



The Model Makes the Difference

By Al Ells, M.C.

The importance of order in the church is stressed throughout the New Testament in books like I Timothy and Titus. As today's churches grow, many adopt a board of directors to govern the church body. Naturally, board members and the pastors they assist come from varied church backgrounds, and may have differing opinions on how to oversee a church. Ultimately, the governance model chosen by the church leaders and the unity with which that choice was made will determine the effectiveness of the board.

Several different models of church boards have emerged over time. For example, some operate like a close-knit family, comprising no more than the pastor, his spouse, and a loyal supporter. These types of boards usually only exist for legal reasons rather than true church oversight. While this model may be necessary for a ministry's inception, it has drawbacks once the ministry begins to grow.

As a church's congregation grows, the pastor often feels overwhelmed, and forms a board of directors to support him in his role. The results of such a model, though borne of good intentions, can actually hinder a church's development. Because these types of boards are formed to help the pastor, they tend to be nearsighted—considering only the pastor's needs when making decisions. Accountability and spiritual growth suffer because the board has become a voice box for the pastor rather than the Holy Spirit.

Yet another model of board leadership, policy governance, is emerging. In this model, the board has a fiduciary (caretaking) responsibility to the pastor and the church. The Board supports, but also monitors church processes and policies. The pastor is the agent of the board, responsible for declaring vision, leading the church and managing routine church operations. Increasingly, growing churches practice this style of governance.

The chart below provides a brief comparison of the different church board models. Which model best describes your church's current practices? Which model do you prefer? If you think your church needs help building an effective board, **Leaders That Last** offers professional consulting to church pastors, directors and staff. Call 480-325-9350 or email us at info@leadersthatlast.org for more information.

<u>COMMON CHURCH BOARD MODELS</u>	CLOSE-KNIT or FAMILY-OWNED MODEL	PASTOR SUPPORT MODEL	POLICY GOVERNANCE MODEL
BOARD SIZE	Pastor, spouse and friend or relative	Small group of handpicked elders	Small to large group of handpicked elders
CHURCH SIZE	Common in small or new churches	Common in small to medium-sized churches	Common in medium-sized to large churches
PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE BOARD	Serves a legal role rather than governing	Provides support for pastor rather than accountability for the church	Assumes responsibility for the well being of the church and pastor
PURPOSE OF THE BOARD	Protects the pastor and the ministry	Protects the pastor and acts as his voice box	Serves the church body and leaders- monitors policy and direction
ACCOUNT-ABILITY	Low level of accountability	Low level of accountability	High level of accountability
RELATIONSHIP TO THE HOLY SPIRIT	Divine direction is expected to come only from the pastor	Divine direction is expected to come only from the pastor and the board	Divine direction primarily from leader but also from board, staff and church