be people who will participate in discussions and debates with other Shepherds until the Shepherding Board agrees on what God is saying to us and on how we should move forward. The Shepherds we elect to the Shepherding Board will be people who can do what the leaders of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church did in Acts 15. Listen as I read Acts 15, starting at verse 1.

<sup>1</sup> Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."<sup>2</sup> And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

The question being debated in Acts 15:1 was this: *“Is it God’s will for us that we be tied to the Old Testament laws – circumcision and other things – or is God leading His church in a different direction?”* Facing that question, the decision was made to let the leaders of the church discern God’s will. That would have been the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem. So Paul and Barnabas were chosen to carry this question to the leaders of the church. Acts 15:6 tells us “the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.” The leaders of the church accepted the responsibility to clarify God’s will for the church. That’s what church leaders do! Our Shepherding Board doesn’t exist just to monitor finances and run programs. Nor does it exist to represent the desires of the people. The Shepherding Board exists to discern the will of God for our church.

No one person can do this. Notice in verse 6 that a whole group of people “came together to look into this matter.” There were at least twelve apostles. We don’t know how many elders. But all of them, together, wrestled with the question, *“What is God’s will for this church?”* And it wasn’t just a pleasant conversation. There was “much debate” verse 7 says. There was heat in this discussion. You can feel the heat in verses 7-11 – especially verse 10 – as Peter demands to know, “Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the necks of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” Peter was a bit worked up in this meeting! I take that to mean that he was disagreeing with some of the opinions being expressed by other apostles and elders. It was a tough question they were

wrestling with. They had to debate God's will, they had to listen carefully to the people (notice in verse 12 Paul and Barnabas were asked to speak again), and then they had to make a decision.

In the 2000-year history of the church, it's never been easy for church leaders to discern the will of God. Differing perspectives are normal – at least in the beginning of a discussion. Debate is normal in the process of understanding God and His Word and then applying it to today. Leaders have to pray together, search the Scriptures together, discuss and debate ideas together, listen to the people together, until we can agree on one picture of what God is calling this church to be. Notice that the Acts 15 leaders did come to an agreement. In verse 13 the apostle James stood up and said, "Brethren, listen to me!" Then, in verses 13-21, he said, "*Here's what I recommend,*" and his view seems to have settled the debate. Everybody agreed that what James had just said was an accurate statement of God's will for the church. And by verse 22 these leaders had agreed on a plan and were figuring out how to put their plan into play. They would send a letter to the whole church detailing their conclusion. One of the things they said in that letter was that they had "become of one mind" on this matter – verse 25. They all agreed, "*This is the will of God,*" and they began, together, helping the whole church pursue the will of God. This is what I want our Shepherds to do.

Now, you understand that there were apostles in this meeting in Acts 15. Men who wrote the New Testament! We don't have any apostles on our Shepherding Board, and there aren't any in our church who can be nominated. The apostles have passed on from this world. But we have their writings! We have the Holy Spirit inspired opinions of the apostles to guide us in discerning the will of God for this church. So when you nominate someone for our Shepherding Board...

- Don't give me the smartest people in our church. Give me people who will pray to God and pour over this book and then stand up and echo the values and opinions of the apostles!
- Don't give me the sharpest business leaders in our church. Give me someone who is passionate for the things that the apostles were passionate for!
- Don't give me friendly, likeable people. Give me people who will demand that we live out this book in every way possible!

Who do you know who can help us do this? Who is a pray-er in this church? Who is a Bible student in this church? Who is a person who will insist that we start our search for God's will right here – in the Bible? Nominate that person! If he's elected (or she), we're going to ask him to help this church understand and pursue God's will for us. It's not an easy task. It's not always a popular task. But it's a crucial task.

Aaron Burr claimed to be a Christian. His father was a Presbyterian minister. But as a leader, he sure did a lot of things that were more self-serving than nation-serving or better yet, God-serving. I want a Shepherding Board that is just the opposite. I want a board filled with people who are devoted to the task of helping this church understand and pursue God's

will. This is the first of two key responsibilities for a Shepherd at Trinity Bible Church. The second is this:

**Responsibility #2 – Help us guard against any person, doctrine, or activity that might lead us away from God’s will.** You all understand that the Church of Jesus Christ has powerful enemies in high places – enemies who do not want us to understand God’s will, enemies who do not want us to pursue God’s will, enemies who will do whatever they can to derail us from God’s will if we try to go in that direction. You can’t be a Shepherd of the Church of Jesus Christ if you’re not aware of the supernatural enemies which lurk in and around the church. In fact, one of the first instructions given to elders in a local church – where no apostle was living – was an instruction to “be on guard” against those things that might derail the church from God’s will. The instruction is found in Acts 20, a passage written to the leaders of a local church. Acts 20:17 says,

<sup>17</sup> From Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. {The leaders of the church in Ephesus. }

Paul was leaving the area and wanted to give a final ‘good-bye’ to the leaders in Ephesus. So he invited them to come to a nearby place. In verses 18-27, Paul reviewed with them his own ministry when he had been with them, reminiscing with them and reminding them of things he had emphasized and modeled. Then, in verse 28, he gave them this instruction.

<sup>28</sup> "Be on guard...

Why? Verse 29.

<sup>29</sup> ...after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

There are people and there are powers who want to derail our leaders and lead the church away from God’s will, and these disruptive people and powers are found in the church! The whole warning reads this way.

<sup>28</sup> "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup> "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Here’s one of the first commands given to a ruling board in a local church. “*Watch out for people, for doctrines, for practices that might lead the church away from the will of God!*” We could do a whole series on “Things that Might Lead the Church Away from God.”

- A mistaken understanding of God can lead a church away from God. How do we assure that people are grasping the truth about who God is? It’s the Shepherding Board that’s called to “guard” against a false understanding of God.

- A mistaken understanding of the Gospel can lead a church away from God. How clearly do the people of this church grasp that their salvation is by grace through faith, and is not dependant on their behaviors? How clearly do we understand that our sanctification – the perfecting of our lives – is by faith as well? Paul was adamant about this point in Galatians 3:3! It’s the Shepherding Board that’s called to “guard” against a false understanding of the Gospel.
- Any kind of sin tolerated within the church can lead a church away from God. How do we lovingly confront people and call them out of their sin – whether it’s blatant and obvious or subtle and hidden? It’s the Shepherding Board that’s called to “guard” against these things.
- All kinds of false teachings can lead a church away from God, and sometimes these teachings start off sounding right.
- All kinds of ministry strategies or church growth strategies can turn out to be harmful to the church – even some that seem so right and are so popular with the people.
- Ungodly values from our culture can creep into a church and pull it away from God.

Somebody needs to “guard” the church against these things, and in the Bible, it’s the elders – or as we would say, the Shepherds – who are given the responsibility of guarding themselves and the church. Acts 20 isn’t the only place in Scripture where this command is given. The apostle Paul repeatedly tells Timothy to “guard” the gospel.

1 Timothy 6:20 guard what has been entrusted to you

2 Timothy 1:14 guard the treasure which has been entrusted to you

2 Timothy 4:15 guard against [those who] vigorously opposed our teaching

To “guard” the church – its people and its doctrines – is a central function of a leadership team. Who do you know who could do this well? It has to be somebody strongly in tune with God – somebody who prays, somebody who studies God’s Word, somebody who lives it out day after day. It doesn’t have to be a smart person – just a godly one. It doesn’t have to be an outgoing person – just a godly one. It doesn’t have to be a well-known person – just a godly one. Who do you know who would do well guarding our leaders and our church? We’re looking to put four people like this on a ballot to elect two in June. They will help us understand and pursue the will of God for this church, and they will help us guard against any person, doctrine, or activity that might lead us away from the will of God. Who do you know who would be the very best we have at this kind of ministry?

Write that person’s name on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page of your sermon guide. Write two if you want, but no more than two. Or you can pray about it for a week. I’ll be coming at this subject from a different angle next Sunday as we look at the responsibilities of a congregation, and at that time I’ll give you another opportunity to nominate two people. But you can’t do it today and next week! You can only do it today or next week. I would say, if you think you’ll be here next week, wait and pray. If you will not be here next week, wait, listen to next weeks’ sermon online, and then turn in your nominations in two weeks. If you won’t be here in two weeks either, then go ahead and turn it in today.

## Conclusion

History tells us we should choose our leaders carefully. Some people think we dodged a bullet with Aaron Burr – our 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-President. He did seem to have plans that went beyond the scope of the Constitution of the United States. On the other hand, the jury in his treason case found him to be, and I quote, “*not proved to be guilty under this indictment by any evidence submitted to us.*” To this day, we just don’t really know what kind of man Aaron Burr was. So let’s make Aaron Burr the anti-model of what we want in our Shepherds. Let’s put our proven people on the Shepherding Board. The responsibilities we’re giving them – the responsibilities God is giving them – are too important to give to anybody else.

# FOLLOWING OUR LEADER: BIBLICAL PICTURES OF LOCAL CHURCH LEADERSHIP

March 2, 2007

**The Shepherds we elect become members of our ruling board. What exactly do we ask our Shepherds to do?**

- 1) Help this church understand and pursue God's \_\_\_\_\_ for Trinity Bible Church.**

## *The Biblical Picture: Acts 15:1-33*

*The Question: What kind of church does God want us to be?*

<sup>1</sup> Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

### *The Decision to Take the Question to the Leaders*

<sup>2</sup> And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. ...

### *The Leaders Accept Responsibility to Clarify God's Will*

<sup>6</sup> The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ...

### *The Active Debate Among the Leaders*

<sup>7</sup> After there had been much debate, Peter stood up... <sup>10</sup> "...why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ...<sup>13</sup> ...James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. ... <sup>19</sup> "... it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, <sup>20</sup> but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. ..."

### *The Decision of "the whole church" to Promote the Vision Clarified by the Leaders*

<sup>22</sup> Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas-- Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, <sup>23</sup> and they sent this letter [detailing their vision] by them, "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia... <sup>25</sup> it seemed good to

us, having become of one mind, ...<sup>28</sup> ...to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:<sup>29</sup> that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

#### The Joy and Peace Enjoyed by the Church

##### As They Adopt the Vision Communicated by the Leaders

<sup>30</sup> ...having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.<sup>31</sup> When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.<sup>32</sup> Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.<sup>33</sup> After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. ... [NASB]

## 2) Help this church guard against any person, doctrine, or activity that might lead us away from God's \_\_\_\_\_.

### *A Biblical Picture: Acts 20:28*

#### *The Call to the Elders (Shepherds)*

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

#### *Paul's Review of His History with these Leaders*

[see verses 18-27]

#### *Paul's Command as He Leaves*

28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. [NASB]

**Who among us can do these two things better than anybody else? Write down a possible nominee or two on the page following**

## Your Nomination:

Who are the people (from our membership list on the following page) who seem to have been "appointed" by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) to fulfill the responsibilities pictured in Acts 15 and Acts 20? The people you name do not need to be holding a formal leadership position right now, but they should certainly be people who are active in the kingdom of God. Do not name any pastor or current Shepherding Board member. They are already on the Shepherding Board for next year.

Current SB members are:

Marty Colwell	(until June '09)
Steve Riggs	(until June '09)
Shelly Hornback	(until June '09)
John Keiser	(until June '09)

Exiting the SB in June and ineligible for one year:

Trent Simpson

What two people do you believe can best fulfill the biblical responsibilities of a Shepherd?

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Circle one response for each question below:

*Are you a formal member of TBC?*    Yes    No

*How old are you?*    High School    Beyond High School

Way Beyond High School!

You may save this until next week and a 2<sup>nd</sup> message on Biblical leadership, or you may drop it in the baskets at the back of the sanctuary as you exit.

## Active Trinity Members

Duane Akeright	Merelyn Harberts	Marcia Mercurio	Karolyn Sorge
Mary Akeright	Russ Harberts	Mike Mercurio	Jeannine South
Michele Aldrich	Debb Henze	Brad Merrill	Marvin South
Margaret Bachtell	Ken Henze	Mary Merrill	Linda Squires
Paul Bailey	Chris Herring	John Miller	Mike Squires
Wanda Bailey	Paul Herring	Karen Miller	Cindy Stambaugh
Dave Bass	Earl Hintzman	Matthew Miller	Jeff Sutton
Ginny Bass	Lucille Hintzman	Adam Molstad	Judy Sutton
Garnet Blohn	Marie Hippen	Kristin Molstad	Nick Thompson
Lorna Blohn	Dave Hodgerson	Carol Moyer	Sue Thompson
Bob Bremner	Ramona Hodgerson	Gary Moyer	Marlene Troyer
Diane Bremner	Viola Hoffman	Laura Mutchler	Carol Van Der Meide
Myrna Bremner	Vonice Hoffman	Bev Nelson	Ron Van Der Meide
Ron Bremner	Janet Holsing	Bruce Nelson	Jake Werkman
Keith Brown	Jared Holsing	Katie Nelson	Lois Werkman
Nancy Brown	Stuart Holsing	Kyle Nelson	Adam Wilson
Scott Brown	Carissa Holton	Mike Noyes	Barb Woods
Tami Brown	Mark Holton	Wendy Noyes	Gary Woods
Becki Budensiek	Kevin Hornback	Mark Oelmann	Gary Yearling
Harry Budensiek	Mary Hornback	Merry Oelmann	Cindy Yearling
Joyce Buehner	Shelly Hornback	David Paulson	Lisa Zeissler
Jim Cavanah	Rob Inouye	Laura Paulson	
Judy Cavanah	Terri Inouye	Al Petersen	
Guy Chiattello	Alice Janssen	Gladys Petersen	
Linn Chiattello	Gene Janssen	Dale Peterson	
Marcia Colwell	Caroline Keiser	Kay Peterson	
Marty Colwell	David Keiser	Marilyn Piburn	
Pat Colwell	Doug Keiser	Marvin Piburn	
Greg Cotrone	John Keiser	Linda Pingel	
Veneice Cotrone	Margie Keiser	Mark Pingel	
Joanne Crabb	Bob Kelly	Janice Riggs	
John Crabb	Christa Kelly	Steve Riggs	
Mary Dickinson	Ken Klingman	Lillian Riker	
Ida Durbin	Linda Klingman	Phillip Rohrbaugh	
Carol Eagan	Angie Krueger	Winnie Rohrbaugh	
Jim Eagan	Ben Krueger	Phylliss Roth	
Elaine Elsberry	Jim Law	Matt Salmon	
Dianne Everts	Sandy Law	Sandy Salmon	
Larry Everts	Brenda Lowe	Mindy Scallon	
Rosemary Fenton	Daryl Lowe	Bob Segebarth	
Steve Fenton	Joan Lowe	Cheryl Segebarth	
Bryan Foster	Mike Lowe	Susan Shafer	
Patty Foster	Amy Lyon	Tom Shafer	
Deb Garbes	Howie Lyon	Becky Shirk	
Leon Garbes	Dawn Mason	David Shirk	
Jim Grandon	Joel Mason	Rob Shirk	
Marilyn Grandon	Deb McKinney	Tracey Shirk	
Darlene Grapp	Mike McKinney	Jenn Simpson	
Lyle Grapp	Bev Mercurio	Trent Simpson	
Helen Hahn	Connie Mercurio	Dick Smith	
Diane Hansen	Harry Mercurio	Peggy Smith	
Gary Hansen	Joe Mercurio	Irv Sorge	