

ELDERS OVERSEERS SHEPHERDS



The Forum Terrace Church of Christ

Sunday Morning Adult Class – Winter 2024

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NUMBER & TERMS OF ELDERS

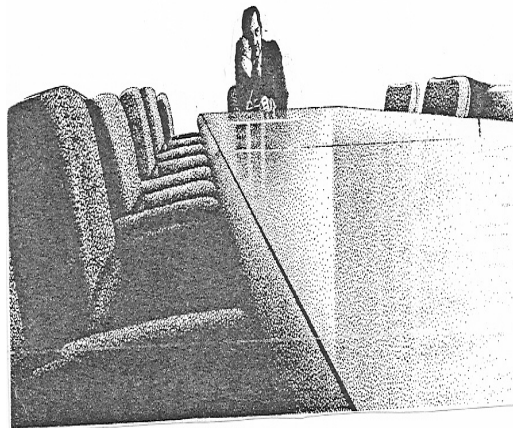
Perhaps no greater demonstration of the superiority of God's Wisdom can be seen than the manner in which He organized the church. Four basic classes of church organization can be considered relative to this discussion on elders. 1) First, a church can be **scripturally organized**. The church at Philippi was thus organized according to Paul. *"Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:"* (Phil. 1:1). 2) However, a church can be **scripturally unorganized**. This would be the case where a church did not have elders due to the unavailability of qualified men. This congregation would in all other respects be scripturally organized. 3) Also, a church can be **unscripturally organized**. For example, a church that practiced any form of organization foreign to the Bible, such as the Episcopal form of government practiced by the Roman Catholic church or Presbyterian form. 4) Finally, a church can be **unscripturally unorganized**. This would be the case where a church did not have elders although it has qualified men that could have already been appointed.

The one man rule of a church is totally without New Testament sanction. Divine prudence can be seen in the requirement of a plurality of elders who rule over the congregation. When Paul addressed the bishops at Philippi - not just one bishop. *"Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons"* (Phil. 1:1). Paul called for the elders of the church of Ephesus to meet him as Miletus, not THE elder. God is totally silent about THE bishop or THE elder concept. Thus, this lesson

is designed to answer the question: "How many elders must a congregation have?" The answer can only come from the Word of God.

GOD'S PATTERN CALLS FOR A PLURALITY

When God sets up a pattern for man He expects man to follow it. When God instructed Moses to construct the Tabernacle He gave him a model to go by. *"... as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, 'See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain'"* (Heb. 8:5.) What God has specified not even Moses was at liberty to change. Today, we too need book, chapter, and verse from the Divine pattern for all that we do (Col. 3:17).



The New Testament churches have always had a plurality of elders. In Acts 14:23 it is said that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church. This would have included the cities of Asia Minor named in verse 21: Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. There was a plurality of elders at the Jerusalem church (Ac. 15:4). The Ephesian church had *"elders"* (Ac. 20:17,28). According to Acts 11:29,30 there were *"elders"* in the churches of Judea. Titus was

instructed by the apostle Paul to appoint *"elders in every city"* on the island of Crete (Tit. 1:5). James speaks of the *"elders of the church"* (5:14). Paul addresses one of his epistles to the *"bishops"* at Philippi (Phil. 1:1). Peter declares that *"elders"* are to feed and lead *"the flock of God which is among you"* (1 Pet. 5:2). Paul's use of such terms as *"the presbytery"* and *"pastors"* demonstrates that God's pattern calls for a plurality of elders. These examples establish the pattern that there must be a plurality of elders in the local church.

Not one instance or necessary inference exists suggesting there was ever one man who served as the only elder in any New Testament church. The only example that comes close is that of Diotrephes and this situation is clearly condemned by the apostle John (3 Jn. 9). One elder cannot be a body of elders, a presbytery, or an eldership. For example, a citizen is not a nation, a Christian is not a congregation, a single

person is not a family, one cow is not a herd, nor can one man ever represent the "elders". Peter was an elder (a "fellow elder"), (1 Pet. 5:1,2). Peter was not THE elder. One elder does not make decisions for the congregation or elders. Decisions are mutually agreed upon by the elders. If one elder of two dies or becomes unqualified and resigns the other must resign. In each local congregation there can never be less than two elders. When two, three, etc. becomes one it is singular, not plural. A congregation with only one elder would automatically find itself in direct contrast to the Divine Pattern of Church Government.

DENOMINATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE UNSCRIPTURAL

The late H. Leo Boles left us an excellent summary of the various forms of church government invented by human reasoning.

"There are three theories devised by man for the government of religious people in the congregational capacity. This gave rise to three different forms of church government. They are mentioned here that the New Testament teaching of church government may stand out the more emphatic. (1) Episcopal. This form of government recognizes three orders of clergy - namely, deacons, who are generally young men serving a kind of apprenticeship; the priests, who have charge of parishes and exercise large powers; bishops, who have the oversight of a number of parishes. The entire district over which the bishop presides is known as a diocese. The Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Church are examples of this form of church government. The Methodist Episcopal churches have a modified form of this kind of government. (2) Presbyterial. This form is an attempt to reproduce the practices of the New Testament churches in which there was a plurality of elders. This form of government makes a distinction between the teaching elder, who is ordained as a minister and preacher, and the ruling elders, who are laymen selected for their ability in leadership. They together form the

session and decide matters of ecclesiastical business. The Presbyterian Church is an example of this form of government. (3) Congregational. This form of church government is based on the theory that each local church is a self-governing institution. All matters are settled by the vote of the members. The churches are loosely organized into associations, conventions, and congresses, but they retain complete independence. The Congregationalist and Baptist Churches are examples of this form of church government." (H. Leo Boles, Eldership of the Churches of Christ, pp. 5,6).

Denominational organizations are varied, such as: city-wide, county-wide, district wide, state-wide, nation-wide, and world-wide. At these various levels they are known as: presbyteries, synods, councils, conferences, assemblies, congresses, conventions, etc. Some are controlled from the top. With this form the central headquarters of the denomination controls the lower levels in the hierarchy. Some are controlled from the bottom. In this case the members elect the delegates.

How did all of these various forms develop? Paul warned the elders of Ephesus that apostasy would arise among their own number (Ac. 20:29f). Before the close of the first century one elder began to exalt himself in the local congregations. He reserved the title of "bishop" for himself while the others were known as "presbyters." The head elder also became known as "president of the presbytery." This step in apostasy triggered a struggle for power among church leaders which accelerated the development of a hierarchy. This change became quite established by 150 A.D. Then certain "bishops" began to preside over several congregations within a district which came to be known as a "diocese." These bishops became known as "diocesan bishops." Next came the rise of the "Metropolitan Bishops." At first, they simply presided over congregations in the metropolis. Then the "country churches, formed under the auspices of a neighboring city church, were affiliated with it, and had for their pastor a presbyter from the parent church, subject to its bishop" (via chart of Robert Turner). Thus, the "diocesan bishops" slowly became subject to the "Metropolitan Bishops." This sufficed for a time, then once more the battle began to rage in the struggle between church leaders for more power. During this struggle, the idea of a metropolitan bishop continued to grow until the presiding elders of churches in the capitals of the world were given authority over all

others. By the close of the third century, the struggle finally narrowed down to just five leading Metropolitan Bishops, who became known as Patriarchs. They lived in Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantinople. The battle for control finally narrowed down from these five to just two: the Bishop of Constantinople and the Bishop of Rome. In 588 A.D. John the Faster, patriarch of Constantinople assumed the title of "universal bishop." Gregory the Great, patriarch of Rome opposed it in 590 A.D. saying that to assume the title of Universal Bishop or to seek to be head of the church on earth was *"the spirit of the anti-Christ."* However, in 606 A.D. Boniface III, Bishop of Rome, was designated Pope by Emperor Phocas. This represents the Episcopal form of church government and how it developed. Other forms were developed by Protestant denominations in their vain attempt to reform the Roman Church. What they failed to do is restore the New Testament pattern of government, instead they continued to invent new forms.

Unfortunately, there are so-called "churches of Christ" which are in the process of adopting denominational forms of organization. In the International Gospel Hour News (Jan./Feb. '81, vol. 7, no. 1) there is on the front page an *"Open Letter From Overseeing Elders."* The second sentence of this letter begins: *"We the overseeing elders, want to..."* This concept is both unscriptural and redundant. It is like saying *"overseeing overseer", "shepherding shepherd", "pastoring pastor",* etc. Another alarming development in liberal congregations has been termed the *"Boston Hierarchy."* The bulletin of the Boston Church, January 4, 1988 mentioned the levels of this new hierarchy. Boston exercises direct control over several key congregations known as *"pillar churches."* The pillar churches control *"capital city churches."* The capital city churches control *"small city churches."* The small city churches in turn control *"countryside churches."* This revised system from Roman Catholicism is gobbling up congregation after congregation. The Boston Church described their means of accomplishing this: *"We are excited to announce that the elders of the Boston congregation have assumed oversight of the Kingston Church of Christ, a two-year-old mission effort originally planted by the Miami-Gables congregation." At this rate is won't be long till there is one Universal Bishop over "churches of Christ".*

It is interesting to note that though denominations have developed governmental forms contrary to the New Testament pattern of a congregation being governed by a plurality of men in

the eldership, their scholars recognized the Divine pattern. Referring to Phil. 1:1, Augustus H. Strong, a prominent denominational theologian said,

"In the very first verse you have recognized an organization of the Christian church that is noteworthy. He writes to those who recognize Christ, to the saints in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons; i.e., with the overseers and deacons. Only two orders are recognized, only two sorts of officers in the Christian church. First the pastors, or overseers, of the flock, and then the deacons of the church; and I suppose we have here the outline of church organization in the apostolic time. We do not anywhere find that there are more than these two ranks, or officers, in the Christian church" (Popular Lectures on the Books of the New Testament, pp. 242, 243).

Walter L. Lingle, former President of Davidson College, wrote,

"In Acts 14:23 we are told that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church which they organized. In Acts 20:17 we learn that Paul sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus. In Titus 1:5 Paul commands Titus to ordain elders in every city. These passages are sufficient to show that the New Testament church was governed by elders...Elders sometimes called bishops. The Presbyterian is sometimes a bit perplexed by finding the word bishop in the New Testament. It occurs in five different places and leaves the impression that perhaps after all the New Testament church was governed by bishops. A little closer study of these passages will reveal the fact that these bishops were simply elders" (Presbyterians: Their History and Beliefs, pp. 11-13).

Lofton, in the English Baptist Reformation (p. 25) said, *"Someone must yet restore a plurality of elders to Baptist Churches."* Obviously this too can be said of some "churches of Christ."

HOW MANY ELDERS CAN A LOCAL CHURCH HAVE?

They must have at least two. A plurality of men

is required, that is, more than one. It is scriptural to have as many elders as there are men qualified. Paul said in 1 Tim. 3:1, *"If any man..."* Any and all men in each congregation who can qualify should be appointed. However, it may prove not to be expedient to have ten elders in a congregation of fifty. Although it would be lawful. Paul also said that things done in the church must work for the edification of the whole (1 Cor. 10:23-33; 14:26). Flavil R. Yeakley Jr. wrote, *"For purposes of decision making efficiency years of research in group dynamics has demonstrated that the best size is either 5 or 7"* (CHURCH LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATION, p. 136). This of course is based on statistics from secular organizations. There is a logical reason for every congregation to strive to have more than two elders. If there are just two then the congregation is just one heart beat away from no eldership. Any one of four people could die: one of the elders or a wife of one of the elders. Furthermore, the church is just one qualification away from no eldership. And, only one has to move away.

NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE CORRECT TERMS

A study of the definitions of Biblical terms is critical to an accurate understanding of any Bible topic. Words are vehicles by which thoughts are expressed in a way that the mind can clearly understand. Six different English words are translated from three Greek words relative to our study. The six English words are: *"elder"* and *"presbyter"* both translated from the Greek word *"presbuteros"*; *"overseer"* and *"bishop"* translated from the Greek word *"episcopos"*; also there is *"shepherd"* and *"pastor"* translated from *"poimen"*. These are not honorary titles, but words describing the work to be done by those qualified for the office.

What purpose does this serve? Or as some might ask, *"If all these terms are used to designate the same group of men, why didn't God just use one term, it would have made it a lot simpler?"* The Holy Spirit called the leaders of the New Testament church by different terms because no single term adequately describes their qualifications and work. The use of equivalent terms for the same office is necessary to call attention to various features of the character and work of this office. For example, I am known as Mr. Vess, preacher, daddy, Dan, husband, Brother Vess, etc. A Biblical example is seen in the way God refers

to Jesus as King, Lamb, Christ, Lion, etc. Each term focuses our attention on a different aspect of his work and character. God has maintained a connection between names and the work He has assigned to His workers. *"Apostle"* meant one who was sent. Jesus was the sender, and apostles were sent. Similar connections between the words *"patriarch"*, *"prophet"*, and *"priest"* and their God-given responsibilities clearly demonstrate this point. Thanks be to God for His great wisdom in using these terms to help give us accurate insight into this vital subject.

Before continuing it must be noted that these terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament. In Acts 20:17 the apostle Paul calls for the *"elders"* of the church at Ephesus to meet him in Miletus. In verse 28 he refers to them as *"overseers"* and instructs them to *"feed"* the church. The word *"feed"* comes from the Greek word *"poimainein"* which is simply the verb form of *"poimen"* (shepherd or pastor). Therefore, in this context the same group of men are referred to as elders, overseers, and shepherds. This clearly establishes the fact that they are one and the same. Again Paul uses the terms interchangeably when he tells Titus to *"appoint elders in every city"* (Tit. 1:5). Then in verse 7 he instructs him *"For a bishop must be blameless."* Further evidence comes from the apostle Peter. Peter exhorts *"the elders among you"* (1 Pet. 5:1) to *"feed the flock of God which is among you"* (v. 2). The word *"feed"* once again is the verb form of *"poimen"* which is a shepherd.

DEFINITION OF ELDER AND PRESBYTER

Throughout this workbook remember that proper study of the meaning of words requires investigating the words in four different areas: 1) *etymologically* - a study of the word's origin or development of usage 2) *comparatively* - a study of the words as to how they are used in other areas; 3) *historically* - a study of the words as to how they were understood by those to whom they were written; 4) *grammatically* - a study of the words as to their contextual usage.

► *Historical Usage of the Term*

The Old Testament foreshadowed the New. Therefore, it should not be surprising to find the term *"elder"* used throughout both Testaments. The word was applied to God's leaders before the time of Moses. While the people were in Egypt, elders were the legal

representatives of the descendants of Israel (Gen. 50:7; Ex. 3:16; 4:29,30). The use of elders after they escaped Egypt was first enjoined by Moses' father-in-law Jethro just prior to Mt. Sinai (Ex. 18:13-27). These elders had qualifications: able, men of truth, God fearing, and hating unjust gain (v. 21). This form of leadership was met with the approval of God (v. 23). These elders were systematically organized into courts with lower and higher judicatories. Later, God appointed a group called "*the Seventy*" (Num. 11:5,16,17). They were to help Moses in governing the people. Apparently there were different levels or groups of elders over God's chosen people: the elders of the tribes (Dt. 31:28); elders of Israel (1 Sam. 5:3); elders of Judah (Ex. 8:1); and elders of towns (Dt. 25:7; Lev. 5:14). Various duties were assigned to these elders. They were judges in apprehending murderers (Dt. 19:12). They were to conduct inquests (21:2). Settling matrimonial disputes was another area of their responsibility (22:15; 25:7).

"Elders among the Jews were the rulers of the people, prominent men who took the lead in directing and controlling affairs. The elders of the city corresponded to our councilmen, just as we now call them 'city fathers'. The elders of the people were their representatives and rulers in the government and management of affairs pertaining to the public welfare. As an official term, therefore, this word expresses the idea of a government by men of age, prominence, experience, and wisdom." (W.L. Hayden, CHURCH POLITY, Kansas City: Old Paths Book Club, 1984, p. 51.)

The use of elderships in governing the people has a long, prominent history among the Jews. They were used: before Moses, in the wilderness, under the judges (Jg. 2:7; 8:14; 11:5), under the Kings (2 Sm. 17:4; 1 Ki. 12:6; 21:11), even during the captivity (Jer. 29:1; Ezk. 8:1), subsequent to the return from captivity (Ezra 5:5-7,14; 10:8,14), during the 400 years of the intertestamental period (the Apocryphal books affirm their existence). They are even found in the New Testament. Christ has to deal with them during His ministry (Mt. 21:23). The elders along with the Chief Priests made the decisions involved in the persecution and crucifixion of Christ (Mt. 26:59; 27:20,41). They are also mentioned during the early church period (Ac. 4:23). One observation needs to be made at this point: there is a striking resemblance that exists between the Old Testament concept and the New

Testament usage of the term "*elder*". Both were older, more experienced men. Both were selected with godly qualifications. Both were spiritual watchmen of God's people. Both were responsible for guiding, leading, ruling, and judging the people of God. In both Testaments corrupt and negligent elders were condemned.

► *The Greek word "presbuteros" defined*
W. E. Vine defines "*presbuteros*" as

"an adjective, the comparative degree of *presbus*, an old man, an elder, is used (a) of age, whether of the elder of two persons, Lk. 15:25, or more, Jn. 8:9, 'the eldest; or of a person advanced in life, a senior, Ac. 2:17; in Heb. 11:2, the 'elders' are the forefathers in Israel; so in Mt. 15:2; Mk. 7:35, the feminine of the adjective is used of elder women in the churches, 1 Tm. 5:2, not in respect of position but in seniority of age; (b) of rank or positions of responsibility, (1) among Gentiles, as in the Sept. of Gen. 50:7; Num. 22:7; (2) in the Jewish nation, firstly, those who were the heads of leaders of the tribes and families,...secondly, members of the Sanhedrin,...(3) in the Christian churches, those who, being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches. To these the term bishops, *episkopoi*, or overseers, is applied the latter term indicating the nature of their work, *presbuteroi* their maturity of spiritual experience. The Divine arrangement seen throughout the N.T. was for the plurality of these to be appointed in each church Ac. 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tm. 5:17; Tit. 1:5. The duty of elders is described by the verb *episkopeo*. They were appointed according as they had given evidence of fulfilling the Divine qualifications, Tit. 1:6-9; cp. 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and 1 Pet. 5:2;..." (AN EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL WORDS, p. 351).

The eminent lexiconographer Joseph Henry Thayer wrote,

"elder used 1. of age; a. where two persons are spoken, of elder; Lk. 15:25. b. univ. advanced in life, an elder, a senior:...2. a term of rank or office; as such borne by,...b. among Christians those who presided over the assemblies (or

churches):...That they did not differ at all from the bishops or overseers is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately, Ac. 20:17,29; Tit. 1:5-7, and that the duty of presbyters is described by the terms episkopein,...The title episkopos denotes the function, presbuteros the dignity; the former was borrowed from Greek institutions, the latter from the Jewish;..." (THAYER'S GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON, p. 536.)

► *Translations of the Greek word*

The Greek word "*presbuteros*" is translated "*elder*" and "*presbyter*". The word "*elder*" is a word of Anglo-Saxon origin meaning "*one older*" or "*an older person*." "*Presbyter*" is the anglicization or transliteration of the Greek word. It is also of Latin origin. It means the same as elder. It needs to be pointed out that some have objection to the use of the term "*eldership*." They argue that such a word is not found in the Bible. However, the Greek word "*presbuterion*" in I Tim. 4:14 translated "*presbytery*" could properly be translated "*eldership*". W. E. Vine defines "*presbuterion*" as "*an assembly of aged men, denotes (a) the council or Senate among the Jews, Lk. 22:66; Ac. 22:5; (b) the elders or bishops in the local church, I Tim. 4:14.*" (p. 351).

As a matter of fact George Berry's Interlinear has the word "*elderhood*" in I Timothy 4:14. The word "*elder*" is found in the Bible. "*Ship*" is simply a noun-forming suffix meaning an office. Such as, "*governorship*" - the office of governor. Both presbytery and eldership carry the idea of the body of elders - all of them collectively.

► *Implications of this term elder*

First, one must be older to serve as an elder. It means age or seniority in a comparative sense (Lk. 15:25). Not necessarily the oldest man. Some would like to read into this a certain chronological age. No minimum age requirement qualifying one for becoming an elder has been given. The constitution of the United States requires that a person be at least 35 years of age before he can be President. The Bible does not specify a chronological age for elders. Second, we learn that one must be spiritually mature. God knows that men develop and mature at different ages. The issue is not chronological age as much as it is maturity that has produced one full-grown in Christ (Heb. 5:14). One must be old enough to have acquired all the qualifications. Leadership or rulership requires wisdom, which comes only by age and

experience. One must be old enough to have the experience of life and the wisdom necessary for the work. By no wild stretch of the imagination can a "youth" be an "elder". A 30 year old may have been in the church for 10 to 15 years, but he lacks the experience of life. Even though he may be scripturally and spiritually wise above average for his age, still he is not an elder. Yet, an 80 year old has experience, but may lack wisdom from above.

► *Misuses of the term*

The Presbyterian Church has a local government in their congregations ruled by elders who are youths and often female. The Mormon church has elders who are youths often unmarried and without a family. Some brethren say that "*elder*" simply means just an older person in the church and not an office. According to the Bible elders have an office and with specific work to do (I Tim. 3:1; 4:14). Remember, the term "*elder*" is equivalent to "*overseer*" and "*shepherd*." These men must be appointed elders, not just grow older. The qualifications do not come naturally with age. The Holy Spirit made them elders not by aging, but by setting up qualifications for them to strive to meet (Ac. 20:28; I Tim. 3:1-7).

DEFINITIONS OF OVERSEER AND BISHOP

► *Historical usage of the term bishop or overseer.*

"In classical Greek, both gods and men can be described as episkopoi or 'overseers' in a general and non-technical sense; inscriptions and papyri of wide distribution use the word to denote magistrates, who sometimes appear to have administered the revenues of heathen temples;...and the word can apply also to philosophers, especially cynics, when acting as spiritual directors" (New Bible Dictionary, p. 158).

The companion word in the New Testament is "*watchman*" (Ezek. 3:17-29). In its classical Greek usage it means: any guardian whatsoever. A municipal officer, or one who was appointed to oversee and take care of the interests of some particular town or district, a viceroy or magistrate sent to superintend the affairs of conquered provinces.

► *The Greek word "episcopos" defined*

The Greek word "*episcopos*" occurs five times in the New Testament. Vine defines the noun as follows: "*lit. an overseer (epi, over; skopeo, to look or watch), whence Eng. 'bishop', which has precisely the same meaning, is found in Ac. 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pt. 2:24.*" (Vine, p. 120). He defines the verb form as

"Lit. to look upon (epi, upon, skopeo, to look at, contemplate), is found in 1 Pet. 5:2...the word does not imply the entrance upon such responsibility, but the fulfillment of it. It is not a matter of assuming a position, but of the discharge of the duties" (p. 824). Thayer defines the noun as "an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any c u r a t o r , g u a r d i a n , o r superintendent;...guardian of souls, one who watches over their welfare:...Spec. the superintendent, head or overseer or any Christian church;..." (Thayer, p. 243).

► *Translations of the term*

The Greek word *episkopos* is translated into two English words: overseer and bishop. The word "*overseer*" is of Anglo-Saxon origin meaning "*over*" to be above in rank and authority and "*seer*" which means to look upon or inspect. The word "*bishop*" is of Latin origin and is a corruption of a Greek word. It means the same as overseer.

► *Observations from the definitions*

First, it is an office of position and service. "*It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do*" (1 Tim. 3:1). Vine translates it as "*overseership*" (p. 129). Second, we learn that they are superintendents over the activities of others. Finally, it tells us of their administrative function.

► *Misuse of the term*

Once again denominational theology has greatly perverted the meaning of a Biblical concept. What they teach and practice concerning a bishop is in direct contrast with the scriptures. God never put bishops over more than one local church as they do. God never intended for just one elder or bishop to oversee the church, but requires a plurality of bishops. God never intended the office of a bishop to be a carnal or political office as they use it, but rather a position of spiritual service.

DEFINITION OF SHEPHERD AND PASTOR

► *Historical usage of the term.*

The term is used 103 times in the Old Testament with reference to: a keeper of sheep, like Abel; God Himself as keeper of mankind; Christ as caretaker (Ezek. 34:23-37); to Moses as the leader and keeper of Israel (Is. 63:11); to the priests and prophets of Israel as feeders of spiritual things (Jer. 3:15; 10:21; 17:16; 23:1); to Cyrus as God's appointed guardian of Israel (Is. 44:28); and as an intimate companion, one who eats and drinks with another (Pr. 13:20).

"No life was more familiar to the Hebrew than that of the shepherd. It was his business to lead the flock into green pastures, and beside still waters, and to protect them from the wolves, lions, and bears, always seeking their destruction. And if one was sick, or lame, or wounded, he was to give it special care often carrying the young lamb in his bosom. And should one stray away and be lost, he was to go out into the mountains and seek it until it was found: and then bring it, with rejoicing, into the fold" (M. M. Davis, THE ELDERSHIP, Standard Publishing Co., 1912, p. 6).

"Shepherds in Bible times were quite different from shepherds in the English speaking world in the days when the Bible was first translated into English. The shepherds of the English speaking world kept their flocks fenced in. They did not live with their flocks. They sent people to feed the flocks regularly and then came around each year to shear the sheep for their wool and slaughter some for market" (Flavil R. Yeakley Jr., Church Leadership & Organization, p. 20).

In Ezekiel 34:1-10 God uses the term to describe the leaders of the Jews. Jesus describes the Sheep/Shepherd relationship using this term in John 10:1-15.

► *The Greek word "poimen" defined*

The noun is found eighteen times in the New Testament denoting: keeper of sheep (Lk. 2:8); the work of Christ (Jn. 10:11, 14, 15); and the work of elders of the church (Eph. 4:11). Vine defines it as

"A shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks 'not merely one who feeds them', is used metaphorically of Christ's pastors,' Eph. 4:11. Pastors guide as well as feed the flock; cp. Ac. 20:28; which, with ver. 17, indicates that this was the service committed to elders (overseers or bishops); so also in I Pet. 5:1,2, 'tend the flock...exercising the oversight', RV.; this involves tender care and vigilant superintendence" (p. 839).

Similarly Thayer says, "...of the overseers of the Christian assemblies..." (p. 527). The verb "*poimanino*" is found eleven times. Vine says, "*Metaphorically of those who act as pastors in the churches, Eph. 4:11*" (p. 1032). Again consulting Thayer we find it means "*to feed, to tend a flock, keep sheep; b. trop. a. to rule, govern; of rulers...of the overseers (pastors) of the church, Jn. 21:16; Ac. 20:28; I Pt. 5:2. b. to furnish pasturage or food; to nourish; ... to cherish one's body, to serve the body, Jd. 12; to supply the requisites for the soul's needs...*" (p. 527).

► *Translations of the term*

Translated from the Greek word "*poimen*" are the two English words "*shepherd*" and "*pastor*." The word "*shepherd*" is of Anglo-Saxon origin and means "*one who tends a flock of sheep*." The word "*pastor*" is of Latin origin and simply means "*shepherd*." It is only translated "*pastor*" in Ephesians 4:11. This is due to denominational bias, because denominations call their preachers "Pastor."

► *Observations from the definition*

As shepherds they are to feed, tend to, and lead the flock (Jn. 10:3); to watch over (Ac. 20:28:31); to oversee (I Pt. 5:2); to know each sheep; to protect; and to give an account to the chief shepherd (I Pet. 5:4; Heb. 13:17).

► *Misuse of the term*

Many denominational preachers are called pastors. Remember, the only time this word is found in the Bible is Ephesians 4:11. It is a Latin term the meaning a shepherd, not preacher. It is used interchangeably with elder and overseer, and never with preacher, minister or evangelist. Furthermore, preachers are not referred to as pastors in the New Testament.

CONCLUSION

God's superior way demands more than one elder to serve a church. History shows that as soon as men start to change this one point in the Pattern it opens the floodgates to many human innovations. Let us learn from the mistakes of those of the past or we are condemned to repeat history.

The danger of selecting one of these terms (elder, presbyter, bishop, overseer, shepherd, and pastor) to the exclusion of others should be obvious. The use of just the term "*elder*" has led some to believe that elders are just older men. The exclusive use of "*pastor*" has led to preachers being called "pastors" by most denominationalist. We should expand our Biblical vocabulary to include and utilize all scriptural terminology. Referring to elders by these other terms could help us avoid under-estimating the duties inherent in the terms "overseer" and "shepherd."

REVIEW

1. List the four possible ways a church could be organized in regard to elders.
2. T F God has not specified how many elders a church must have.
3. List the references which show the New Testament churches always had a plurality of elders.
4. T F If there are two elders in a congregation and one dies the other one can continue to serve as the elder.

5. List the three basic forms of church government that have been designed by denominations.
6. What was the first deviation from the Divine pattern of church government?
7. In what did this power struggle among church leaders ultimately result?
8. Why is it wrong for one eldership to oversee a congregation other than its own?
9. T F Some denominational scholars recognize the fact that the Bible teaches a congregation to be governed by a plurality of men in the eldership.
10. Give reasons why it is better to have more than two elders.
11. List the English words that are translated from the Corresponding Greek words.

Poimen:

Presbuteros:

Episcopos:
11. Be ready to explain why God chose various terms for the same office.
12. List the passages where these terms are used together.
13. T F There is no resemblance between elders of the Old Testament and elders of the New Testament.
14. T F Is it scriptural to use the term "eldership".
15. List two things we learn from the term elder.
16. In your own words be able to define "episcopos".
17. What three things do we learn from "episcopos"?
18. Be ready to discuss how modern denominations misuse the terms following:

Elder:

Bishop:

Pastor:
19. T F "pastor" is a Latin term which means either "preacher", "Shepherd", "minister" or "Reverend".

CHARACTER QUALIFICATIONS

A very specific and extensive list of qualifications for elders is given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Perhaps no such detailed list exist throughout the scriptures for any other office. God has given both lists so that the members of each local church can clearly identify those suitable for the office. Ironically, the very Divine list that was given to simplify the appointment of elders has been confused by so many false doctrines and improper attitudes that it is almost impossible to appoint elders in some congregations.

Many erroneous attitudes toward the qualifications of elders exists: 1) *"No man can qualify today, because no one is inspired, hence no elders today."* Does it follow that there can be no preachers and Christians today because no one can be inspired of God today as they were back then? Until some passage is found that establishes this quality as an essential part of the eldership, the argument and contention amounts to nothing. 2) *"All the Bible qualifications are for the group of elders rather than for one man."* According to this view what one man lacked another could supply. Paul clearly identified both lists as personal qualifications each man must acquire.

"If a man...he desireth...the bishop" (I Tim. 3:1,2, KJV) it did not say "If the men...the bishops" (cf. Tit. 1:6,7). 3) "There is only one qualification for this office - blamelessness." "I come now to notice, the qualification, singular and the points of the qualification, instead of the qualifications, plural, I believe there is only one basic qualification required of all elder, namely, Blamelessness" (Winkler, the Eldership, p. 89).

Then why not appoint a woman who is blameless or a twelve year old boy? 4) Another view states: *"There*

are several qualifications, but marriage and family relations are not essential." By what means do we eliminate these qualifications? Although these pose a great difficulty for some as far as various beliefs and obtaining and maintaining these qualifications this idea cannot be scripturally justified. 5) Others will argue: *"All qualifications are flexible and not absolute."* Why not allow the plan of salvation to be flexible for different men in different situations if this be true of the eldership? If there is no man who can rightly limit the flexibility of these qualities, what is to hinder someone from stretching them completely out of existence? These are just a few of many man-made viewpoints.

Before engaging in this study of the qualifications of bishops, one should develop the proper attitude toward the qualifications. 1) These qualifications do not demand a perfect, sinless man. Most of the qualifications are relative, which may be understood in terms of degrees, but not all of them are relative. Every elder must have all the qualifications to a high degree or above the average degree. 2) The qualifications are MUSTS. In 1 Timothy 3:2 there are seven *"musts"* implied in the mention of the *"must"* at the beginning of the passage: *"A bishop then must be..."* The Greek word for *"must"* is *"dei"*. According to Thayer it means, *"necessity in reference to what is required to attain some end"* (p. 126.) 3) A man must



develop these qualifications before being appointed. The office of the bishop is not for the purpose of developing the qualities of an elder. It is not, *"Appoint them and give them time to qualify themselves"*. 4) All qualifications must be maintained after appointment. Some have the mistaken notion that *"once an elder always an elder."* A man who finds himself disqualified needs to resign.

In studying these qualifications, brethren have devised several ways of grouping them for study. The most natural way is to study them in I Timothy 3 in order and then go to Titus 1. Others divide up the qualifications into negative and positive lists. Still others study those that are absolute and then those they consider relative. Our study of these qualifications will be done topically. A total of 27 qualifications will be classed under one of the topics which follow: character, reputation, habits, experience and ability, and domestic qualifications. First, the six character qualifications will be considered.

DESIRE THE OFFICE

I Timothy 3:1

One may be qualified, but due to health, work, family situations, or other reasons not have the desire to serve. In such cases some men have been pressured into taking on the responsibility against their wishes. Some elders lament, *"There was no one else to do it, they just forced it upon me."* An elder that was asked by the congregation to resign due to his gross neglect of duty said, *"I didn't asked to be an elder. Years ago the brethren pressured me into serving"*. If this is the case, both the congregation and the elder are wrong. The fact is no one will do a good job if they are forced to do it.

► Definitions

Two Greek words are used in this verse which are translated by the single English word: desire. The first Greek word in this verse that is translated desire is *"epithumeo"*. *Epithumeo* means *"a desire, craving, longing, mostly of evil desires, frequently translated lust, is used in the following of good desires..."* (Vine, p. 289). Next, the Greek word *"orego"* means *"to reach or stretch out...signifying the mental effort of stretching oneself out for a thing, of longing after it with stress on the object desired"* (Vine, p. 290). Bagster defines it as *"to desire earnestly, long after."* It is used in Hebrews 11:16 in reference to a desire for heaven. This word shows that one has a great ambition, a strong yearning for something. A man in order to be qualified must *"stretch out his hands after"* the office of an elder. Years ago when a congregation was about to appoint more elders a lady objected to one man by saying, *"He desires to be an elder; he wants to be one and therefore cannot qualify."* What she was ignorant of is the fact that only such a man is qualified to serve. *"Originally, to stretch forth, to reach after...The word implies eagerness, but not of an immoderate or unchristian character"* (Marvin R. Vincent, WORD STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, vol. 3, p. 227).

► Implications

First, such a desire needs to be cultivated early in life or at least when they are new born babes in Christ (1 Peter 2:2). Fathers and mothers can play a major role in encouraging their sons to desire this office one day. This desire in a youth is to be

encouraged by all and never criticized. Men cannot be qualified over night. Qualifying and maintaining the qualifications takes a life time. One does not become *"just"* or *"not self-willed"* by accident. One must serve willingly, not due to conscription or coercion. Peter commanded his fellow-elders to *"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock"* (1 Pet. 5:2,3). This excludes those who are power or position hungry. In a sense, the office seeks the man as the man longs to serve in this office. He desires to do the work. An elder must be one who desires to lead God's people (1 Tim. 5:13; 1 Th. 5:12). It calls for a man who is willing to speak to others about their souls (1 Th. 5:12-14). It requires a man who has a desire to work with other elders in this work.

► Reasons for a lack of desire in some men

Relative to this qualification, all men fall into one of three categories: those who desire the office, those who desire not to have it, and those who are indifferent. Sometimes this is the fault of the church, but many times it is the fault of the man. Men should want to serve, because of the serious need for the work and for the progress of the congregation. Yet some have this unexpressed attitude: *"If nominated I will not accept; if elected I will not serve"*. To desire the office is to desire a good work. It is a sin not to do good when we know what good is (Js. 4:17). We do not have the luxury of a choice in doing good service in the kingdom of God (remember Jonah). This is true of preaching the gospel to others, teaching, encouraging, inviting, studying, praying, song leading, etc. as well as overseeing. Of course, legitimately some are hindered due to health and certain other scriptural obligations. Yet, many are simply not thankful for the God given opportunity and ability to serve (1 Tim. 1:12; 1 Cor. 5:9,10). Such a man may not be aware that he will be judged on how he uses his ability and opportunities (Lk. 12:48). He may be afraid. Come judgment day such an excuse will serve him no better than it did the unworthy servant (Mt. 25:25). Many are just plain too lazy. They are afraid of hard work. A lot of hard work is involved. The word *"laboring"* in Acts 20:35 means *"to be wearied out"*. Paul used this word describing his example to the Ephesian elders. When one desires the office of bishop, he is not desiring the prestige, authority, esteem, or glory of the job, but an awesome, nerve-wracking, sometimes nauseating responsibility, which, without strong desire, he will not perform in the way that God would have him.

HOLY

Titus 1:8

► *Definition*

This qualification is translated from the Greek word "*hosion*". *"Signifies religiously right, holy, as opposed to what is unrighteous or polluted, It is commonly associated with righteousness..."* (Vine, p. 557.)

► *Implications*

Since this is a character trait that all Christians are commanded to have those who aspire to the office must begin to be holy as soon as they are born spiritually (Rom. 12:1; 1 Cor. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 1:4; Heb. 12:14). He must be one that is not only separated from sin, but is devoted to God. He is blameless before God. He is right with God. This is required of God's leaders because of the nature of God. *"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"* (1 Pet. 1:15,16.) He does what God says, the way God says it, for the reason God says it, because God says it. He is guided by the Holy Word (Ac. 20:35). Because he is entering a holy work. He is not sinless, but does not allow sin to reign in his body (Rom. 6:12; 1 Pet. 2:9; Js. 4:17).

JUST

Titus 1:8

► *Definition*

From the Greek word "*dikaio*s". *Dikaio*s

"was first used of persons observant of *dike*, custom, rule, right, especially in the fulfillment of duties towards gods and men, and of things that were in accordance with right. The Eng. word "righteous" was formerly spelt 'rightwise', i.e. (in a) straight way. In the N.T. it denotes righteous, a state of being right, or right conduct, judged whether by the Divine standard or according to human standards, of what is right. Said of God, it designates the perfect agreement between His nature and His acts (in which He is the standard of all men)" (Vine, p. 613.)

Thayer defines it as "*rendering to each his dues, passing just judgment on others, whether expressed in words or shown by the manner of dealing with them*" (p. 149.) "A person who observes the rules, one who is fair minded, upright, and righteous." (Yeakley, 122.)

► *Examples*

A good example of this kind of just man is found in Joseph, Jesus' father. When he found out that Mary was with child he could have made a public spectacle out of her, but instead put her away quietly (Mt. 1:19). Cornelius was this type of man (Ac. 10:22).

► *Implications*

This qualification deals with his handling of judicial aspects of his work. He is one able to render his judgments fairly. He carefully listens to both sides before making a decision. His decision making is not the result of respect of persons, selfishness, one-sidedness or prejudice. Like God, he deals with people without partiality (1 Tim. 5:21; Ac. 10:34). This qualification is seen in his ability to pass just judgment on others whether expressed in words or by manner of dealing with them. He refuses to be influenced by mere emotional pressures.

PATIENT

1 Timothy 3:3

► *Definition*

From the Greek word, "*epieika*". *"Equitable, fair, moderate, forbearing, not insisting on the letter of the law, it expresses that considerateness that looks humanely and reasonably at the facts of the case."* (Vine, p. 474,475.) *"forbearing...forbearance in 2 Cor. 10:1; where it is associated with meekness...not making a determined stand for one's just due."* (Vincent, vol. 3, p. 230). David Lipscomb says, *"Not bitter and impatient, but kind in manners even to the froward and unpleasant"* (A COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES WORDS, p. 114.)

► *Examples*

This same qualification is required of gospel preachers (2 Tim. 2:24). Paul's gentleness toward the Thessalonians is as a nursing mother (1 Th. 2:7). This is part of God's character (2 Pet. 3:9). Perhaps the best illustration of this is that of Christ. He is the Lion of Judah, but we also see Him as the Lamb of God. The Chief Shepherd is very gentle. *"Those who serve therefore under this Shepherd must be of like*

disposition. The very term shepherd is a synonym for gentleness and mildness. Gentle men are to serve under a God of gentleness and a Savior of gentleness." (Robert R. Taylor Jr., THE ELDER AND HIS WORK, p. 70.)

► *Implications*

This qualification allows him to be easily approached by others with their problems and/or questions. He does not easily offend and is not easily offended. While opposing sin and err he is considerate of the other person. Not one who is vengeful, too eager or impetuous or harsh. The ability to deal with any problem that comes up no matter how long it takes or how often. He can deal with weak Christians out of love. He cannot use just any physical means to make the sheep stay in line, but by patient teaching and example they will follow. Though the sheep may be complaining or murmuring he does not, even in the face of provocation.

OF GOOD BEHAVIOR

1 Timothy 3:2

► *Definition*

Thayer defines the Greek word "*kosmios*" as meaning, "*well-arranged, seemly, modest..a man living with decorum, a well-ordered life*" (p. 202.) Vine tells us that this word is translated "*modest*" in 1 Timothy 2:9 and is definitive of a woman's apparel.

► *Implications*

A bishop must be one who wears orderly, respectable and modest clothing. His language is in good order as well as his habits. His priorities are in good order. He keeps his activities in proper perspective. He will not be found fishing on Sunday morning. With him there is a time to laugh, a time to cry, a time to praise, and a time to rebuke, expressing and controlling all emotions in proper order. In viewing his family, business, job, house, habits you will see that they are not conducted in a haphazard or careless fashion. He is not behind on payments. He is not hazardous with church affairs, etc. It also implies that one who can respond with true dignity to every situation. His life is full of good order. An orderly desk is not an empty desk, but one upon which everything can be properly arranged and utilized most effectively.

"The life of an elder should be well-directed.

A man who is sloven, careless, and haphazard in his work has no business trying to direct the work of the Lord. We dare say this qualification has been overlooked more than any other. Some churches have very little system or order in their work. There is very little planning, coordination or sense of direction in their efforts" (L.R. Wilson, CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, p. 14.)

LOVER OF GOOD

Titus 1:8

► *Definition*

Thayer defines "*philagathos*" as "*loving goodness*" (p. 653). Vine defines it as "*loving that which is good*" (p. 23.) It is the opposite of pettiness or the disposition to despise a man regardless of his goodness. The negative form of this Greek term, *aphilagathos*, is used in 2 Timothy 3:3 in describing wicked men. "*...Despisers of those that are good...*"

► *Implications*

He has a heart that is big enough to love all the good in everything. Philippians 4:8 teaches us how he can love the good, "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there is any virtue, and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things.*" He fulfills every desire for good (2 Th. 1:1; 1 Tim. 6:11). He loves to do good. As Jesus, who went about doing good. He finds good things to do because love is his motivator.

"No finer index to a man's real character exists than an examination of what he loves and what he hates. What a man loves or hates either makes him like God or like Satan. God loves the good and hates the wicked and evil; Satan loves the evil and hates the good. A man who is yet indecisive about whether to pursue good or follow the course of evil is not yet fit material for the eldership in the Lord's church." (Taylor, p. 80).

He loves the brethren (1 Jn. 3:4). This does not give a man the right to hate evil men. He is to love the sinner and hate the sin. He can find good in all men to love.

He seeks to develop good in every Christian and every man. His love would not be limited to those of the local congregation, but he loves the brotherhood, (1 Pet. 2:17).

CONCLUSION

God wants men to serve as elders who have true character. This refers to one's moral qualities and strengths. This is different from his personality. One's personality is how he reacts and interacts with others whereas his character is what is going on inside his heart. As Thomas Babington Macaulay said, *"The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he would never be found out"*. Or as Jack Miner put it, *"A man's reputation is the opinion people have of him; his character is what he really is."* True character depends on two things: conviction and commitment. He knows where he stands on good and evil. He will stick to what he believes. This is his conviction. His commitment is seen as he strives to live by his conviction no matter what the situation or opposition.

REVIEW

1. List three erroneous attitudes toward the qualifications of elders.
2. List four proper attitudes toward these qualifications.
3. T F It is wrong to appoint a man to be an elder who eagerly seeks the position.
4. T F No legitimate reasons exists for a qualified man not to desire to serve as an elder.
5. Why does an elder need to be holy?
6. Give an example or two of Bible characters who were just.
7. How would patience assist one serving as an elder?
8. List some areas in a man's life where his good order or behavior can be seen.
9. Make a list of some things an elder should love contrasted with what he should not love.
10. Upon what two things does true character depend?

REPUTATION & HABIT QUALIFICATIONS

A good name is assessed to be of great value by Solomon. *"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches..."* (Pr. 22:1.) In order to be an elder a man must acquire a good name or reputation. God requires his leaders to have a clean reputation with both their brothers and in the local community in which they live. The following qualifications involve those characteristics found in men with a good reputation.

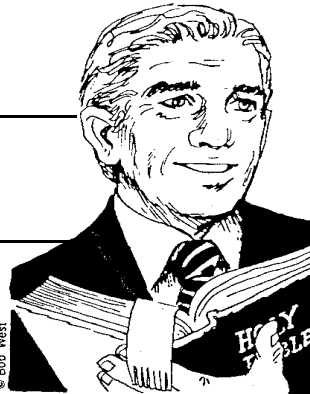
BLAMELESS

1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6

► Definition

Two Greek words represent this qualification: *"anepilamptōn"* in 1 Timothy 3:2 and *"anegklatos"* in Titus 1:6. First, *anepilamptōs* means *"not open to attack"...* *The metaphor is said to be from wrestling or boxing, when a man leaves no part of his body exposed to the attack of his adversary* (Pulpit Comm., V. 21, p. 51.) *"Never caught doing wrong, irreproachable,"* as George R. Berry translated it. *"Not apprehended, that cannot be laid hold of; hence that cannot be reprehended; not open to censure, irreproachable..."* (Thayer, p. 44.) *"one who cannot be laid hold of, who gives no ground for accusation."* (Vincent, v. 3, p. 228.) Thayer the renowned lexiconographer defines *anegklatos* as "that cannot be called to account, unreprouvable, unaccused, blameless." (p. 44.)

"Signifies that which cannot be called to account (from a, negative; n, euponic, and enkaleo, with nothing laid to ones charge (as the result of public investigation)...It implies not merely acquittal but the absence of even a charge or accusation against a person." (Vine, p. 123.)



The word in Timothy implies that the man has lived so that men will not accuse him of evil, while the word in Titus is stronger meaning that men cannot accuse him of evil.

OF GOOD REPORT

1 Timothy 3:7

► Examples

No doubt Christ is a prime example of a man found blameless even among his enemies. Deacons and preachers as well as elders are to have this quality in order to perform their duties (1 Timothy 3:10 and 1 Timothy 6:14) respectively. According to 1 Timothy 5:7, widows indeed must possess this. All Christians are required to develop blamelessness. God *"who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22).

► Implications

This calls for men of unquestionable integrity. It does not require perfection. For example, Peter was an elder (1 Pet. 5:1), yet Paul blamed Peter in Galatians 2:11-14. As a matter of fact, no Christian is perfect (1 Jn. 1:6-10). Nor do these terms imply that accusations cannot be leveled against them. Christ and His apostles were accused of an assortment of sins. However, he must not be one against whom evil reports constantly are being circulated. He is blameless because all past mistakes have been corrected. He has so lived his life that when anybody brings an accusation against him, a fair test will prove it to be empty. Old skeletons cannot be pulled out of the closet and used against him. God wants his eldership to be unimpeachable and unreprouvable.

► Examples

The seven men of good reputation were chosen in Acts 6:3 to serve in the early church. Again, widows indeed are to have this quality (1 Tim. 5:10). Still all Christians are to have good reputations with all men. *"You may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world"* (Phil. 2:15). From the very beginning of the New Testament church we see this as a quality among God's people. *"praising God, and having favor with all the people..."* (Ac. 2:47.)

► *Implications*

They are to have good dealing with all men. It is essential *"lest he fall into the reproach and snare of the devil"*. Elders without this quality will succumb easily to the snares of the Devil. *"Those that are without"* clearly represents people who are not Christians. These people see him at work or at play. They see who his friends are and the places he frequents. Although it may seem strange that God is essentially allowing the views of the world to help us select elders, these people can often have a clearer or at least a different perception of the man. J.W. McGarvey said, *"The good which a church is capable of accomplishing in a community depends very much upon its reputation, and the reputation of the church depends much upon that of its representative men."* God wants His elders to lead His church before a world that will recognize their good reputations.

LOVER OF HOSPITALITY

1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8

► *Definition*

It is from the Greek word, *"philoxenos"*, meaning *"love of strangers (philos, loving, xenos, a stranger)"* (Vine, p. 565.) Vincent defines it as *"pursuing hospitality"*. (v. 3, p. 229). Thayer says, *"hospitable, generous to guests."* (p. 654.) Our English word is defined as *"the quality of being friendly and solicitous toward guest by giving a warm welcome, food and shelter, or kind treatment to them."* (Webster's Dict.)

► *Examples*

The Bible is resplendent with examples of hospitable, friendly children of God. It is said that Abraham entertained angels from God unaware through his hospitality (Gen. 18:2,3). One of the reasons why Peter was summoned to the lifeless corpse of Tabitha was her great reputation for hospitality (Ac. 9:36). Right after her conversion, Lydia, demonstrated this quality in her hospitality to Paul and Silas (Ac. 16:15,40). Again, all Christians are to be hospitable to all men (1 Pet. 4:9). Since Pentecost this has been a reoccurring quality of God's people (Ac. 2:46). Probably the need for hospitality was greater in Timothy's day than in ours. We are told that the inns were dirty, dangerous and immoral. In a Greek play an actor responded to another concerning where they would stay that night, he said, *"Where the fleas are fewer."*

► *Implications*

This is a quality to be shown to all men even strangers (Gal. 6:10; Heb. 13:2). It is easy to show hospitality to brethren we love. It is a whole different ball game to go all out for a complete stranger. The first time my wife and I did this was for a young man my age who showed up at church one Wednesday night. He had just moved in to begin a new job. He knew no one. He was living in the back of his car. So we invited him home to stay with us. That first night I must admit I had trouble getting to sleep. Five weeks later he was able to get out on his own. After his departure our home felt a little empty.

An elder must have a reputation among brethren and strangers of being hospitable and friendly. His home is always open. Many men cannot use their homes as such because there isn't a good home life in their house. Sometimes a motel room would provide about as much warmth as can be found in some homes. Too many homes are like holy places, instead of workshops. Some are like an idol or like a shrine for all their material possessions.

A bishop's hospitality is seen in his willingness to provide for the needs of others (1 Jn. 3:17,18). He has a reputation as a generous gentlemen not a materialistic miser. Not just laying up for himself, but willing to part with what is his for the benefit of others. This qualification involves the whole family, especially the wife. She holds the key that can help make or break this quality in her husband. If the wife is too inhospitable than her husband cannot qualify. Most wives work outside the home now and have little time to "entertain". Regardless, of the reasons we are becoming an inhospitable nation and an elder still must have this quality. Overseers need this quality in order to do their work. Being an elders involves more than just making a few decisions. Much work is to be done. To qualify, his home must be known as a haven of hospitality.

NOT A BRAWLER

1 Timothy 3:3

► *Definition*

This qualification is from the Greek word *"amachos"*. It is *"an adjective, lit., not fighting (a, negative, mache, a fight) came to denote metaphorically, not contentious"* (Vine, p. 138.) *"Commonly not to be withstood, invincible; more rarely abstaining from fighting"* (Thayer, p. 31.) It is the idea of abstaining from battle, whether physical or verbal.

► *Implications*

He isn't one of these men who have a reputation for always being in the thick of it when there is a problem. This qualification negates any man who is a noisy person or delights in an issue. Rather he avoids foolish questions (Tit. 3:9) and he avoids envying and strife (Js. 3:16). He can surrender his rights to others to avoid wrangling and fighting over opinions. He doesn't have a chip on his shoulder nor is he trigger happy toward everything that is done or said. He is a lover of peace, not a lover of a good fight.

NOT GREEDY OF MONEY

1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2

► *Definition*

From the Greek words "*ma aischrokerdas*". The word "*ma*" means "*not by no means, never at any time*". *Aischrokerdas* is defined as "*eager for base gain*" (Thayer, p. 17) and "*fond of dishonest gain*" (Arndt & Gingrich).

► *Examples*

Many examples of this type of man can be found throughout the scriptures. Balaam desired money to the extent that he was willing to prophecy against the chosen children of God. Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard so badly that his pagan wife lied and killed to obtain it for him. The rich fool in Jesus' parable forgot about and lost his soul over his sudden wealth (Lk. 12:16-20). A man who will neglect his own soul for material gain will neglect the souls of others. The Rich Young Ruler is a prime example of someone in a place of leadership who refused to sell all and give to the poor in order to be a disciple of Jesus (Mt. 19:16). The early church had to deal with this attitude when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit about the money they were giving (Ac. 5:1-11). Peter also had to deal with Simon who sought to purchase the right to bestow the gifts of the Holy Spirit on others (Ac. 8:22f). Early Christian writers understood this to be a necessary quality, "*Appoint, therefore, for yourselves, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money...*" (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. 7, p. 381.)

► *Implications*

To be an elder one must have his priorities in

proper order relative to material things. He must seek the Kingdom of God above the dominion of Mammon, (Mt. 6:33). He realizes the futility of trying to serve both God and mammon (material world) (Mt. 6:24). It requires a man that serves God, not gold; the Savior, not silver, and the Master, not money. Paul recalled the words of the Savior in Acts 20:35 to illustrate this point to the Ephesian elders. "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" He must never be materialistic in his outlook or neglect his duties to make money. We are to look for men who are greater lovers of souls and the church than material things. Where others may see dollars signs, the overseers will see opportunities and souls to assist.

Some elderships are too materialistic. They treat the treasury as if it were their own to do with as they please without regard to the Will of God or the needs and concerns of the congregation. Some elderships become misers, not wishing to spend, but hoard up what is God's. Remember, the great commission contains no command to "go into all the world and make and save up money." We have been commissioned to make disciples, not "*nice little nest eggs*" for that obscure rainy day. True elders will never allow the wealthy members to blackmail them into making biased decisions or curtailing the preaching of the gospel on a certain subject. Of course, truly qualified men are those who would never stoop to improper means to get gain.

NOT COVETOUS

1 Timothy 3:3

► *Definition*

"*Aphilarguros*" is the Greek word and it means "*not loving money, not avaricious.*" (Thayer, p. 89.) "*not a money-lover... This admonition is cited by some writers in support of the view that the original episkopos was simply a financial officer. It is assumed that it was prompted by the special temptations which attached to the financial function*" (Vincent, v. 3, p. 231). The difference between this qualification and the one dealt with above are slight. The former deals with the method of obtaining it. This deals with the attitude toward money. This term also carries the idea of wanting that which belongs to another or that which is not rightfully ours.

► *Implications*

Those who lack this quality also lack

contentment (1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:8). He must not be motivated by love of money. He is not always talking about money, or sacrificing faith or family for it. Gene Tharp an elder in Columbus, Indiana described the leadership of a covetous elder when he wrote,

"A large bank account is accumulated for a rainy day or an emergency. Demand is placed on physical results such as more contribution, adding to the building in order to make if comparable to buildings of denominations in the community. Numerical growth is stressed more than spiritual growth. Less thought is given to the spiritual growth of the members and more to the physical aspect. As more thought is given to pleasing the outward man, the church becomes weaker and less of a positive influence for Christ in the community." ("Is a Successful Businessman Necessarily a Good Elder?", Guardian of Truth, Jan. 5, 1989, P. 7.)

NOT A STRIKER

1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7

► Definition

Translated from the Greek words *"ma"* (not) *"plaktan"*. *"Bruiser, ready with a blow; a pugnacious, contentious; quarrelsome person"* (Thayer, p. 516.) David Libscomb describes it as *"Ungoverned in temper, ready to resent insult or wrong,..."* (p. 147.) This qualification is closely related to brawler, not soon angry, temperate, and patient, but is a distinct quality.

► Example

The best opposite example of this would be Christ. *"And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; While suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;"* (1 Pet. 2:23.) Although He could have destroyed any physical opponent He chose to exercise self-control. In contrast too many today are willing to take up arms against any one who threatens their way of life, even those who claim to be Christians have been involved in striking out at others in armed attacks. Christ's Kingdom is not a militant organization like the I.R.A. or militant Islam. We do not strike out at our enemies with carnal warfare.

► Implications

An elder must be one who is not apt to strike out at the opposition in any form. He is not too "quick on the trigger." He won't strike out to hurt with physical force, verbal abuse, emotional abuse or negative actions. Elders need this quality for they will have to deal with false teachers and must get doors slammed in their faces. Overseers will have to give an account for how they have reacted when Judgment Day arrives. Remember, God loves a peacemaker.

HABITS OF AN ELDER

This third group of qualifications deal with a prospective elder's habits. A man's habits can tell a great deal about how he would perform as an elder. His habits can make it easier for him to sin or not to sin. What a man does habitually is what he is. Webster defines habit as *"Custom or practice; especially an aptitude or inclination for some action, acquired by repetition and showing itself in facility of performance or in decreased power of resistance; as, the opium habit."* The man who aspires to the office of an elder needs to be very careful as to the habits he cultivates. Someone has said, *"Good habits are like good porcelain and as easily broken. Bad habits are as indestructible as coarse crockery"*.

SELF-CONTROL

Titus 1:8

► Definition

From *"egkrates"* meaning *"self-control...(the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites)"* (Thayer, p. 167.) *"It comes from a word that signifies strength, and denotes one who has power over his appetite and affections, or in things lawful"* (Pulpit Comm. v. 21, p. 858). Good control of one's self to moderation in that which is lawful, and abstaining from all that is unlawful.

► Examples

Jesus again demonstrates as the Chief Shepherd how the under shepherds are to exercise self-control (1 Pet. 2:23). Stephen controlled himself while being stoned to death (Ac. 7:51f). Paul had to work at this on a daily basis as all men should (1 Cor. 9:27). All Christians need to be temperate. Temperance is one of the fruits of the Spirit and a Christian grace (Gal. 5:23; 2 Pet. 1:6).

► *Implications*

A man who cannot bring his own habits of life under control cannot take a position of controlling others. Control of self must come before there can be leadership of others. Paul pointed this out to the elders from Ephesus when he said, *"Therefore, take heed to yourselves and to 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"* (Ac. 20:28.)

He has to have control of his tongue (Js. 3:1-5). An elder's tongue that is out of control will destroy a congregation. I witnessed this very point in two elders who publicly bore false witness against two brothers. The end result of their failure to repent of this was division of the church.

NOT GIVEN TO WINE

1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7

► *Definition*

From the Greek word: *"ma"* (not) *"paroinon"*. Paroinon means *"...one who sits long a his wine, given to wine, drunken. (secondary sense) quarrelsome over wine; hence, brawling, abusive"* (Thayer, p. 490.) *"Drunken, addicted to wine"* (Arndt & Gingrich). *"Lit. tarrying at wine...probably has the secondary sense, of the effects of wine-bibbing."* (Vine, p. 146.) Concerning this qualification commentator, Adam Clark wrote, *"This word not only signifies one who is inordinately attached to wine, a winebibber or tippler, but also one who is imperious, abusive, insolent, whether through wine or otherwise."*

► *Examples*

It is interesting to note that Old Testament priests were forbidden the use of wine because of their work in the Tabernacle (Lev. 10:8-11). Today, the office of a bishop and the drinking of alcoholic beverages do not mix any better than water does with oil. John the Baptist who was sent with a special mission by God was not to drink any wine or liquor. As the angel instructed Zacharias, *"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb."*

Then there is the example of Paul instructing Timothy to use wine in 1 Timothy 5:23. *"No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments*

(NASV)." Could Paul be restricting the use of wine among the elders and encouraging its use by Timothy in the same epistle? First, we would have to assume that this was again intoxicating wine as opposed to water. The Greek word used here is *"oinos"* which can be grape juice or wine as we know it today. Ferrar Fenton in his book *THE BIBLE AND WINE* said, *"'stomach wine' or wine for the stomach; the old writers upon Greek medicine tell us, was grape juice, prepared as a thick, unfermented syrup, for use as a medicine for dyspeptic and weak persons, and there cannot be a doubt but that was the wine for the stomach; the apostle told his friend to use."* Furthermore, Timothy had known the sacred writings from childhood (2 Tim. 3:15), and his knowledge and attitude as a Christian was such that he would not even touch the stuff as medicine until Paul commanded him to do so. Timothy had been a total abstainer. If it was intoxicating wine it would have been according to custom highly diluted with water and of low alcoholic content. The purpose of Timothy using a little wine was for its therapeutic and antiseptic value in the promotion of health. Modern medications often include alcohol in small amounts, but fewer and fewer doctors prescribe alcohol as medication. One must be careful not to prescribe medicine without a license.

► *Implications*

Could this restriction simply mean that elders could not be drunkards or alcoholics? Of course, no Christian can be a drunkard so Paul cannot be simply saying that they cannot be drunkards. If he wished to say that he would have used the Greek word *"methe."* The key to translating here is the Greek word, *"paroinos"*, which is only used twice in the whole Bible. *Paroinos* is a compound word *"para"* meaning *"at the side of"* or *"along side."* *"Oinos"* simply means wine either fermented or unfermented. Literally, this qualification means that elders are not to be found along side of wine. An elder who is seen along side of wine can destroy his influence with those both inside and outside of the church. A deacon defended his right to drink "moderately" in the privacy of his own home. Perhaps he never drank to excess; certainly he never became a drunkard, but his teenage son did.

NOT SOON ANGRY

Titus 1:7

► *Definition*

From the Greek word *"orgilos"* meaning *"prone*

to anger, irascible". (Thayer, p. 452.)

► **Implications**

Anger in and of itself is not a sin. A big difference exists between such a thing as sinful anger and righteous indignation. Anger is a God-given emotion. All emotions when not under control can be expressed in a sinful way. Paul wrote, *"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil"* (Eph. 4:26,27). Once more we look into the life of Christ to see righteous anger under control. Jesus became angry many times throughout His life. The only difference between us and Him is that he never allowed His anger to get out of control (Mt. 3:5). Nor did He get angry at the drop of a hat. A woman once told a preacher she had a bad temper, but that it was over in a moment. *"So is a shotgun blast, but it blows everything to pieces,"* was the preacher's reply. At times an elder must be angry. The Psalmist said, *"God is angry with the wicked every day"* (Ps. 7:11.) Like the Chief Shepherd elders must be angry, but not be in the habit of being quick tempered. He must have a slow fuse. Slow to become angry with righteous indignation, and even then it doesn't last too long. *"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"* (Js. 1:19). This brings to mind the motto: *"Think twice before you speak."* Not a man who gets hot-headed under a little bit of pressure. You can tell what kind of metal they are made of observing them under fire. Solomon's wisdom is seen in this matter when he wrote, *"He who is quick-tempered acts foolishly,...He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly"* (Pr. 14:17,29.) *"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules is spirit than he who takes a city"* (Pr. 16:32.) An adult temper tantrum from an elder will destroy love and affection. All a man needs to do is get into the habit of letting this emotion run out of control and the Devil is given a destructive foot hold in his life. With much ease Satan can turn sinful anger into wrath. The step is an exceedingly short one between wrath and malice.

NOT SELF-WILLED

Titus 1:7

► **Definition**

The word *"authades"* is the Greek term for

self-willed. It means *"self-pleasing, self-willed, arrogant."* (Thayer, p. 83.) Vine says, *"self-pleasing...denotes one who dominated by self-interest, and inconsiderate of others, arrogantly asserts his own will...One so far overvaluing any determination at which he has himself once arrived that he will not be removed from it."* (p. 342.)

► **Example**

Shepherds need to look to the Chief Shepherd's attitude toward His own will. *"We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification, for even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'the reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me'"* (Rom. 15:1-3.)

► **Implications**

An elder must not be domineering or arrogant, or belligerent. Not self-pleasing, selfish, self-opinionated, self-loving, self-seeking, self-trusting, etc. He doesn't consider himself before all others. He is willing to yield his personal preferences to those of others. He does not believe his way is always the right way, but is willing to listen to others. A self-willed man will lord it over the flock (1 Pet. 5:3). The self-willed have a rule or ruin attitude. He has a dogmatic approach to matters of opinion, and he always has an opinion. A self-willed elder cannot work with other elders. He is not willing to surrender his will in matters of judgment. Just one self-willed elder can stop the work and growth of the church. Since appointing a self-willed man as an elder is so dangerous, brethren need to detect a self-willed man. Consider the following questions: Does this person have trouble working with others in a harmonious unit? How does this person react to those who differ with him on matters of opinion? How does he take constructive criticism of himself? Is this person a good listener? Is this person sympathetic and understanding of the needs of others? Is this person arbitrary and capricious in his dealings with others?

SOBER-MINDED

1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8

► **Definition**

This is translated from *"sophrona"*. It *"denotes of sound mind (sozo, to save; phren, the mind), hence,*

self-controlled, soberminded,..." (Vine, p. 1057.) *"a. of sound mind, sane, in one's senses...b. curbing one's desires and impulses, self-controlled, temperate..."* (Thayer, p. 613.) Emphasizes calm, thoughtful, serious, good common sense. This quality is closely related to vigilant and temperate.

► *Implications*

Being a watchman over the house of God is serious business. An elder must be a serious person. He is not a joker. A sober person can joke, but a joker will not be serious. He has complete control of his thinking faculties. He does not allow his thinking to be effected by alcohol or drugs, so he can think clearly at all times. An overseer is one who is well adjusted in the face of trial. A wise man in the ability to make good decisions.

CONCLUSION

To have a good reputation in later years of life requires diligence to guard it all of one's life. Remember, one elder's reputation can help make or break a congregation.

It is said that a man one day was strolling along in the country happened to see a magnificent golden eagle flying upward toward the sky. He watched it with delight and admiration as it strongly mounted upward; but presently he saw that something was wrong with it. It seemed unable to go any higher. Soon it began to fall, and presently it lay at his feet a lifeless mass. What could be the matter? No human hand had harmed it. No sportsman's shot had reached it. He went and examined the bird, and what did he find? It had carried up with it a little weasel in its talons, and as it had drawn its talons near to its body for flight the little creature had wormed itself partly out of them and had drunk the life blood from the eagle's breast.

This is most like the way of a habit. A fine man picks up a habit and before he knows it has fastened onto his life. Many such habits keep men from soaring to the service of an overseer. A habit can be the best servant or the most destructive of enemies. Remember, sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a life. Sow a life, reap a destiny.

REVIEW

1. Why is it important for all Christians to consider these qualifications?
2. T F To be blameless one must be perfect.
3. Why would a good report from those outside of Christ help qualify a man?
4. What does the Greek word "philoxenos" literally mean?
5. How would an elders wife hinder him in being hospitable?
6. Who is a brawler?
7. Give some Bible examples of those who were greedy.
8. What is "mammon"?
9. How would a greedy, covetous man function as an elder?

10. Describe a striker:.
11. T F One elder's reputation can help make or break a congregation.
12. List several ways in which controversy over the qualifications of elders can be avoided.
13. T F A man's habits can tell a great deal about how he would perform as an elder.
14. Give some Bible examples of those who practiced self-control.
15. List some areas in the life of an elder where he should exercise self-control.
16. T F Old Testament priests as well as John the Baptist were permitted by God to drink wine.
17. T F We know for a fact that the wine Paul instructed Timothy to drink was fermented.
18. T F Timothy was to drink a lot of wine for his stomach's sake.
19. What is the literal meaning of *paroinos*?
20. T F It is a sin to be angry.
21. Give an example of Jesus being angry.
22. List some other passages from the scriptures showing that it is wrong to be quick tempered.
23. How did Jesus demonstrate that He was not self-willed?
24. List some ways in which a congregation can detect a self-willed man?
25. T F In order to be sober-minded an elder can never joke.
26. How would an elder's sober-mindedness assist him in his work?

EXPERIENCE & ABILITY QUALIFICATIONS

These qualifications set a very high standard for the office of an elder. It is the nature of an office, whether human or divine, that certain qualifications are required of a person before he is eligible to hold the position. Every office has different qualifications, and usually the higher the office the more rigid the requirements. An individual seeking a job as dog-catcher doesn't have to have near the qualifications that is required of a Supreme Court Justice. Jesus requires certain conditions of those who are Christians, a higher standard for deacons, and for those desiring the office of an overseer he sets an even higher standard. Indeed, God has probably required a higher standard for the eldership than any country in the world requires of its highest leaders. Since the qualifications for elders are of Divine, not human origin, we should study them with great respect.



► Implications

This means that he is a good watchman. He must have the right kind of vision in watching over the church. Vision is a quality lacking in many elderships today. Many are aptly described in the statement made by Alexandre Ledru-Rollin, *"There go my people. I must find out where they are going so I can lead them."* Some elderships are nothing but *"blind leaders of the blind."* This results in too many congregations being *"sheep without a shepherd."* Vision is not merely the act of seeing, but it is an imaginative perception of things combining insight with foresight. A deep dissatisfaction with what is and a clear grasp of what could be. Without vision there are no goals, without goals the church goes nowhere but astray. Overseers need to see long and short term goals. Politicians publish election manifestos. Military personnel lay down campaign strategy. It is the ability to see the opportunities to strengthen the young and the weak. Seeing the opportunities to teach the lost. Recognition of leadership potential in others and knowing how to develop such. Not just seeing the problems, but visualizing the solutions. Vigilant elders have developed the quality of being able to watch himself and others against sin and false teachers (Ac. 20:28-31). Christians are commanded to *"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account, Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you"* (Heb. 13:17.) To be an overseer requires the ability to oversee souls, this calls for vision and watchfulness.

VIGILANT 1 Timothy 3:2

► Definition

"Naphaleon" according to Thayer means *"sober, temperate, abstaining from wine, either entirely or at least from its immoderate use..."* (p. 425.) *"To be sober and wary, cool and unimpassioned."* (Vincent, v. 3; p. 229.) Originally the word meant complete abstinence from wine. Our English word is defined as *"Watchful; circumspect; attentive to discover and avoid danger or to provide for safety; wary"* (Webster.)

NOT A NOVICE 1 Timothy 3:6

► Definition

From the Greek words *"ma neophuton"*. *"lit. newly-planted, denotes a new convert, neophyte, novice, 1 Tim. 3:6; of one who by inexperience is unfitted to act as a bishop or overseer in a church"* (Vine, p. 119.) What Thayer has to say is identical except he adds *"one who has recently become a Christian"* (p. 424.) Vincent says *"from neo, new and*

phuton, a plant...Better, the ancient Greek interpreters, newly baptized..."

► **Implications**

He must be a meat eater in order to be qualified to feed others. The writer of Hebrews condemns some who ought to be able to teach others, but are yet novices in the word.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of the milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14.)

Just because one has been a Christian 20, 30, or even 40 years does not mean he has this ability. A Christian with a Ph.D. in a secular field may know only a few fundamentals of the Gospel, and next to nothing when it comes to meatier portions of the Word. Note, it is not wrong to be a novice. All must grow from their spiritual birth on the milk of the Word. What is the reason behind having this ability? Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 3:6, "lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil." Now there are two viewpoints as to the meaning of this reason: 1) the same condemnation into which the devil fell through pride or 2) the condemnation or accusation of the devil against the novice. Vincent defines the phrase "being lifted up" as meaning "the verb means primarily to make smoke; hence, metaphorically, to blind with pride or conceit...a beclouded and stupid state of mind as the result of pride" (v. 3, p. 232.) "beclouded...a confused state of mind, here due to conceit because of sudden elevation to office." (NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY: REVISED, p. 1171.) The new convert being so quickly elevated to this position would find himself in a cloud land of conceit and pride. It is the condemnation into which the devil fell. The cause of Satan's downfall: pride. As the novice grows and develops spiritual attitudes the danger of being puffed up with conceit will grow less and less. For a congregation to appoint a novice is to put his soul in jeopardy and rob themselves of having a fine elder in the future. It is wonderful that young Christians have a desire to lead. The church should strive to channel those desires in a positive way to develop elders for the future.

APT TO TEACH

1 Timothy 3:2

► **Definition**

Vine defines *didaktikos* as "skilled in teaching". (p. 112.) Thayer: "apt and skillful in teaching" (p. 144).

► **Example**

The Old Testament has many examples of able teachers. Moses, though he did not consider himself much of a speaker or a willing leader, turned out to be the greatest teacher of his day. Many of the great prophets were apt teachers. During the great revival following the restoration of the remnant to the promised land the Law as read and apt teachers were utilized to give the meaning of the text.

Jesus Christ is a great example of this (Mt. 7:28,29). Evangelists are to have this quality (2 Tim. 2:24). Timothy is instructed by Paul to encourage others. "And the things you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2.).

► **Implications**

Of course, this is a relative qualification for no two men have exactly the same ability. A certain amount of native ability is requisite to being "apt to teach." He must be able to teach well, better than average. This ability is not proven by teaching a class one time and preaching a lesson or two. Many congregations have made a farce out of this qualification by having the prospective elder, who has never taught before, get up and teach one adult class for a quarter. This qualification is not requesting that we simply find the most knowledgeable man in the congregation. Even knowledgeable men don't always have the ability to teach. A man could be a walking Bible Encyclopedia yet unable to relay any of his knowledge through teaching. It does require a man who knows the Bible very well. Some older men have been Christians for years, but young men know more than they do (Heb. 5:12-14). He must be given to study and meditation (2 Tim. 2:15; Ps. 1:2). A man can't teach what he doesn't know. Furthermore, he must have a willingness to teach others.

Reasons for this qualification: *"be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers"* (Tit. 1:9). To be able to "feed the flock of God" (Ac. 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Both the flock and the

shepherds have the same diet. They need to be ready to give an answer and prepared to contend for the faith (1 Pet. 3:15; Jd. 3). In some churches elders do not teach at all. All the teaching is left up to the preacher. This is misfortunate for the sheep. This qualification must be obtained prior to being appointed and maintained after appointment for the benefit of teaching the flock.

One final word on this quality before we move on. What is often overlooked when considering this qualification is a man's willingness and ability to teach both in private and in public. Too many churches are not able to carry the Gospel to the community because they do not have proven leadership in the area of personal evangelism. Elders who have zero or very little experience in bringing the lost to Christ through home Bible studies can hardly lead a congregation in this work. Let us be determined to appoint men who are skilled personal workers and not just teachers in the Sunday morning adult class.

ABLE TO CONVICT GAINSAYERS

Titus 1:9

► Definitions

The word "*convict*" is from the Greek word *elegchein*.

"1. to convict, refute, confute, generally with a suggestion of the shame of the person convicted...contextually, by conviction to bring to light, to expose...used of the exposure and confutation of false teachers of Christianity, Tit. 1:9,13; utter these thus by way of refutation, Tit. 2:15. 2. to find fault with, correct; a. by word, to reprehend severely, chide, admonish, reprove, Jd. 22...contextually, to call to account, show one his fault, demand an explanation,...b. by deed; to chasten, punish." ; (Thayer, p. 203.)

"Gainsayers" is translated from *antilegontas*. "Gainsay, Anglo-Saxon *gegn* (Ger. *gegen*) 'against', and 'say'." (Vincent, v. 3, p. 335.) The verb form means "to contradict, oppose, lit. say against." Thus, this phrase requires the ability to stand against those who stand against the truth.

► Implications

Though closely related to "*apt to teach*" this qualification requires that one be able to teach even

the adversaries. The context of this qualification shows that it includes: those who refuse to obey and those who lead others the wrong way (v. 10). Also given are two reasons why this ability is required in an overseer. 1) "Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain" (v. 11.) 2) "...rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith" (v. 13).

HOLDING FIRM THE FAITHFUL WORD

Titus 1:9

► Definition

"Holding firm" is translated from *antecho* Thayer tells us that it means "to hold before or against, bold back, withstand, endure;...to hold to, hold it fast." (p. 49.) This is closely akin to the previous two, but denotes a close experience with the Word.

► Implications

This implies more than mere knowledge of the Word. It is a set beyond even application of the Word to one's life. It requires the ability to remain faithful to the Word and hanging onto it through thick and thin. As Paul did, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*" (2 Tim. 4:7).

OLDER

The term "elder", as has been pointed out previously, means "one who is older." The exact age for an elder is not implied in this qualification. This still does not leave room for young men to qualify. One young Christian said he was a "junior elder." "A junior elder" he said "is one who is in training to be an elder." Another abuse of this qualification is seen in the Watchtower magazine published by The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. From the Feb. 1, 1983 issue we learn that Paul was an "elder." Do you know why Paul wrote to Timothy? It is because Timothy was a young "elder", who needed the advice of an older "elder" like Paul. Surely any true Bible student can see the folly of these statements.

This term requires a man with experience and wisdom. Age is required for experience and wisdom. Wisdom and experience does not automatically come with age (Heb. 5:12-14). Old age is only a "*crown of*

glory" to those who practice righteousness (Pr. 16:31). Paul gives Titus a list of responsibilities that all men are to do when they reach their later years of life (Tit. 2:1,2). God never intended old age to be a time of retirement from Christian responsibilities, but a time to begin a new chapter in life.

How old must a man be to qualify? He must be old enough to acquire all of the qualifications and the experiences which only come with the long years of life.

STEWARD

Titus 1:7

► Definition

Translated from the word *oikonomos* and according to W.E. Vine it primarily denotes the manager of a household or estate (*oikos*, house, *nemo*, to arrange). (p. 1087.) Thayer says

"the manager of a ;household or of household affairs; esp. a steward, manager, superintendent, ...to whom the head of the house or proprietor has entrusted the management of his affairs, the care of the receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to every servant and even to the children not yet of age...and any and every Christian who rightly uses the gifts entrusted to him by God for the good of his brethren,..." (p. 441.)

The spiritual use of this term involves the idea of a manager of the affairs of God on earth.

► Implications

To be qualified for the office of a bishop a man must be a proven steward. It is a well established fact in scripture that good stewardship leads to greater responsibilities. In a parable of Jesus the five talent man earned five talents more and was given the one talent of the worthless steward (Mt. 25:28). In His parable of the minas to the servant that used his mina to gain ten more the nobleman gave him ten cities, to the servant who used his mina to gain five more he gave five cities, but to another who kept his mina in a handkerchief he took it away and gave to the steward with ten minas (Lk. 19:11-27). Even in the secular world one does not promote a man to the position of major league baseball coach if he cannot even coach a little league team. A man who cannot effectively be

superintendent over a small school district cannot superintend over a large one. Men who are poor stewards of their own homes are not fit to have the stewardship of God's house. "For if a man does not know how to rule his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:5). He must first prove his stewardship over his own abilities, time, opportunity, money, possessions, etc. before he is qualified to oversee the church. He must take good care of his own soul before he can be entrusted with the souls of others (Heb. 13:17).

CONCLUSION

It should be noted in closing that the three titles for this office call for men with certain abilities. The term "elder" requires a man with decision making ability. Inherent in the word "overseer" is administrative ability. "Shepherd" calls for a man apt at spiritual counseling and teaching. Just as a president must know how to preside, a bookkeeper must know how to keep books, and a teacher must be able to teach, a shepherd, overseer, and elder must possess their respective abilities.

REVIEW

1. T F Generally speaking, the higher the position one has the higher the qualifications.
2. In your own words define "vigilant."
3. T F Though the leadership of a group may lack vision, the group does not suffer as a result.
4. List some areas where elders need to use their vision.

5. What is a novice? faithful word" imply?
6. T F It is wrong for anyone to be a novice.
7. Give two reasons why a novice should not be appointed as an elder:
8. T F The "condemnation of the devil" is his pride.
9. T F "Apt to teach" is an relative qualification, because no two men have the exact same teaching ability.
10. T F If a man is able to teach a class or two he has proven that he is apt to teach.
11. Why should an elder have the qualification "apt to teach"?
12. Give some reasons why churches should appoint men who are apt to teach in the area of personal evangelism.
13. What is a "gainsayer"?
14. Why should an elder be able to convict the gainsayers?
15. What does the qualification "holding firm the
16. T F All older men will naturally have experience and wisdom, thus qualifying.
17. How old must a man be to qualify?
18. What is a "steward"?
19. Give some areas where an elder should demonstrate good stewardship.
20. Describe the abilities implied by the titles below:
elder
overseer
shepherd

DOMESTIC QUALIFICATIONS

One church asked its elders to resign because they were unqualified. One elder refused saying "I am the husband of one wife, therefore, qualified". The worst infidel, murderer, drunkard, covetous person in the world could qualify in this as well as many teenage boys. These domestic qualifications are the most prevalent areas of disagreement. Concerning the marital status of an elder ("husband of one wife") there are various viewpoints. Some claim that this is merely a qualification given to eliminate those practicing polygamy. Others claim this would disqualify men who have married after their first wife had died. Still others believe that an elder doesn't have to be married, but if he is, he must have but one wife. And then there is the viewpoint that this requires that a man have but one living wife and that he be scripturally married to her. The other area of dispute is over the word "children." How many must a man have? Can a man with one child serve as an elder? One of the most prevalent questions dealing with these qualifications is over the meaning of "faithful children." What does it mean? To whom are they to be faithful? To whom are they to be in subjection? This chapter involves the most difficult and emotional areas of a man's qualifications for the eldership. Please study with the view to discovering God's Will.

A MAN

1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:6

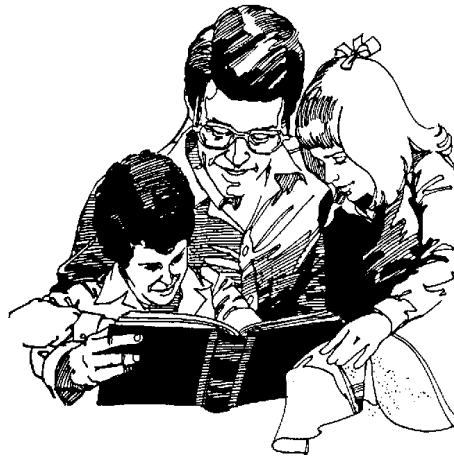
► *Definition*

The word "man" is translated from the Greek word *anar*. Thayer defines it as follows: "a man...the meanings of this word in the N.T. differ in no respect

from classic usage; for it is employed with a reference to sex and so to distinguish a man from a woman; either a. as a male in or b. as a husband...2. with a reference to age, and to distinguish an adult man from a boy,...3. univ. any male person, a man."

► *Implications*

Many denominations and even brethren fail to see this as a qualification. They feel free to appoint women to this position in the church. One denomination even appointed teenage girls as elders. The Newport Daily Independent reported that the



Newport Presbyterian Church had appointed two women to the position of "ruling elders." In a church of Christ an elder became ill and appointed his wife to serve during his sickness. He died from his illness and his wife carried on as an elder until she died. Women can't possibly qualify to serve as elders for several logical reasons: (1) It is specifically commanded that an elder be a man, this excludes women. (2) All elders in the New Testament were men. (3) A woman cannot be the husband

of one wife. (4) A woman cannot be a father. (5) Women are not given the role of ruling the home. (6) Women are not to exercise authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11,12). An elder is to rule or exercise authority over the church. Therefore, a woman cannot be an elder. This qualification also excludes boys or young men from serving as elders. To be an elder a man must be old enough to meet all of the qualifications. This requires a man somewhat advanced in years.

HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE

1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6

► *Definitions*

This qualification is translated from the Greek words: *mias gunaikos andra*, 1 Tim. 3:2 and "*mias gunaikos anar*", Tit. 1:6. *Mias* is defined as "Fem. of *eis*, one." (George Berry, Interlinear Greek-English Bible). "*a cardinal numeral, one*". (Thayer, p. 187). *Gunaikos* means "(1) a woman...(2) a wife". (Berry). Thayer says "1. univ. a woman of any age, whether a virgin, or married, or a widow...2. a wife". Westcott and Hort define "*anar*" or "*andra*" as "a man...a husband." Literally, the phrase means "a one woman man" or "a

man who has only one woman." If an individual is a "one farm man" he could not have more than one farm, yet he must have a farm. If one is a "worshiper of one God", he is neither an atheist (a no God man) nor a polytheist (a believer in many gods), but he believes in and worships one God.

► *Various views on this qualification*

Some feel that it only prohibits polygamy. This view simply limits those with more than one wife. Those who espouse this view would see nothing wrong with appointing a man who is not married and a man unlawfully married.

Again, some feel that it prohibits polygamy, but it also enforces celibacy. For example, the Roman Catholic Church says that a bishop is not to be the husband of one wife. Forbidding to marry is one of the erroneous doctrines condemned by Paul in the very chapter proceeding these qualifications (1 Tim. 4:3). Peter was married and yet he served as an elder (Mt. 8:14; 1 Pet. 5:12).

A view promoted by some early Christian writers is that it prohibits decamy i.e. remarriage after the death or divorce of one's spouse. This view is taught in the initial edition of the RSV: "married only once." Does this qualification prohibit elders with second marriages? Nothing can be found in Paul's writings on second marriages which suggests the notion of there being anything disreputable in a second marriage. Although he did advise against it under certain situations and for certain people (Rom. 7:2,3; 1 Cor. 7:8,39; 1 Tim. 4:3,4,8). Vincent gives us some historical insight into this view, "The opposition to second marriage became very strong in the latter part of the second century. It was elevated into an article of faith by Montanists, and was emphasized by Tertullian and Athenagoras, who called second marriage a specious adultery" (Vol. 3; p. 229).

Finally, there is the view that this not only prohibits polygamy and also requires that a man be scripturally married to a woman. This is the view that is held by most brethren. A man if divorced must have put away his wife on the grounds of fornication and then married another who also had a right to marry. In this case, he has but one wife. If his wife dies he must marry again in order to be qualified. Still, he has but one wife.

► *Arguments for the doctrine of unmarried elders*

Let us take a closer look into the viewpoint that elders do not have to be married. Those who hold this view will point to the many scholars who also hold to

the same. Matthew Henry commenting on 1 Tim. 3:2 said, "'The husband of one wife' - not that ministers must be married; this is not meant; but the husband of one wife may be either not having divorced his wife or married another, or the husband of one wife, that is, at one and the same time, no bigamist..." Another commentator wrote, "it does not necessarily compel pastors to marry..." (Pulpit Comm., v. 21). If all these scholars are accepted as being accurate on the subject what shall we do with all the other scholars, equally great in ability and reputation, who can be quoted on the other side of the question?

Another argument is that this is a restrictive requirement rather than a positive one. They say "'Husband of one wife' is a restriction against more than one wife rather than compelling the elder to be married." Just how would one read Paul's statement here and conclude, without some help beyond the context and the necessary requirements, that he did not mean the bishop "must be the husband of one wife", but that "If he is married...he must be the husband of one wife"? This view on the requirement strikes at polygamy, rather than requiring marriage. It limits the number of wives rather than making marriage necessary for the bishop. If the intention of Paul had been just to prevent polygamy in the eldership, why didn't he say: "if any man...not guilty of polygamy." Note, "one" here has the same meaning as the "one" in Eph. 4:5 - "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." That does not mean "no Lord, no faith, no baptism". Neither does "one wife" mean "no wife." Still they argue, "Is a qualified man to be deprived of the work of an elder just because he does not have a family?" This is to beg the question. Regardless of who this qualification might exclude it cannot be disregarded. By way of comparison consider 1 Tim. 5:9 where Paul is talking about widows exclusively, not unmarried women. "Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man," The passage would certainly exclude any woman from the relief rolls of the church who has not been "the wife of one husband." Consider the following parallel to 1 Tim. 3:2. "This is a true saying, if a man desire to be fully dressed, he desireth a good thing. A man then must have a suit, shirt, shoes, socks, tie, hat, and underclothes; (For if a man does not have these things, how can he be fully dressed?)" Could any reasonable person read this and conclude that a naked man is fully dressed?

Another argument is that "husband of one wife" is only a quality of blamelessness. According to this view when Paul said "husband of one wife", he meant that in the marriage relationship the elder must be

without reproach. If he is married he must be temperate and have only one wife, and if he is single he must be free from the guilt of adultery. In full, he must be free from blame regarding the opposite sex. If so, then Paul would have said, "The bishop must be blameless with regard to the opposite sex."

An astonishing claim is made that "Paul was an elder and he was unmarried." They reason that since Paul did the work of an elder, he was an elder. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ, as he told us again and again, and as such he exercised an oversight, fed the flock, and was an example. Paul's claim to apostleship in no way implies that he was an elder. Most of Paul's work was done in traveling from place to place, while an elder's work and authority are entirely local in nature and limited (Ac. 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). It is still argued that "Paul was not behind Peter in anything, and Peter was an elder" (2 Cor. 11:5). Yet, there are at least four things in which Paul rates second to Peter. (1) Peter preached the first gospel sermon (Ac. 2:17ff). (2) Peter preached first to the Gentile converts (Ac. 10;15:7). (3) Peter was married, evidently Paul was not (Mt. 8:14; 1 Cor. 9:5). (4) Peter was the first to enter the tomb of Christ, Paul was not (Jn. 20:1-6). If I would state: *"in nothing am I a whit behind the chiefest Christians"*, it would not follow that should some Christian be a noted architect I too must be an architect.

Another attempt is made to defend this position by declaring that since Christ was not married, elders need not be married. Their reasoning goes like this: *"Jesus Christ is 'The Chief Shepherd'"* (1 Pet. 5:4). He was not married and if the Chief Shepherd was not married on what basis of reasoning would it be necessary for the under or common, shepherd to be married?" If this argument has any force at all it would demand all shepherds today to be unmarried, because Christ was not married. If it is valid to argue on the comparison of the office of the "Chief Shepherd" and the office of a bishop in regard to marriage, then consider the fact that Christ has a bride, the church. Therefore, spiritually speaking Christ is the husband of one wife. If one insists that elders do not need to be married because Christ was not married while in the flesh, why not argue that elders today need not be baptized for the remission of sins because Christ was not so baptized?

"Paul said the unmarried could serve God better than the married". Therefore, they conclude that elders don't have to be married. It would be completely out of harmony with the will of God concerning marriage to say that it would always be better to be unmarried. God instituted the first

marriage and said it was good. The writer of Hebrews penned, "marriage is honorable among all..." (Heb. 13:4). In speaking of the younger widows, Paul said: *"Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children..."* (1 Tim. 5:14). If this contention be true why not teach the Roman Catholic doctrine of the celibacy of the Bishops?

"The Bishop can get the experience without a family". This sort of logic could as well do away with several other requirements God has bound upon man. How could a man get the experience of being a husband without being the husband of a wife? This is nothing less than using human reasoning to subtract from the Word of God (Rev. 22:19).

Finally, they argue, "Any command that excludes such men as Paul, David Lipscomb, or M.C. Kurfrees from the eldership certainly is arbitrary." Is it arbitrary and absurd to compel the bishop to be married. Remember, this same type of argument was used about baptism for the remission of sins. Those who oppose baptism can argue that many great religious leaders of the world were not immersed for the remission of sins, therefore they do not have to be baptized.

► *Implications*

This qualification would eliminate many men from consideration based on their marital status. (1) No polygamist could be appointed to the eldership. (2) Those who practiced any form of concubinage would not qualify. (3) A man who has divorced his wife for any other reason than fornication cannot be an elder (Mt. 5:32; 19:4-9). Any previous marriage that ended in divorce requires that the wife had been put away for adultery and only then could the man remarry. (4) Neither could he marry an unscripturally divorced woman. By being married to a woman who has not been scripturally divorced would make him the husband of another man's wife. (5) To be qualified the man must have a wife at the time of his appointment. (5) He cannot be a bachelor. A bachelor is not a one woman man, but a no woman man. As a bachelor he would automatically be unqualified in other areas. He could not have his household in subjection nor could he have a wife in subjection to him. He could not demonstrate his ability to rule his household well. The bishop cannot be a husband of any kind unless he is married. If he could be a husband without marriage, he would be an unmarried husband, which is ridiculous. It would be as ridiculous as "single wives" or "married bachelors." Several questions often arise concerning this qualification. First, there is the concern as to whether or not an elder can continue to serve as

an elder after his wife dies. Far too many brethren would give this an affirmative answer. Robert R. Taylor Jr. wrote,

"What should the elder do in case his wife dies? Should he resign the eldership the next Sunday?' Some have so affirmed but I am not of this number. When initially appointed he had the one wife and met with signal success the possession of that qualification. ...Even if he chooses never to remarry, he may still serve with efficiency in the eldership the rest of his active life. He still has in his background the necessary experience within the family framework to make successful his efficiency in this realm of the service that elders render." (THE ELDER AND HIS WORK, p. 85).

Marriage ends in death (Rom. 7:2,3). He is no longer a one woman man. He is a no woman man, a bachelor. J. W. McGarvey said, "If I were an elder of the church and my wife should die. I would go before the church the next Lord's day and resign." This is exactly what an elder should do upon finding himself no longer qualified to serve. By not having a wife he would seriously be hampered in his ability to perform some of his duties. For example, showing hospitality would be a problem. Still some argue that as long as he is married when appointed he is still qualified if his wife dies. "He has already proven himself in this area." Could we say that same thing about his reputation, self-control, etc.? If he lacks in any of these could we argue." He has already proven himself in these areas at the time he was appointed?"

Another question closely related to this one is whether or not a man can be qualified if he remarries after his first wife as died. The answer is definitely yes. Again, marriage ends in death (Rom. 7:2,3). The man isn't also married to the dead woman, but has one wife. Finally, we consider whether or not a man is still qualified to serve if his wife has become unfaithful. An elder's wife must also meet certain qualification (1 Tim. 3:11). While her unfaithfulness to the Lord would not keep the elder from being the husband of one wife it would greatly hinder him. However, it could require him to resign if the situation became a long term problem.

RULES WELL HIS OWN HOUSE

1 Timothy 3:4

► *Definitions*

"*That ruleth*" comes from the Greek words *proista nenos*. Vine defines rule as "to stand before, hence, to lead, attend to (indicating care and diligence)" (p. 979). "The participle means placed in front" (Vincent, v. 3, p. 231). According to Thayer it means "1. to set or place before, to set over...a. to be over, to superintend, preside over...b. to be a protector or guardian; to give aid...c. to care for give attention to" (p. 539). He defines the Greek word for well as meaning "beautifully, finely, excellently, well, rightly, so that there shall be no room for blame." (Thayer, p. 323).

► *Examples*

An early example of this fine leadership in the home is seen in Noah. Though the entire world around him was perverse and rejected God and Noah's preaching, he saved his family. Joshua illustrated this when he told all Israel, "And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river, of the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15.) Job illustrates a the type of father who still shows concern for the spiritual soundness of his grown children. Cornelius and the Philippian Jailor would be prime New Testament examples of those who ruled their household well (Ac. 10 and 16:31-34).

► *Implications*

The home is God's proving ground for leadership ability. We are not instructed to look for the church's leaders in the business world, not in the political arena or in the circle of civic leadership. God wants us to look at a man's home to see whether he is a good spiritual leader. If there is no communication, the father domineers the children, the children are bitter, his family is wracked by all kinds of problems, then he is not qualified. Neither should he be a hen pecked husband, but a man whose wife is in submission.

Why? Paul gives us the reason, "one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?)" Note, "rules his own house" is in the present tense while "take care of the church" is in the future tense. A man must first prove his ability in the home then he is qualified to rule over the church. If a man cannot manage a small store how can he manage a large store. If a man cannot manage a little lemonade

stand how can he manage a Fortune 500 company. Indeed, an elder, as a leader, is to be a ruler (Heb. 13:17). If he cannot rule his own house and family there is no way he is qualified to rule over God's house and family.

Through this qualification he will prove to be a trustworthy steward. He first must teach his own children, *"And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath; but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord"* (Eph. 6:4). He first must have a good relationship with his wife, *"Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered"* (1 Pet. 3:7). Then he will be seen fit by God to take care of His children and the Bride of Christ.

HAS CHILDREN

1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6

► *He must be a father*

Little argument can be given as to whether a man who has no children and never has had them could be appointed. Divine wisdom is seen in requiring a father to be an elder. He has a better understanding of children and young people. He can be more sympathetic to the needs of the congregation.

► *Number of children required*

How many children must a man have to qualify? Some argue that no children are required. Since this view is somewhat rare and weak at this time we will not deal with it in our study. Others say that this requires a man to have a plurality of children. On the opposing side of this are those who say that a man must have at least one child. The basis of the first view is that the word "children" is plural and therefore forbids the singular (child). The Greek word for children is *tekna*. An investigation of its Biblical usage will prove helpful in resolving the differences.

When solving any disagreement it is wise for both sides to keep in mind some basic rules of interpretation. (1) Always interpret according to the known purpose of the writer. In this case, it is obviously the qualifications of an elder. First, the context will help us to know what the writer has in mind. The harmony with other inspired writers will help us to know what a certain writer meant by the use of the word. Sometimes we can learn what the writer means in one place by seeing his use of the word in

another place. (2) We must always interpret words by the rules of language. (3) The Bible sometimes uses the plural for the singular and the singular for the plural. This is a rule of grammar that is upheld by many scholars. "...the Plural...is used although the predicate refers primarily to one individual, when the writer wishes to keep the thought somewhat vague". (Winer's Greek Grammar, p. 175). "Even in concrete words, the poets sometimes use the plural for the singular, to give the expression a more general turn (generalizing plural)..." (Hadley and Allen, Greek Grammar, p. 211). "in a generalization, the plural can stand for one person: Mt. 2:20..." (Robert Runk, A Greek Grammar of the New Testament, p. 77). "The plural is used with reference to a single person by a generalizing mode of expression in Mt. 2:20..." (Friederick Blass, Grammar of New Testament Greek, p. 83). A word of caution on this point,

it is wrong to conclude that the singular can always be separated from the plural to stand on its own. If this were true than some could argue 'If the plural always includes the singular, then does the appointment of "elders in every church" (Ac. 14:23) authorize a one man eldership? (Perry D. Hall, "Elders: Grammatical Construction of Children", SENTRY MAGAZINE, p.6).

(4) The same rule must be applied alike to all words when they are used in the same way.

In his classical work, Hermeneutics, Dungan informs us it is possible for the plural to include the singular in a very common figure of speech called "synecdoche." It is used throughout the scriptures.

"It is usually spoken as a figure of speech by which we speak of the whole by a part, or a part by using a term denoting the whole. But while this is the main feature of this trope, it by no means exhausts it...'Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck?' (Gen. 21:7). She never had but one child, and no other was ever promised. In Gen. 46:7, when Jacob was going into Egypt, it is indicated that he took 'his sons, and his sons' sons with him; his daughters, and his sons' daughters.' But Jacob never had more than one daughter - Dinah - that was defiled by Shechem" (Dungan, 300,307).

The Bible is resplendent with examples of the word "children" being used for the singular "child" and

the singular "child" being used for the plural. *"Train up a CHILD in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"* (Pr. 22:6). Does this proverb apply to fathers with more than one child? "And you fathers, do not provoke your CHILDREN to wrath; but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4). Are fathers with only one child exempt from this responsibility? In Gen. 11:30 the Bible says *"But Sarai was barren; she had no CHILD."* Then in Gen. 16:1 it says, *"now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no CHILDREN"*. Finally, in Gen. 21:7 Sarah says, *"She also said, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse CHILDREN? For I have borne him a son in his old age'".* Sarah had only one child, Issac, so how could she have children? Acts 2:39 says, *"For the promise is to you and your CHILDREN, and to all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call."* Does the promise of salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit apply to parents of one child? Older women are instructed to *"that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their CHILDREN"* (Tit. 2:4.) Are not mothers with only one child to be encouraged to love him as well? Many other examples in which "children" also includes "child" (Mt. 22:24; Gal. 3:16; 1 Tim. 5:4,10; 1 Th. 2:3; 2:11; etc.) Regardless of our opinions, there is Biblical justification for taking the view that "children" can include the singular "child".

The Greek used of "children" is the same as the English. Suppose the school system announced "We want all parents to bring your children to the school nurse tomorrow for a measles shot." If you had only one child would you bring them? Of course you would. But why? Because you understand through common sense that by "children" they also meant "child." Suppose you were in an audience of people who were asked, "All parents with children please stand up." If you had but one child would you stand up? Of course you would.

At this point those who say this qualification requires a plurality of children argue, "A man cannot get enough experience with one child." However, a single child will demand different experiences. Certainly, a single child will be viewed closer by the congregation to see if the father has done a good job.

"Faithful" is translated from the word "pista." Vincent says it means "Believing children...children that believe" (vol. 3, p. 333).

► *Implications*

Some argue that this means the children are faithful to their father. The word "subjection" covers that, this is in addition to that. The word "faithful" generally is referring to Christians. After the church was established the word was used exclusively of Christians (Ac. 16:1,15; 1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Cor. 6:15; Eph. 1:1; 6:21; Col. 1:2,7; 4:7,9). It refers to one who is trustworthy, reliable or dependable because he is a Christian. An elder, therefore, must be one who took the time to teach his children the Gospel. To neglect his children shows that he will probably neglect babes in Christ.

Must all his children be Christians for him to be qualified? This is the safe route. If they are at the age of accountability they must. This age can be difficult to detect. This age differs from child to child. If a man has a few who have obeyed and one who is too young then he may serve, but if that child doesn't obey when he is old enough then the elder may need to resign. Yet it may be wise for a man not to serve until all his children have obeyed the Gospel.

One of the most common questions is: What if an elder's child becomes unfaithful, must he resign? That all depends on the specifics of the situation. Such as, whether the child is at home or in their own home. The quality of "faithful" can be relative. In some cases the child's unfaithfulness may require an elder's resignation. Each case should be considered on its own merits. When ever this happens an elder and the church should take a second look at his qualifications. But remember a righteous man can have a wicked son (Ezek. 18:5-10; 1 Sm. 1:2). It is argued that Proverbs 22:6 states *"Train up a CHILD in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."* That is true, however, it is a generalization like many of the Proverbs. Most of the time it is true, however there are exceptions. For example, *"For the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags"*. Generally, this is true, but what about all those lazy drinkers who are also gluttons and yet are very wealthy and never see poverty all their lives? (See also Prov. 3:1,2; 26:4,5; 28:11; 29:12; 31:10,11). The most important thing for the church to do when this happens is to see what the elder does. Does he get on the phone, jump in the car, exhort him, rebuke him face to face, etc.? Or is he like Eli who did nothing about the wickedness of his sons? If the latter is the case then may he be dealt with in the same

FAITHFUL CHILDREN

Titus 1:6

► *Definition*

fashion as God did with Eli. God said to Samuel concerning Eli, *"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them"* (1 Sam. 3:13).

HAVING HIS CHILDREN IN SUBMISSION WITH ALL REVERENCE 1 Timothy 3:4

► *Definitions*

Subjection is to be subject to another's rule and authority. Reverence means serious or worthy of respect. His children are not to be accused of riot or unruly. Titus adds *"children not accused of dissipation or insubordination"* (Tit. 1:6b). Vine defines "accused" as "an accusation. Lit. 'not under accusation' in all have chiefly to do with judicial procedure, as distinct from dioballo, to slander." (p. 18). Riot means "prodigality, a wastefulness, profligacy..." (Vine, p. 971). "incorrigibleness, an abandoned dissolute, life" (Thayer, p. 82). Vine also defines the word "unruly" meaning "not subject to rule...disobedient" (p. 1186).

► *Implications*

Would subjection apply to a child who has left home and has a home of his own. A parent does have an obligation to his grown children. Remember, Eli was condemned by God for not trying to control his sons. Eli was not automatically condemned because his grown sons had done wrong. He was condemned because he stood by the did nothing. However, when a child becomes a part of another home the father's authority over his children and their subjection to him is greatly limited. A father should be respected and honored. If a child becomes unfaithful to the Lord this does not automatically mean that child is not in subjection to their father. A son or daughter has a free will. He has the freedom of choice to serve God or not to. It doesn't matter how well the Father ruled over or how much the child had been in subjection to his father while at home. If a father pleads with his grown daughter to return to the Lord and she does not, such does not mean she is not under subjection to him. A father cannot force a his grown children to be faithful to the Lord. A child does not obey God on the basis of being in subjection to the father's request and desire that they do so. It needs to be noted that these qualifications are in the present tense. The

elder's ruling of his children is in the present tense while the ruling of the church is mentioned in future tense (1 Tim. 3:5). Thus, if strictly adhered to this would require that an elder must have children at home in order to be appointed. Usually by the time a man has fulfilled all the qualifications, some, if not all, of his children have set up households of their own.

"...it is unscriptural for a father to rule his children once they have 'left father and mother and cleaved unto their wives'. After all, who is the head of the house? The man or his father? Therefore, a man can be qualified if he is no longer ruling his children because they have set up their own households or because they are not living. In either case he is not ruling them (present tense)...It would not make much spiritual sense to remove a man from office because his faithful children have left home to set up their own households" (Hall, p. 7).

Paul gave the reason why an elder's children are in subjection to him. It is reverence. It is not out of fear or merely out of obedience. The children submit to him out of their respect for him. The best way to keep them under control is for the father to be grave (serious) with them. A father who is a perpetual clown, a Homer Simpson type, will never earn his children's respect.

Paul also tells of the results of this subjection. The children are to be subject to the extent that they have a good, not bad, reputation. They are not known in the community or church as being riotous or unruly. A child's reputation can easily disqualify their father even if they no longer live at home.

CONCLUSION

Although the domestic qualifications are very important they are no more so then the other qualifications. Let us be determined not to undermine and weaken the import of these qualifications. On the other hand let us be careful not to add more to these beyond the requirements of the Holy Spirit.

As a father and a husband, a man has the greatest proving ground for the greatest responsibility in the local congregation. Failure in these can keep a man from ever being qualified. Why? Because once one has failed in these areas it is very difficult and often impossible to go back and correct the situation.

A story is told of a young man who stood at the bar of justice to be sentenced for forgery. The judge

had known the young man from childhood, for his father had been a famous legal light and his work on the "Law of Trusts" was the most exhaustive work on the subject. "Do you remember your father," asked the judge, sternly, "that father whom you have disgraced?" The prisoner answered, "I remember him perfectly. When I went to him for advice or companionship, he would look up from his book on the "Law of Trusts" and say, 'Run away, boy, I am busy.' My father finished his book, and here I am." The great lawyer had neglected his own trust with awful results.

One of the greatest gifts as well as one of the greatest responsibilities ever to be placed into a man's hands is the raising of a child. To neglect this responsibility is rob the child of a happy and productive future as well as robbing the Lord of being able to entrust you with guiding His family. All the more reason for a young married man to begin now to prepare himself to lead God's children. He can begin in his twenties by ruling his own household well.

REVIEW

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| <p>1. T F Domestic qualifications represent the least area of disagreement compared to other types of qualifications.</p> <p>2. What is the dispute over the word "children"?</p> <p>3. List four reasons why a woman couldn't be appointed an elder.</p> <p>4. T F The 1946 edition of the RSV correctly translates 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 showing an elder must be "married only once."</p> <p>5. Give passages which show that the binding of celibacy is wrong, especially for an elder.</p> | <p>6. What is decamy?</p> <p>7. T F Nothing in Paul's writings on second marriages suggests the notion of there being anything disreputable in a second marriage.</p> <p>8. T F Very few scholars hold to the view that elders do not have to be married.</p> <p>9. T F The qualification "husband of one wife" is a restrictive requirement rather than a positive one.</p> <p>10. Tell why you think that this qualification is not merely a quality of blamelessness.</p> <p>11. T F Paul often did the work of an elder thus proving he was an elder.</p> <p>12. Answer the argument: "Christ was not married therefore elders do not have to be married."</p> <p>13. T F Paul never said the unmarried could always serve God better than the married.</p> <p>14. T F An elder could not obtain the experience of being a husband without a wife.</p> <p>15. List the different men who would be disqualified from being an elder because they are not the husband of one wife.</p> <p>16. T F An elder whose wife has died cannot be an elder, because marriage ends in death. Thus, he is a widower and a widower is not a one woman man.</p> |
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17. If a man's wife dies while he is serving as an elder he should a) resign b) continue to serve because he had a wife when appointed c) continue to serve as long as he plans to remarry in the near future.
18. Would a man be qualified to serve as an elder if he has remarried after his first wife had died? Explain.
19. If a man puts his wife away for fornication while he is serving as an elder he should a) resign b) continue to serve c) never serve as an elder again whether he remarries or not.
20. T F The home is God's proving ground for leadership ability.
21. Why must a man rule his own household well before he can be qualified as an elder?
22. T F A man must be a father to be qualified?
23. List the four basic rules of interpretation that will help solve many disagreements.
24. List some verses where the word "children" is used in a way that includes the singular "child".
25. T F The Greek use of "children" is the same as the English use of the word.
26. Give some examples of how we use the word "children" to include the singular "child".
27. What is the figure of speech called "synecdoche"?
28. T F A man cannot get enough experience to qualify if he has only one child.
29. In your own words define "*faithful children*".
30. Must all a man's children be Christians for him to qualify? Explain.
31. What should an elder do if one of his children who has not for some time lived in their own home but has become unfaithful?
32. T F Eli was rejected by God as judge over His people because Eli's sons were involved in a sinful lifestyle.
33. T F The qualifications "faithful children" and "having his children in subjection" are synonymous.
34. T F An elder's children must be in subjection to him all of their lives.
35. T F A man's failure in the domestic qualifications can keep him from ever being qualified.

WIVES OF ELDERS & DEACONS

Actually, there is no way to estimate the value of godly women in the home or even in the church. Since no man operates in a vacuum their wives have an enormous influence upon them. Elders and deacons are family men by necessity and will be influenced daily by the wife and her attitude. Before we look at the qualifications and duties of their wives let's first deal with some false concepts about the role of women in the work of the church.



WOMEN ELDERS

Before the women's lib movement women seeking a position of leadership in the church was exceedingly rare. Now there has been a move for women to attend "business meetings". This at first was just to be silent witnesses of the discussion and decisions of the church. Next, they were given voice concerning matters which would "require" a woman's input. The gradual introduction of women into the decision making for the church opens the flood gates for women serving at the Lord's Table, making announcements, etc. It isn't a wonder that other congregations which are more "progressive" have those demanding equal rights to read Scriptures and lead prayers in public worship.

Can a woman serve as an elder? Only if she can attain the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 for one to be an overseer. How can a woman be the "husband of one wife"? Not to mention the first qualification: "If a man..." Obviously, God never intended for women to be shepherds of the flock.

Although not officially an elder, some women

have become self-appointed "she elders." Because she can get away with wearing the pants around the house she begins to think it will work in the church. Some of these "she-elders" are not even married to elders, nor do they even have to be married women to exalt themselves to this position.

Some will argue that the very existence of a set of qualifications for women is proof for a position for women in the leadership of the congregation. In other words, 1 Timothy 3:11 is speaking of women officers rather than the wives of the deacons or elders. The Greek word *gunaikas* employed here simply means women. The context must determine whether it means either wife or woman. This leaves us with several possible interpretations. First, these could be qualifications for all women of the church. However, this would be highly unlikely since this is discussed in the middle of qualifications given for elders and deacons. Why would the Holy Spirit stop in the middle of discussing elders and deacons to speak of women in general? Furthermore, some have espoused the view that it is speaking of qualifications for the wives of deacons only. It seems unlikely that qualifications would have been given for

a deacon's wife when none is given for the elder's wife. Because the family relations of both is important, by necessary inference these qualities should be in the wives of both the elders and deacons. Which is the position this writer takes: 1 Timothy 3:11 is speaking of the qualifications for the wives of both elders and deacons. Still others hold a view that this is proof of an official position for women leaders in the church, such as, a deaconess.

DEACONESSES

The main proof text for an official office of deaconess in the church is found in Romans 16:1,2. "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well" (RSV) Note, most other translations have "servant" instead of "deaconess". The Greek word is *diakonos* which has been transliterated into English to give us deacon.

Here, we have the feminine form of the word and thus, deaconess. The term is a general word for a servant.

Some extra Biblical writings can be called upon to lend validity to this view.

“Pliny the younger, about A.D. 104, appears to refer to them in his letter to Trajan, in which he speaks of the torture of two maids who were called *ministrae* (female ministers). The office seems to have been confined mainly to widows, though virgins were not absolutely excluded. Their duties were to take care of the sick and poor, to minister to martyrs and confessors in prison, to instruct catechumens to assist at the baptism of women, and to exercise the general supervision over the female church-members” (Vincent, 177).

Please keep in mind that this is not proof that they were female ministers or deaconesses. This was merely the view of a man who was a pagan trying to explain the role of women in the church using his limited experience and knowledge.

The specific woman under consideration is Phoebe. She was of the church of Cenchrea, a seaport on the Aegean Sea some seven miles from Corinth. It is believed that she was the bearer of the epistle to the Romans. Phoebe had been on the giving end of hospitality and assistance a great many times. Since the term applied to her is a general word for servant, Phoebe was a servant of the church and nothing more than any other Christian woman. Anything more than this is an unwarranted assumption. We do not know what service she performed or that this service was performed due to an official assignment from the men of the congregation. Even if she was assigned a duty such in and of itself would not warrant a position of deaconess in the church. The idea of church officers in any special sense is simply not in this verse.

Still it is argued that such work as attending to the sick women, attending to baptisms of women - their dressing, helping delinquent girls, and teaching women, can better be done by women than men. Admittedly this is true, women can and should be assigned to do various work. There is a difference in assigning women to do a certain work in the church, and in putting them into an office to do the kind of work assigned to deacons. To select a person for a certain work does not necessarily make him or her an officer.

If it was part of God's Will to have deaconesses in the early church Acts 6:1-7 would have been a prime time to reveal this. The Hellenistic

widows were being neglected in the Jerusalem church. The Apostles told the congregation to seek out MEN with certain qualifications to be appointed to this “ministration” (Gk. *diakonia*, from the same root word from which we have deacon and deaconess). Again, God willed that they were to select and appoint men “over this business” (KJV) or “office” (Nestle-Marshall Greek Text and Literal English Translation).

Consider the consequences of this argument that the word *diakonon* (servant) scripturally authorizes an office of deaconess. If so, all other places where this term is used would also scripturally authorize an office with regard to whomever it is applied whether male or female. Thus, when the word *diakonon* is applied to the apostles in 2 Corinthians 6:4 we would have the office of “apostle deacons”. “Evangelist deacons” can be proven from the application of this Greek word to evangelists in 1 Tim. 4:6; 1 Thess. 3:2. As a matter of fact all faithful Christians are called servants providing the church with the official title and position of “Christian deacons”. However, in Phil. 1:1 a distinction is made between the ordinary use of the word “servant” and the official use. *“Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:”*

After all, a word may sometimes have a dual meaning. As we have seen in a previous study the term “elder” can be applied to older people in general, city councilmen, or overseers and shepherds of God's local flock of believers. The same can be said of the term “minister”. The Devil has ministers (2 Cor. 11:15).

It cannot and should not be denied that women can serve the local congregation where they are members. A woman can be a Christian just like a man. She must obey the same prerequisites to be saved as has been given to men. She must worship God according to the same pattern God has given to men. However, a woman cannot exercise authority over a man. Paul wrote, *“Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”* (1 Timothy 2:11,12). The limitation is based upon an attitude of submission. Other reasons for a woman's limited role in church leadership is given by Paul. *“For Adam was formed first, then Eve”* (v. 13). This refers to the principle of creation. God's Will from the beginning was for man to be the head of the woman. Next, the deception principle is used to show God's reasoning. *“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression”* (v. 14). Adam and Eve both sinned, but Adam was not beguiled. He followed Eve into sin with his eyes open.

She was thoroughly deceived. Beguiled means completely or thoroughly beguiled. She had shown that she was not qualified to take the lead. She showed that she was not adapted to the situation of headship. Eve's judgment was flawed. She ran ahead of her husband and yielded to emotion and not reason. Finally, Paul appeals to the principle of differing roles in verse 15. *"Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control."* One of Satan's tactics is the destruction of the distinctive roles God has given to man and woman. And remember, God has always had the man in the dominant role, both in the home and the church. Christ did not select a woman to be among the apostles, elders or evangelists in the New Testament church. Although there is no such thing as a woman serving as a co-preacher or co-elder or co-deacon this in no way lessens her importance or responsibility.

QUALIFICATIONS

1 Timothy 3:11

A bad woman can have an evil influence upon any man. The bad conduct of a woman can disqualify her husband from the office of either elder or deacon.

No man should be allowed to serve in the office unless he has such a wife who meets the following qualifications. "Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things".

■ *Grave*

The Greek word *semnos* means not given to flippancy and childish behavior, but is respectable, honorable or honest. She is not indifferent to the work of the church. Her seriousness about Christianity she professes can be seen in the way she studies, treats worship services and even in the way she dresses (1 Tim. 2:9,10). This in no way means she cannot have a sense of humor and has to be cold and serious at all times. As Robert M. Hutchins wrote "It is not so important to be serious as it is to be serious about important things".

■ *Not a slanderer.*

Translated from the word *diabolos*. It is the same as is applied to the devil and means a false accuser. This is a serious sin of the tongue. Often

women have been singled out and warned about the need to guard their speech. Older women and younger women alike have been encouraged not to be busybodies in idle talk. As the old saying goes, "There are four effective ways to transmit information abroad: telegraph, telephone, television, and tell a woman". Just as some doctors look at a patient's tongue to determine the general condition of their health, so the spiritual health of an elder or deacon's wife can be determined by how she uses her tongue. It will be important for her to hold her temper when people unjustly criticize her husband, herself or even her children. The need for confidentiality is paramount. As his wife, she will take phone messages, receive visitors, sit in on conversations with sisters with problems. Members will expect her to fill in all the juicy details. Yet she may know little and be able to tell less. As Henry Delaune wrote, "Think all you speak, but speak not all you think". Her words will be chosen wisely and used kindly remembering that they cannot be "unsaid." Once the words leave the mouth they are no longer hers to control. She cannot be the starting point for rumors nor the carrying agent for such. After all, if we do not bridle our tongue, our religion is vain (James 1:26).

■ *Sober*

The Greek word *nephaleos* is most often translated "sober". Vine's says it "signifies to be free from the influence of intoxicants; in the N.T., metaphorically, it does not itself imply watchfulness, but is used in association with it..." Indeed, Paul instructed Titus that older women were to be "not given to much wine," (Titus 2:3). The fact is that mere moderation in drinking of alcohol robs one of their clear thinking and a temperate condition of mind and attitude. Although this is the general meaning, she should consider the need to always be in such a state of mind. After all soberness is required of all women (1 Tim. 2:9) and all Christians. It will involve the ability of setting her heart and mind on higher things.

■ *Faithful In All Things*

"Faithful" is translated from the Greek word *pistos* meaning trustworthy or trustful, sure, and true. This means in all areas of her life not just in regard to being a wife of an elder or deacon. As a submissive helpmeet to her husband, she will demonstrate faithfulness. Being a dedicated mother will show her to be faithful to her children. Her faithfulness to God will be seen in how she submissively obeys the Will of God in all things.

ASSISTING THEIR HUSBANDS

When the congregation selected and appointed her husband as one of their elders or deacons, they also revealed their trust in her to fulfill her place as his wife. To be a wife means to be a helpmeet. Just how can she assist her husband as an elder or a deacon?

■ *By Her Willingness to Serve*

An elder must desire the work. He must do the work willingly and not under compulsion (1 Peter 5:2,3). The wife therefore, must also assist him by choosing this work and doing her part willingly. A wife that is not behind her man in the work he has chosen to do will naturally begrudge the time he works for the church. Their wives must share in the spiritual service by being willing to rearrange her schedule, preempt her time, and put up with inconveniences. His is not a prestigious position but work, work in which she needs to assist him. Not to feel compelled to tolerate but share in her husband's love for the souls of the flock and suffer with him the pain that the burdens and distress of the duty will bring.

■ *By Not Being Materialistic*

Remember an elder cannot be "*greedy of filthy lucre*" (1 Peter 5:2,3). Many of these traits can be achieved by a man only with the cooperation of his mate. A materialistic wife will press her husband to focus more attention on material gain than spiritual progress. The end result will be more things for the home but less souls in heaven. True, his work will not be compensated on a level with that of the world. Neither will the world be impressed with him or her for their sacrifices. However, selfish ambition is part of the world's standards and has robbed God of enough glory.

■ *By Being In Subjection*

A wife is to be in subjection to her husband in every thing (Eph. 5:24). In far too many homes the wife wears the pants. Subjection is seen as demeaning and as inequality. They reject God's Word concerning the woman's role in the home. These passages are labeled and libeled as the prejudice of Jewish religious leaders against women, such as the apostle Paul. A man cannot rule if the wife is not subject to him. A man cannot qualify as an elder if his wife is the "Boss" of the home or "henpecks" him into subjugation.

If the husband is to rule well his own household and the household of God his wife must fulfill her God given role. This does not mean she cannot have any say in the house or the church. Any wise elder or deacon worth his salt would seek out the input of his godly wife. Yet she must always remember that the work and decisions are not hers to make.

■ *By Showing Hospitality*

Perhaps this is the most telling area where a woman can assist her husband not only in meeting and maintaining the qualification of being "*given to hospitality*" (1 Timothy 3:2), but assist in the ongoing need to have people into their homes. Today with so many women working they do not have time to clean up their house much less have people over. The home of an elder needs to be open to the brethren 24 hours a day in order for him to be an effective shepherd of the flock. Thus, a godly wife must be ready with a cordial welcome, a spare bed, a quick meal, etc. An inhospitable wife can drive the "flock of God" away.

■ *By Being A Good Mother*

In no way can an elder "*rule well his own house*" with "*faithful children*" "*having them in subjection with all gravity*" and not "*accused of riot or unruly*" without the help of a godly mother. After all, she often spends more time with the children than her husband, especially in their younger years. It is most difficult perhaps impossible - for a man to discipline his children properly without the full cooperation and assistance of his wife.

■ *By Maintaining A Good Reputation.*

Elders must have a "good report from without". If his wife is not seen as being in submission or conducts herself in an unbecoming manner his reputation with the brethren and the community will no doubt suffer. She must concern herself with what people think of her husband, what people think of her. Like it or not she stands in a "spotlight". The wife must act at all-times in a manner which cannot bring reproach upon her husband and the church.

■ *By Working With the Local Congregation.*

Several examples come to mind when considering the number of women who figure prominently in the work of the early church. The church gathered in Mary's home to pray for Peter (Ac. 12:12). Lydia helped start the church in Philippi (Acts 16:14,15). Priscilla helped her husband, Aquila, teach Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). Philip the evangelist had four daughters who prophesied (Ac. 21:9). Euodia and

Syntyche were two women whom Paul said "labored with me in the gospel" (Phil. 4:2,3).

Older women are to teach the younger women. This is a much neglected commandment. *"that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed"* (Titus 2:2-5). We are prone to be disturbed when a congregation has exist for years without qualified elders. We should be!

We should also be disturbed when the older women are not teaching the young women. The best way to fulfill this commandment is to let the older women teach the Ladies' Bible Class. Far too often its the young preacher who is employed to teach all these classes.

PREPARATION

Also, ladies Bible classes can help prepare the younger women to develop the qualifications and abilities to be the wives of elders and deacons. They need to start preparing now. These worthy women are made, not born. Just as each man should be preparing himself to serve in the capacity of elder or deacon, the young woman at his side is working to fit herself as the proper wife. A man does not occupy the position of an elder or deacon on the assumption that he will develop the necessary qualifications. The Bible said that they "Must be" certain things not maybe or perhaps.

As husband and wife can grow together into their respective qualifications. She should "hold the ladder while he climbs toward maturity."

CONCLUSION

Behind every strong elder and deacon there stands a strong, godly woman. Far too often she is the unsung hero. "An elder's wife must be as staunch as a rock, as busy as a beaver, as quiet as a mouse, as biblically informed as a preacher, as flexible as a rubber band, and as patient as a mother of triplets".

REVIEW

1. List the qualifications of elders and deacons which women obviously can never attain.
2. What is a "she elder"?
3. What are the four groups of women to which 1 Timothy 3:11 has been applied? Which interpretation do you hold?
4. Who is said to be a deaconess according to the Revised Standard Version's translation of Romans 16:1? Are any qualifications or specific work mentioned of her?
5. T F Pliny the younger provides scriptural proof that their were female ministers in the early church.
6. Can elders assign women specific task to perform in the congregation? If so, does this prove that there must be an office of deaconess?
7. In Acts 6:1-7 who did the church at Jerusalem select and appoint men or women to supervise the needs of the Hellenistic widows?
8. What is the general, normal meaning of the Greek word *diakonon*?

9. T F If the term *diakonon* in Romans 16:1 proves there is the office of a deaconess than other passages where the term is applied would prove that there is the office of “apostle deacons”, “evangelist deacons” and “Christian deacons”.
10. List four reasons Paul gives in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 to show that women have a limited role in church leadership.
11. Define the term “grave” and apply the meaning to the role of an elder or deacon’s wife.
12. Why is it so important for the wives of church leaders to guard their tongue?
13. Originally and generally what does the Greek term for “sober” signify?
14. List some specific areas where these wives need to be faithful.
15. Why does an elder and deacon’s wife need to be willing for their husbands to serve?
16. What effect would a materialistic wife have upon her husband as he works for the church?
17. What does being in subjection involve?
18. Why is it so important that she be a good mother?
19. Can a wife hurt the reputation of an elder or deacon? If so, how?
20. What are some ways these wives can labor in the local congregation?
21. What can be done to help prepare future wives of elders and deacons?

SELECTION & APPOINTMENT

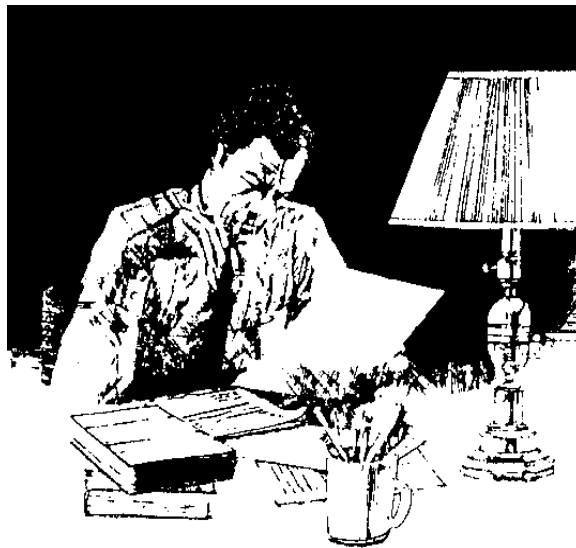
Crete is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean. Titus was instructed by Paul to appoint elders in all the churches of Crete. *"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you" (Tit. 1:5).* The purpose of Titus being in Crete was to set in order that which was wanting. The Greek word for "wanting" literally means "to set straight besides or farther; that is, should arrange what remained to be set in order after Paul's departure. Used by medical writers of setting broken limbs or straightening crooked ones" (Vincent, vol. 3, p. 333). God intends that all congregations select and appoint elders. Without the selection and appointment of elders a congregation is imperfect and wanting.

Many congregations exist without elders. This is justifiable so long as it is scripturally unorganized. Consider the many excuses or extenuating circumstances why some local congregations lack elders. Such as, 1) not enough qualified men to serve, 2) some churches have a high population "turnover" rate, 3) divisions, 4) complacency, 5) content without them, and 6) no teaching to develop or encouragement for the men to develop. Every congregation should strive to overcome these and appoint elders as soon as possible.

THE ACTION OF THE CHURCH IN SELECTION OF ELDERS

To the elders of Ephesus Paul said, *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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" (Ac. 20:28). How does the Holy Spirit make elders? Is this some miraculous event? Does He make elders today? According to Acts 13:2-4 the local church functions as God's minister under the directions of the Holy Spirit to accomplish some work which He wants done. *"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus."* Today, when the church takes the teaching of the Holy Spirit



on elders and seeks out men who have these Holy Spirit specified qualifications and chooses such men, then they are elders made by the Holy Spirit.

When the early church brought the problem of the neglected widows to the apostles attention they said, *"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Ac. 6:3).* It was the multitude of the disciples who were told to

chose the seven men. "Chose" or "look out" means the same as select. The members would have the best ability to look among their own number to see who is qualified.

Although elders are over the congregation, the eldership does not select men to serve as elders. The eldership is not a self-perpetuating body. This type of situation would be akin to lording it over the flock, (1 Pet. 5:2,3). The word "lord" means a ruler whose authority is totally independent of the consent of those he rules. In order to serve, elders need the consent of those they serve. If an elder should move to another place, he is not an overseer in his new home, unless the congregation selects him and appoints him. They are to "look ye out among yourselves". They cannot chose anyone who is not a member. The congregation should not view the eldership as an exclusive club closed only to those who were first appointed. Neither should the present eldership refuse the selection of qualified men by the congregation. However, each elder has as much a part in the selection of future

elders as any other member in their flock.

THE EVANGELIST'S APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS

"Doesn't Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 prove that the selection and appointment of the elders is up to the local evangelist?" No. Preachers are not to select and appoint elders for the church. The congregation selects those who are qualified. Qualifications given by the Holy Spirit determine who is qualified for selection. Preachers can only appoint those who have been selected by the congregation.

When seven men were to be selected and appointed to tend to the needy widows in the Jerusalem church it was the church that did the choosing, while the apostles were to do the appointing or the setting in place of these seven men. Indeed, there is a difference between selecting (choosing) and appointing (Ac. 6:3). In Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 we learn that evangelists do the appointing of elders. *"So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."* (Acts 14:23). Both Paul and Barnabas are mentioned as doing the appointing. Since Barnabas was not an apostle of Christ, and since he was involved in the appointment with Paul it follows that the appointment was not peculiar to the function of the apostolic office. Remember, apostles were also evangelists. Paul told Titus, an evangelist, to ordain elders in every church (Tit. 1:5).

It is worthy of our consideration to note the following definitions for the word "appointed" as used in Acts 14:23. "Choose, elect by raising hands...especially of election or selection for definite offices or tasks...2 Cor. 8:19". (Arndt and Gingrich, p. 889). Young defines this verb as "to select by stretching out the hand." "Properly to vote by stretching out the hand; to create or appoint by vote...one to have charge of some office or duty.. with the loss of the notion of extending the hand, to elect, appoint, create: Ac. 14:23." (Thayer, p. 668). "translated appoint...means primarily to stretch out the hand; and thirdly, to appoint or elect without regard to the method." (J.W. McGarvey, COMM. ON ACTS, vol. 2, p. 49.)

The word "appoint" in Tit. 1:5 is synonymous with the Greek word used in Ac. 14:23. It is the same word used in Ac. 6:3 for the appointing of the seven by the apostles. It is used in Ac. 7:10 describing how

Pharaoh "made" Joseph governor over Egypt and all his house. High priests were "appointed" according to the Law of Moses in Hebrews 5:1. It means "to cause to stand, to set...usually to appoint a person to a position. In this sense the verb is often translated to make or to set, in appointing a person to a place of authority, e.g., a servant over a household, Mt. 24:45,47..." (Vine, p. 57). "...to set down, put down to set, place, put; to set one over a thing (in charge of it)..." (Thayer, p. 314). "put in charge...someone over something or someone..." (Arndt and Gingrich, p. 301). Titus was to appoint men to the position of elders, put them in charge of the church, or set them up over God's house.

Certain guidelines should be kept in mind by evangelists when appointing men to this position. 1) They should make sure that the men who have been selected meet the qualifications. 2) They can only appoint those qualified men who have been selected by the congregation. 3) They must appoint a plurality of men to serve unless an eldership already exist. 4) They must never refuse to appoint qualified men. 5) They should not be hasty in appointing elders.

MANNER OF SELECTING ELDERS

God has no specified method. He has left a lot of it up to our own judgment. Whatever is done must comply with all of God's Law relevant to this subject.

Some things are a must in the selection of qualified men for the eldership by the congregation. 1) Which ever selection process they use they must conduct it in an orderly fashion. *"But let all things be done decently and in order"* (I Cor. 14:40). 2) The congregation must be careful only to select qualified men. Some unqualified men will naturally be nominated by some who are honestly mistaken. However, no objection against a man should be based upon mere opinion. Remember that some qualifications are relative, such as, *"apt to teach"*. 3) Do not permit prejudice or partiality to be reflected in the selection. Some want men who will allow themselves to be used and manipulated by the membership. Thus, some will select unqualified men and reject the qualified. Yet, the selection of these men is to please God rather than man. 4) Everything about the selective procedure should be motivated by love. 5) Every member must do his own thinking and make his own judgment on who should be selected. 6) The selection process should not be viewed as an

election or with the attitude "whoever gets the most votes wins."

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE FOR SELECTING AND APPOINTING

1) *Proper preparation*

A church that hurriedly selects and appoints an eldership may be heading for a disaster. A series needs to be taught or preached on the qualifications, authority, and duties of the elders. Any doctrinal or moral problems which would hinder this procedure should be discussed and overcome.

2) *Prayer*

When Barsabbas and Mathias were put forth to replace Judas, the apostles prayed for Divine assistance (Ac. 1:24). Prayer should dominate every step of the procedure when selecting elders. A congregation needs to pray for wisdom and courage. We need to pray for the ones under consideration.

3) *Nominations should be taken from the whole church*

The preacher or the present eldership should not be the only ones who submit the names of men to be considered for appointment. To cut off the congregation or any part of it from the selection process would be unscriptural.

First, individuals should try to talk to the nominee about his possibility of serving. If a man doesn't want you to nominate him and has a good reason then don't. Such nomination can be written on a piece of paper and signed. Someone should be appointed to receive the nominations and tabulate them.

4) *The nominees should be announced*

First, the men who have been nominated should be notified. This will give them a chance to decline. Next, all the nominees should be announced to the congregation. Such would provide them with the opportunity to consider and ask questions of these men.

5) *Each nominee should be put to the test to see if they are qualified.*

In 1 Timothy 3:10 Paul wrote, "*But let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless*" The implication of the word

"also" is that elders are to be tested according to the preceding qualifications before they can be appointed. The Greek word used here conveys the thought of being found acceptable through thorough testing.

Every member should receive a sheet of paper with the qualifications listed for each man still under consideration. The sheet of paper should list all of the qualifications. Some qualifications will be easy to answer, such as, "*a man*". Beside each qualification should be three boxes or lines for the member to check one. The first line would be checked if the nominee has the particular qualification. The second line would be checked if the member felt that the man did not possess the specified qualification. If the member didn't know whether or not the man had the particular quality he would check the last line or box. Every member should make every possible effort to find out the answer before they fill out the list. These should be signed and kept confidential. This would help eliminate someone taking pot-shots at the nominees. Thus, a trustworthy member needs to collect and tabulate the results.

6) *Time needs to be given for objections to be considered*

If someone questions whether he can conscientiously obey and submit to a certain nominee he should meet with the man to see if the difficulty can be resolved. Many objections will turn out to be misunderstandings or otherwise easily answered. All objections should first be discussed privately. No candidate's qualifications or lack of them should be debated publicly. Those nominees who are considered qualified to serve as the elders are to be considered as the congregations choice from among them.

7) *Formal appointing*

After the final selection has been made by the congregation some serious appointment service should be held. This is not optional, but scripturally mandated (Ac. 14:23; Tit. 1:5; Ac. 6:3). The congregation needs to know exactly who is to be their shepherds. The men need to know that they have been given this responsibility to serve and when they are to begin.

Again, God has not mentioned any specific way in which this appointing is to be done. Some congregations simply make an announcement to notify the members who will be elders. However, a formal recognition could prove far more expedient. The following points are recommended for such an event: 1) It would be very appropriate for the preacher to conduct this service (Tit. 1:5; Ac. 14:23). 2) The men should be introduced to the congregation and identify

them by name. 3) Much prayer should be rendered as these men begin their service (Ac. 6:6; 14:23). 4) Fasting was even used by Paul and Barnabas to demonstrate the seriousness of this occasion (Ac. 14:23; Mt. 9:14,17). 5) The phrase “*laying on of hands*” occurs several times in the New Testament meaning: to arrest (Ac. 4:3); to take hold of, Ac. 5:18); to impart spiritual gifts by the apostles (Ac. 6:6; 8:17,18); to heal the sick miraculously (Ac. 28:8; and to appoint or designate to a work or position, Ac. 13:3; I Tm. 4:14). In this case it was for the reason as a gesture to publicly demonstrate that one was being appointed or set apart for the special function. Applying such to this service would merely publicly indicate to the people who is to function as elder. 6) The preacher could read select passages reminding them of the duties of elders and reminding them of the responsibility of the congregation to the elders. 7) If an eldership already exist then one elder should make a few comments of recognition of the newly appointed elder(s).

CONCLUSION

The selection of elders is a very serious duty of each local congregation. Much care and prayer must be given in such an occasion. Furthermore, the appointment of elders was been primarily given to evangelist of New Testament times. Although if an evangelist does not exist in the congregation this responsibility should be taken up by a faithful leader in the congregation. Just selecting men to serve is not enough, these men must be publicly recognized and identified before the congregation.

REVIEW

1. List some reasons why many congregations are without elders?

2. How does the Holy Spirit make elders today?

3. What would be wrong with the eldership selecting and appointing additional elders without the participation of the congregation?

4. What is the distinction between selecting and appointing elders?

5. T F The appointing of elders is strictly a duty of apostles.

6. What are some guidelines evangelists should use when appointing elders?

7. T F God has given us specific instruction on every detail as to the method of selecting and appointment of elders.

8. List some “must” in the manner of selecting elders.

9. What are some of the things a congregation can do in preparation for selecting elders?

10. What did the apostles do just prior to selecting and appointing ?

11. T F Nominations should be taken from the whole congregation.

12. Is there scriptural authority for putting elders to the test? If so, what is the standard for this testing?
13. How should objections to a nominee's qualifications be handled?
14. What are some things which can be included in a formal appointment of elders?
15. T F A congregation cannot appoint elders if it lacks an evangelist.

REALM OF AUTHORITY

Preachers during sermons ask the question, “*how much authority do elders have?*” Then they go to the board and write a big “0” on it, and insist that elders do not have any authority. However, left unqualified, such statements are contrary to scripture. Elders do have authority. It is delegated authority. The authority comes from the head of the church, Jesus Christ. He has “*all authority in heaven and earth*” (Mt. 28:18). It is true, no authority rests in the eldership in and of itself. The only authority they have is derived from Christ.

Elders may be rendered unscriptural by failure to know the limits of their authority. Most apostasies have come about because elders have failed to know or practice the truth on this subject (Acts 20:29,30). When elders exercise any other authority than that set forth by the Lord in His Word, they have perverted the office and disqualified themselves as bishops.



Greece of overseers or guardians in general, or of municipal and financial officers. In Athens the commissioners who regulate the colonies and subject states were called “*episkopoi*.” This information tells us that authority inheres in the office of an overseer. 1) There are things to be done by others. 2) These must be done right. 3) Overseers must see that things are done right by others. 4) Overseers have authority and responsibility from God to carry out these things.

The word for “*shepherd*” also implies authority. The word “*poiman*” is defined “*a shepherd, one who tends herds or flocks, not merely one who feeds, but one who tends, guides, nourishes, cherishes, and rules, etc.*” (Bullinger, p. 574). This term demonstrates their positional authority. 1) Christ as Chief Shepherd. 2) Elders as Shepherds. 3) Congregation as flock of sheep. When shepherds see one of the flock straying toward a precipice, do they not have any authority to prevent a fatal fall? When they see a wolf devouring the lambs must he watch without authority (i.e., the right or power to act) to try to stop it? This term does not leave us with the notion that the sheep make the decisions and the shepherd follows them, but rather he leads and directs the flock as well as protects and feeds them.

Finally, the term “*oikonomos*” translated “*steward*” in Titus 1:7 demonstrates authority in the position. Thayer says, “*the manager of a household or a household affairs; especially a steward, manager, superintendent...to whom the head of the house or proprietor has intrusted management of his affairs to the care of receipts and expenditures...a bishop (or overseer) is called ‘oikonomos theou’ - of God, as the head and master of the Christian theocracy*” (440,441). An eldership is given all the authority necessary to carry out this special stewardship. An elder is an administrator of God’s house.

SCRIPTURAL PROOF OF AUTHORITY

► ***Their names demonstrate their authority***

The Greek term *presbuteros* is translated “elder” and “presbyter.” This term primarily means one of age and experience. It was understood by the Jew to signify civic as well as religious officials. It requires that one is old enough to have the wisdom and experience necessary to make the right decisions.

The same can be said of authority residing in the term “*overseer*.” Thayer defines the word “*episkopos*” as “*an overseer, a man in charge with...seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent, head or overseer of any Christian church*” (p. 243). The term was used in Egypt of the officer of a temple, in

► ***Their work demonstrates their authority***

In 1 Timothy 3:5 and 5:17 elders are to rule over the church. Rule is defined “*to stand before, be over, preside, rule, as with care and diligence*” (Bellinger, 653). Thayer defines the term “rule over” and used in Hebrews 13:17 as “*to lead, to go before, to be a leader; to rule...command; to have AUTHORITY over; a prince, of regal power, a governor, viceroy, chief; leading as respects influence, controlling in counsel; ...the overseers or leaders of Christian*

churches" (276). The same Greek word (*hegeomai*) is used of Pilate as Roman governor over Judea in Matthew 27:2 and of Joseph as second in command over all Egypt in Acts 7:10. Certainly the use of this term by the Holy Spirit shows that elders have authority over the church. Again in 1 Timothy 3:5 they are to "take care of the church." Bullinger defines this "have the management of; solicitude expressed in forethought or the employment of means for a desired result" (134). "This is the very term used to show the service that the good Samaritan rendered to the injured man on the Jericho Road and what he paid the inn keeper to provide the injured man on his way" (Taylor, 106). Also, the terms "watch" (Heb. 13:17), "feed or tend" (Ac. 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2,3), and "protect" (Ac. 20:29-31) clearly, depict a work requiring authority.

► **New Testament examples of their authority**

In Acts 11:27-30 benevolent money is sent to the needy saints in Judea by the hands of Paul and Barnabas. The money was to be given to the elders of the congregations in Judea. Why did they send this relief to the elders if elders have no authority? The fact is the elders did have authority. They had responsibility to determine how the relief was to be distributed among the needy saints. When there was a controversy over circumcision and the Gentile converts, the elders and the apostles met in Jerusalem to determine the matter. The Jerusalem elders are mentioned right along side of the apostles (Ac. 15:5,6). They came to a decision based upon the Truth (Acts 15:22). The elders concurred with the inspired apostles. This is how decisions by elders are to be made today.

► **Duties of members shows their authority.**

According to Hebrews 13:17 the members are to obey and submit to the elders. Obey means "to listen to, obey, yield to; comply with..." (Thayer, 497). This same Greek word (*peitho*) is used in James 3:3 in reference to the response the horse gives to the directions of the rider. Authority resides in the bit by which the rider controls the horse. Submit is defined as "to resist no longer, but to give way, yield, to yield to AUTHORITY and admonition, to submit" (Thayer, 638). Authority resides in the eldership in which members must obey and submit. If they have no authority then why are we told to esteem them highly for their works sake (1 Th. 5:12,13) and honor and support them financially in their work (1 Tim. 5:17)? As they exercise their authority in doing their work members should appropriately recognize their

authority.

SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

► ***Authority does not emanate from the eldership.***

One man was appointed "acting elder" by the "real elder" to serve while the real elder was away on vacation. Elders do not have the right to delegate authority in this manner. Authority is not passed down from elder to elder or eldership to eldership. Such authoritarians are condemned in the Bible (3 Jn. 9,10; 2 Th. 2:3,4). Christ has all authority in the church (Eph. 1:21-23). He makes elders through the Holy Spirit (Ac. 20:28). To be an elder one has to be scripturally appointed (Ac. 14:23; Tit. 1:5).

► ***Authority does not come from the congregation.***

It is the Holy Spirit that makes elders, not the congregation. The Holy Spirit makes them today by giving us their qualifications and giving them their authority and their work via the Word of God. Christ, the Chief Shepherd, has given them the authority to shepherd, not the congregation (1 Pet. 5:4). In a sense elders only have authority if the congregation has selected them to so serve as elders. Human agency is necessarily involved in making them overseers according to the Spirit revealed qualifications. It is true that the church must obey and submit in order to give their authority any substance (Heb. 13:17). However, the congregation doesn't hand down their decisions for the elders. Elders are not overseen by the congregation, but are the overseers of the congregation. This view would make elders mere puppets of the congregation.

► ***Authority does not come from a preacher.***

Some elders feel they have to ask the preacher's permission before they do anything. They wait around for instruction and guidance from the preacher before getting busy with their work. Once a preacher admonished an elder for his continued refusal to tend to the needs of the wayward sheep in the small congregation. The elder replied, "But you never told us we needed to go see these people." God, the Chief Shepherd, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles had already authorized him to go. No elder needs a preacher's instructions to do their work when Christ has clearly

authorized His shepherds to perform. It is true that a preacher may be involved in the selection and appointment process, but this is by no means equivalent to giving the elders their authority.

► *Authority is given by Christ.*

Christ has been given all authority in the church (Eph. 1:22,23; Col. 1:18; Mt. 28:18). He is God and authority inheres in God. He is the Primary source of all authority. Christ has the right to delegate it to the elders. As Chief Shepherd the local shepherds must give an account to Him (1 Pet. 5:4). Christ delegates the responsibility and realm of authority, to qualified men.

NATURE OF AUTHORITY

► *Elders cannot make laws.*

The two areas in church authority may be exercised: 1) Divine Law - making of law 2) human judgment - deciding things in agreement with the Divine Law and guiding in harmony with it. Elders have been given no legislative abilities. They rule as executors in the spiritual realm. They merely carry out the law of Christ, the only Lawgiver (Js. 4:12).

► *Two false views of the nature of their authority.*

The first of these false concepts: "Elders have no authority in matters of judgment, they rule only in spiritual matters." Why then have so many qualifications been given relating to their judgment abilities? This would make the church a democracy or governed by majority rule in matters of judgment. This view calls for arbitrary and indefinable distinctions. Some say that any other way would allow the elders to lord it over the flock by allowing them to bind their opinions. However, wouldn't a business meeting be doing the same thing? God did not put elders in charge of spiritual affairs while deacons in charge of the physical affairs of the church as some contend. The apostles told the seven in Acts 6:1-6 to make judgment calls in the work of benevolence. The elders do the same in Acts 11:29,30, when the elders *distribute the relief sent for the needy saints*. 2) *"Elders have absolute authority in matters of judgment, no authority in the spiritual realm."* This would make them lords of the flock (1 Pet. 5:2). *Elders may have the final say in matters of judgment,*

but not absolute authority.

► *Elders have authority in both matters of faith and judgment.*

The Bible makes no distinction between spiritual and physical parts of the work of the church. Unless some exception can be made from the Word elders oversee the church in both matters. In matters of faith - things specified - elders must follow the Word. For example, God said that we are to sing (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19) in worship to Him. Elders could not authorize the playing of instrumental music in worship. In matters of faith, the elders are to teach, render decisions, and settle doctrinal disputes based on the Word of God. In matters of judgment - things generically authorized - elders must be guided by their wisdom experience, and the Word to make the best choice from all available expedients. Remember, all expedients must first be lawful (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23). For example, the elders in a congregation might decide to have a man come in and teach the young men how to lead singing. This is generically authorized and lawful. However, were they to hire an organist to come in to play the organ to assist the singing they would be without authority. Such is not expedient because it is not lawful. It is not a matter of judgment or opinion. Other examples of matters of judgment are: hour of worship on Sunday, order of worship, number of times we meet, color of paint for the classroom walls, and who is to teach a special class in the home of a weak member, etc.

SCOPE OF AUTHORITY

► *Authority limited to the local congregation.*

The key word is "among". *"Shepherd the flock of God AMONG you..."* (1 Pet. 5:2). *"Be on the 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"* (Ac. 20:28). Note, they have authority over the flock, not flocks. They are appointed over the church, not churches (Ac. 14:23; Tit. 1:7). This would exclude the following: 1) elders over another church or churches, 2) elders over a human institution, 3) elders over an unauthorized work, and 4) elders trying to oversee the secular or private aspects of the members' lives. Except as these affect the persons' relationship to God and the reputation of the church.

► *Specific areas of authority in the local church.*

They are over everything that pertains to the work and worship of the church (Ac. 20:28). They oversee everything that affects the souls of the members of the local flock (Heb. 13:17). The elders are over: 1) the worship assembly, but not limited to just the assembly and those who assemble. Neither are they just responsible for the building. 2) The teaching program (Eph. 4:11,12). 3) The discipline of the members walking disorderly. 4) The benevolent needs of the members and benevolence going out to other needy saints (Ac. 11:27-30; 2 Cor. 8:9; Rom. 15:2; 2 Cor. 11:8,9). 5) All those who are members of the congregation (Ac. 20:28). An elder once preached a lesson in which he stated that elders are not over the membership of a local church only over the conduct of the members. 6) The work and growth of the church (Eph. 4:11,12). 7) The sick, the shut-ins, weak and way-ward members (Js. 4:14; Ac. 20:32-35; Tit. 1:9). As the eldership functions in these various areas it must be careful not to violate church autonomy. Autonomy means "the right to self-government; a self-governing state, an independent body." They could never delegate any part of their oversight to any other eldership or human organization. For example, elders have no authority to delegate their duties in benevolence to a benevolent institution; their teaching program to a college; or their responsibility in evangelism to a sponsoring church.

► *Violations of the scope of authority*

Elderships can violate their God given scope of authority in many ways. Most if not all of these violations will result in the destruction of the local church's autonomy. 1) An elder making decisions for the rest of the elders of the congregation. The oversight of the flock does not belong to one man. No authority resides in one elder, but in the eldership. Elders must make up their own mind on all issues. Several years ago when I first started preaching I had the opportunity to speak to an elder of a congregation where they were practicing things contrary to God's Word. I discovered that this elder believed the truth and saw that his congregation was in error. When I asked him why he permitted such to continue he responded that he was only one of three elders and thus had to go along with the other two on this. Although an elder cannot make decisions for the congregation on his own he still must obey God, not his fellow-elders. 2) A congregation's blind acceptance of the leaders authority can also be a serious problem. Members will say such things as

"Whatever the elders decide we must accept, we must obey them" or "The elders have decided to contribute to Abilene Christian University and we must obey them even if they are wrong, for they will have to answer to God." A college president said to an assembly of preachers that he believed an eldership could do anything it wanted to as long as they believed it to be a "good" work. According to 1 Timothy 5:19-21 members are to rebuke elders who are found guilty of sin. Paul warned the Ephesian overseers that of their own number men would arise leading God's flock astray (Ac. 20:29-31). 3) When an eldership accepts the oversight of another church.

"The Jerusalem eldership therefore was not over a group of people who met together in one location, but over a group of people who met in various locations. Information about the church in Ephesus in the second century indicates that the church there likewise had various groups under one eldership. If we had a church like the Jerusalem church in the inner city today, we would have meetings in the various places, but one eldership residing in the inner city...Being of some number under one eldership it would have a more united effort in working for justice" (Thomas H. Obricht, MISSION, Oct. 1968).

This view has led the elders of one congregation taking over the complete oversight of other congregations. A report from Africa tells about the elders of a church in the United States overseeing a church in Africa. This view is also revealed in a statement from a church bulletin. "...the work among the colored brethren, presents one of our finest challenges...the Sunset eldership, with your approval and encouragement has assumed the oversight of the good work...the elders have agreed to assume the oversight of the Graza Ave. Congregation..." The Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio wrote in their bulletin, "the leaders of the Grove Avenue church approached the Oak Hill elders about assuming the oversight of that congregation. Our elders accepted this responsibility..so, effective March 1, 1970 the Oak Hills church will assume responsibility for the work at Grove Ave." A blatant example of an eldership failing to comprehend the scope of their authority is further seen in the following statement from a newspaper: "You'll want to know about our autonomy...The Riverchase work will be under the supervision of the Central Church of Christ elders until such time it becomes self-supporting. At this point the Elders and Deacons for the Riverchase congregation will be

appointed" (Birmingham News, "Religion today", 10/13/79, p. 22). Such demonstrates their complete ignorance about church autonomy. No authority for this can be gleaned from a single page in all the New Testament. Not one command, approved example, or necessary inference can be found where an eldership had the oversight of a plurality of congregations.

4) Elderships that oversee human institutions violate God's Pattern of church organization. In the Feb. 1972 issue of the Pepperdine News, a publication of Pepperdine University, was the following: "The Crenshaw Church of Christ has agreed to take the oversight of Pepperdine's Campus Advance for Christ, it was announced Sunday. The church will assume legal responsibility for the CA program on the Vermont campus..." In 1952 the elders of the Highlands church in Abilene, Texas, accepted the oversight of a program called the Herald of Truth. The Holy Spirit made elders over God's flock, but never did He give them any authority or right to be over a man made organization.

5) Elderships overseeing preachers while these preachers are working in foreign lands as members of a different congregation are without authority.

6) Other elderships unscripturally transfer funds to the oversight of another eldership. What part of their oversight can elders delegate to another congregation? Does this include the funds of the local church? A local church is to be independent, autonomous, equal, and self-sufficient (Ac. 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2,3). Much authority can be found in the Bible for elders to delegate all their members, discipline, worship, work, etc. as can be found for them to delegate their funds to a Sponsoring Church. When an eldership delegates any part of its local congregation to a sponsoring church they forfeit their ability to see that things are done rightly. In other words, they cease to be elders. They have given away the local church's autonomy and made it dependent upon and unequal to the Sponsoring Church.

7) Finally, we look at the false assumption that some elderships have that their authority is only over the assembly and those assembled. Some elders believe the word "among" in 1 Peter 5:2 and Acts 20:28 means "*the assembly and those assembled*." Therefore, the scope of their authority extends only to those who are physically present at worship services and exists so long as they are assembled. However, elders are responsible for the sick (Js. 4:13). If this view be true then elders would not be responsible for those who are sick and unable to attend worship

services. According to Acts 20:28, 35 elders are to help the weak among them. If a spiritually weak member fails to attend services do not the elders have a responsibility toward him? In Acts 11:29, 30 elders were to distribute relief funds to needy saints. Would not this require them to go from house to house in accomplishing this task? Good shepherds are responsible for the sheep gone astray (1 Pet. 5:2,3; Mt. 18:12-14). If this view is correct than an elder could say, "I only have authority concerning the sheep which is among us, therefore I am not responsible for the lost sheep." All elders must watch and give an account for all the souls even those who have ceased to attend (1 Tim. 3:4; Heb. 13:17).

PROPER MANNER OF EXERCISING AUTHORITY

► *They are not to lord it over the flock.*

1 Peter 5:2,3 says, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock," The word "lording" here is from the word "katakuriuo" meaning "Kata (according to, against) and Kurieus (to lord), to exercise dominion against someone i.e. to one's own advantage" (Roerster, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, III, 1098). It is tyrannical manipulation without the permission or consent of the one being ruled. When an elder becomes inconsiderate, selfish, and seeks to enforce their own preferences without regard to the congregation he is lording it over the flock. One elder upon accepting appointment said, "I just want to say, if there is anyone that thinks we don't have elders now, just let him try to start something."

► *They must set a proper example.*

A "do as I say, not as I do" attitude will not work. Elders cannot tell the people to get to work if they themselves have been negligent. The congregation may obey, but find it hard to submit to such men (Heb. 13:17). Good leaders practice show and tell. They not only tell the congregation what is to be done, but they show them how it is done in their own lives.

► *They must do their duty willingly.*

An elder who does his work grudgingly will do it half-heartedly. An elder who does not desire the work will leave the work undone. Some men in positions of leadership in this world are unwilling to

wield their authority. They fail because of fear, apathy, or simply not wishing to offend others. This is a real problem for the church when its eldership is unwilling to exercise its God-given authority.

CONCLUSION

We have established several fact concerning the authority of elders in this lesson. Plenty of evidence exists for the authority of the eldership. Their names and work demonstrates their authority. The members are commanded to recognize their authority, therefore, they must have authority. New Testament examples prove they have authority. An elder's authority comes from Christ, not other elders, the congregation, or the preacher. Elders have authority in both matters of faith and judgment. However, elders have no authority to make laws. The scope of their authority is limited to the local congregation. We have discovered there is a multitude of ways in which elderships have overstepped the bounds of their authority. Finally, we learned that God had prescribed the proper manner in which they are to exercise their authority. Any elder or eldership must be familiar with this lesson.

REVIEW

1. Show how the following names demonstrate authority.

Elder:

Overseer:

Shepherd:

2. List several words for the work of elders which also imply authority.

3. List the responsibilities the members are to have toward the elders which demonstrate their authority.

4. What is and is not the source of an elder's authority?

5. T F Elders have no authority in matters of judgment.

6. T F Elders have absolute authority in matters of judgment, no authority in the spiritual realm.

7. What are some specific areas where the elders have authority in the local church?

8. Which passage limits an elderships' realm of authority to just their local congregation?

9. T F No authority resides in one elder, but in the eldership.

10. T F Members must obey whatever the elders say.

11. Give an example of an eldership over a man-made organization.

12. What happens whenever an eldership delegates a part of its oversight to a sponsoring church?

13. List some passages which show that elders are not over just the assembly and those who assemble.

14. Give the three proper ways in which they are to exercise authority.

15. Describe some ways in which elder can “lord it over a flock”.

DUTY OF ELDERS: DECISION-MAKERS

Three terms describe the men who lead the church and also their work. These terms (elder, overseer, and shepherd) are not just honorary titles but each name implies a work to be done by the one who wears the name. "Elder" implies that the wearer of this title be a decision-maker. The term "overseer" describes the work of an administrator. The job of counseling, teaching, general care for the flock inheres in "shepherd".

All organizations require decision-makers. The United States government has the president, congress, and the supreme court as its decision-makers. Corporations often use a board of directors to make decisions. In the home, the husband as the head has been divinely ordained to make the decisions. For each local church God has delegated to the elders the responsibility of making the decisions.

It is a most unfortunate trend, but many elderships have ceased to function as decision-makers. One elder in California said, "we elders seem to function in a brotherhood where Buildings, Bulletins, Budgets, and Burials mostly consume us." It has been said that leaders fall into three groups: Those who make things happen; those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened. Far too many elderships fall into the last two categories.

DECISION-MAKING IS IN THE TERM "ELDER"

In the Old Testament the term "elder" applied to a decision-maker. To assist Moses in judging the people elders were appointed (Ex. 18:13-27).

"Elders among the Jews were the rulers of the

people, prominent men who took the lead in directing and controlling affairs. The elders of a city corresponded to our councilmen, just as we now call them 'city fathers'. The elders of the people were their representatives and rulers in the government and management of affairs pertaining to the public welfare. As an official term, therefore, the word expresses the idea of a government by men of age, prominence, experience, and wisdom." (W.L. Hayden, Church Polity, p. 51).



During the New Testament period elders were decision-makers. Ironically, the decisions the Jewish elders made in this period were wicked ones. They made decisions involving the persecution and crucifixion of Christ (Mt. 26:59; 27:20,41). Historians tell us that Greek society also used this concept of elders as decision-makers. "Among the Greeks, also there were elders who were men of experience and wisdom who were held in honor among their fellows. Thus, both Jews and Greeks who were converted to Christ could readily understand and accept the functioning of elders in the church" (Charles Moore, Functioning Leadership in the Church, p. 4).

Elders made decisions in the early church. They made decisions regarding the distribution of benevolence to needy saints (Ac. 11:29,30). They made decisions regarding Gentile Christians being circumcised (Ac. 15:2,4,6,19,20,22). It should be noted that these elders arrived at the right decision by concurring with the inspired apostles. New Testament elders also made decisions on whom to delegate responsibility (1 Tim. 4:14).

NECESSITY OF MAKING DECISIONS

Decision-making has always been a task of God's people. Joshua demanded the people of Israel to make their decision on who they are going to follow, God or false gods. *"And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the*

Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"(Josh. 24:15). Elijah condemned the people for their wishy-washy attitude toward making this same decision. "And Elijah came to all the people, and said, 'How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him' But the people answered him not a word"(1 Kgs. 18:21). Likewise today, there are decisions that must be made.

Failure of elderships to make decisions will lead to many serious problems. Many elderships are like the man on the way to the camp meeting grounds. He came through town and asked some people if they had seen a group of people heading toward the camp meeting grounds. They told him that such a group had passed through town about four hours earlier. The man then said, "I have to hurry to catch up with them. I am their leader." Elders need to be in the lead guiding by way of their decisions. People are lost without decision-makers. *"Where there is no council, the people fall, but in multitude of counselors there is safety"* (Pr. 11:14). *"Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established"* (Pr. 15:22). *"For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in the multitude of counselors there is safety"*(Pr. 24:6). Failure to make decisions on doctrinal matters may lead to serious trouble (Tit. 1:9).

MANNER OF MAKING DECISIONS

► *Improper ways of making decisions.*

Many wrong ways exist in which to arrive at a decision. These are given so that elderships and all Christians can avoid them. 1) Decisions that are made in haste just to get things out of the way. 2) Some decisions are made on the basis of personal intuition. "I just feel right about it." 3) Decisions are made at times just to please others. This is done so as not to "rock the boat" or to retain their popularity with certain members of the congregation. 4) Other decisions result by following the path of least resistance. Usually this allows the majority to rule. 5) The "passing the buck" method of decision-making is used effectively by some elders. They keep passing it around like some hot potato hoping that it will get lost in the shuffle. 6) "Keep the peace at any cost" is the attitude expressed by some. The trouble makers usually win when this method is employed. 7)

Occasions come up when decisions are made due to some selfish motive on the part of the leadership. 8) Decisions have been known to result through pressure tactics. 9) The lazy way to make decisions is by default. By failing to make a decision, in reality, a decision has been made. 10) Always taking the safe way may sound effective, but is not a productive way of making decisions.

► *Facts about decision-making.*

Here we consider ten points that need to be remembered in order for decisions to be appropriately made. 1) You will make some wrong decisions. The challenge is not to make the same one twice. 2) Always try to make your decisions out of a positive frame of mind. When you are down or discouraged, if possible, try to avoid making major decisions. 3) Have a spirit of expectancy. 4) Never make the mistake of looking back and dwelling in the past. 5) Good decisions come from know-how. Know-how comes from study and practice. 6) All decisions are building blocks. One good decision opens doors of opportunity to make many more and more effect decisions. 7) Decisions are organizers. They help eliminate confusion and procrastination. 8) The best decisions require vision. "A leader sees three things: What ought to be done, what can be done, and how to do it." 9) No one elder rules the entire program of the church. One elder rule and one elder decisions are unscriptural. Authority resides in the eldership not one man. It must be the eldership as a whole that functions as the decision-making body for the church. 10) Almost always the quality of the decision is more important than the speed of the decision. Elderships should never use the "management by crises" approach. They make all their decisions in emergency meetings conducted in the aisles after the services or they make their decisions in a series of telephone calls. Many benefits of group interaction are lost. A few matters might be decided in a huddle, but no serious and in depth plans can be worked out to benefit the church.

► *Proper manner of decision-making*

Consider the many good points to keep in mind which will prove helpful in making proper decisions. 1) Gather as many facts as possible. Consider the two main reasons why many elders are inefficient in their decision-making. First, they do not properly prepare for meetings. Second, they do not conduct the elders' meetings in an orderly manner. 2) Remember the power of prayer. Making good decisions require wisdom. Wisdom is acquired through prayer (Js. 1:5).

Elders need always to begin their meetings with prayer. Ask God to guide you through your rational and logical thought processes. 3) Study your Bible to see if God has already made the decision for you. 4) Try to be deliberate, if possible, keep your emotions out of decision-making. 5) Be specific and write down in a clear sentence what you want the result of your decision to be. 6) If possible set a time limit. "I will give you an answer on..." 7) Make up your mind. Wishy-washy decisions are not decisions. 8) Ask yourself this question, "What is the worst possible thing that could happen if I make this decision?" 9) Write down the pros and cons. 10) Sleep on the matter. 11) Do not be afraid of challenges and hard work. 12) Do not jump to conclusions that are not decisions. A lady invited some friends over for a mushroom and steak dinner. When she opened the can of mushrooms, they looked a little funny. The guests were coming soon, and she didn't have time to drive to the grocery store for more. She decided to give the dog a little, to see if he liked it. The dog gulped it down and begged for more, so she figured the mushrooms were all right, and went ahead and served them with the steak. After the main course, the maid whispered to her employer, "Ma'am, the dog is dead." Well, there was only one thing to do. Sometime later the guests were reclining after the use of the stomach pump. The lady asked the maid, "Where is the dog now?" "Out beside the road," she answered, "where he fell after the car hit him." 13) Never ride the middle of the road. Stop being neutral. The only thing found in the middle of the road are dead skunks and indecisive church members. 14) If you make a wrong decision bounce back and start again. 15) You must be willing to accept the responsibility for your decisions.

COMMUNICATING DECISIONS

► *Importance of communicating decisions.*

Some elderships feel that it is better not to inform the members of their decisions. This makes them like overlords, not informing the people of their plans, purposes or programs. They say: "Don't let the church know what is going on, but we expect them to back us and our decisions anyway". The members would complain: "We never know what is going on. They never communicate about the program of work and we are never informed of the decisions until they

are made. Then required to carry them out with zeal." Some elders are silent because they harbor a fear of trouble that is close to paranoia. Elders are not the CIA or secret service portion of the church. The members should not only know what is "going on", but why it is "going on". Elders who keep the church well informed of plans, problems and affairs receive better cooperation.

The early church was made aware of the decisions of the elders. Furthermore, it can be evidenced that the members of the congregation assisted in decision-making. The decision in Acts 11:26-30 was made by *"every man."* In Acts 13:1-3 and 14:26-28 show that the whole church was gathered together for a particular work or endeavor. Paul tells of an epistle that was to be read "in the church" (Col. 4:16. Ac. 11:22). Other passage speaks of the "ears of the church" at Jerusalem. Acts 12:5 speaks of prayer being made "of the church". Both Romans 16:23 and 2 Cor. 8:19 speak of messengers who were *"chosen of the churches"*. Paul wrote to the church of God at Corinth, "Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters..." (1 Cor. 16:3). Concerning the matter of church discipline Jesus said, *"tell it to the church"*, (Mt. 18:17). Also Paul showed the involvement of the church as a whole in the matter of church discipline, *"When you are gathered together,"* (1 Cor. 5:4).

What the elders decide affects every member and their spiritual condition. These decisions need to be communicated to the congregation. After Nehemiah informed the Jews of his plans, he stimulated them to serve by saying, "let us rise up and build (Neh. 2:17).

Remember, communication is a two way street. Information flows like water. It flows downward with natural ease. However, flowing upward is very difficult, and requires a great deal of extra effort. The members' communication with the elders requires added effort on the part of the eldership. In order for communications to flow properly in both directions elders must create adequate channels of communication.

Proper communication helps to eliminate and avoid many problems. 1) Helps limit gossip. 2) Helps to limit confusion. Members know what is expected of them and what others might be doing. 3) It comforts the members. They know they are being taken care of. 4) Creates a mutual respect. 5) Allows the members to help. 6) Prevents the members from thinking that the elders are being negligent their decision-making. 7) Last, but by no means least, it is good to surface any disagreements over the decisions made. It is not good to stifle the expression of dissent in the

congregation. Bottled up feelings, hurt, anger or resentment can be explosive. Elders need to be loving and patient enough to want to give ear to any disagreements.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATING DECISIONS

Several effective and expedient ways can be utilized in which the elders can inform the members of their decisions. Which ever method is used elders need to avoid information overload. An important communication rule is "K.I.S.S." meaning "Keep It Short and Simple." Members need to be informed about matters under consideration, but not every little detail. 1) The first vehicle that can be utilized to transport important information to the members could be called "Communication Meetings." In some congregations when elders are appointed, business meetings are no longer needed for decision-making. However, communication meetings can be used to keep the congregation informed. 2) Some churches use an "Elders' Page" in the bulletin to help keep members informed. 3) Making Elders' Meeting Minutes available has proven helpful. This should include all essential details, but care needs to be taken not to include private details on confidential matters. 4) Flavil Yealey in his book CHURCH LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATION suggests the use of Elder/Member Conferences.

"Suppose that there are 300 families represented in a local congregation and eight elders could split up into four two man teams and conduct four 45 minute meetings each Sunday afternoon, starting at 1:30 and ending at 4:30 for a total of 16 such elder/member conferences each Sunday afternoon. In these meetings, the elders can ask how the members are doing, how they are growing spiritually, what problems they may be having, what works they are involved in, and how they feel about various programs of work in the church (Yeakley, p. 49). 5) *Elders have also used their homes to have people over to show them hospitality and to discuss matters they are dealing with. Elders need to be careful not to show partiality in this area.*

GETTING THE CONGREGATION INVOLVED

The early church members assisted in the decision-making process as was demonstrated in Acts 6:1-6 and other passages previously mentioned. Today, all the members are needed to assist elders in their decision-making. The scriptures have shown that not all the work, the decisions, the needs, the responsibilities, and the endeavors of the church are decided in the back room in some elders' meeting. When the congregation is involved they can say "This is our work" instead of "This is what the elders told us to do." The best possible decisions are made by elders who get all the help they can from the congregation, because they are aided by a variety of ideas. Special meetings with the preacher, deacons, teachers or other groups to deal with areas connected with their duties result in healthy productive decisions. Elders need to visit in the homes of members seeking comments, criticisms, questions and suggestions concerning the work.

Two extremes need to be avoided. 1) Elderships who do not allow the congregation any part in the decision-making process. 2) Elders who have to be pushed, prodded and hounded by the members to make any decisions.

To whatever extent the congregation is involved they need to remember that the elders have the final say in the decision-making process. This includes decisions concerning financial matters (Ac. 11:29,30); doctrinal matters (Ac. 15:1-22; Tit. 1:9); members (Ac. 9:26); and especially in matters of judgment and opinion. The members do have one alternative if they believe the elders' decision(s) to be unscriptural. They must rebuke them publicly if the matter is confirmed by two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19-21). Remember, the Chief Shepherd ultimately has the final say in all decisions.

CONCLUSION

Making decisions is not an easy task. It requires experience, wisdom, patience, etc. God has placed this awesome responsibility in the hands of the elders. They need to strive to perfect their performance in making decisions. The members need

to assist them, obey them, and submit to the decisions they have made.

"If an eldership will start to keep the members more fully informed, get more input from the members before they make their decisions, do more to prepare for their meetings, and conduct their meetings in a more orderly manner - several good results will follow: 1) The quality of their decisions will improve greatly. 2) They will spend much less time in their decision-making meetings. 3) They will have more time to function as overseers and shepherds. 4) The members will be more involved; and the church will begin to grow. (Yeakley, p. 77).

7. Explain the "management by crisis" approach.

8. Explain how all decisions are building blocks.

9. Some helpful decision making habits are a) write down the pros, but not the cons b) sleep on the matter c) jump to conclusions d) study to see if God has already made the decision.

10. How can prayer help decision-making?

REVIEW

1. T F Elders have the God given duty of making the decisions in the local church.

2. What were the duties of elders in the Old Testament?

3. T F The Greek concept of an elder referred only to aged men.

4. What kind of problems can result when elderships fail to make decisions?

5. Who usually benefits when elders make decisions based on the "keep the peace at any cost" attitude?

6. What is the lazy way of making decisions?

11. T F Some elders do not communicate with the congregation because of fear.

12. List some of the positive things that result from proper communication.

13. What are "Communication Meetings"?

14. T F The elder's Meeting Minutes should include every decision and item of discussion when it is made available to the congregation.

15. How could elder-member conferences be helpful?

16. T F The best possible decisions are made when elders get all the help they need from the members.

17. What two extremes need to be avoided?

18. What can a congregation do if they feel their elders have made an unscriptural decision?

19. T F The Chief shepherd ultimately has the final say in all decisions.

20. List verses showing that the early church either knew of or assisted in decisions.

DUTY OF OVERSEERS: ADMINISTRATORS

The duties of overseers are the weightiest on earth, because they involve the most precious things in the world: the blood bought body of Christ (Ac. 20:28) and human souls (Mt. 16:26). To be an administrator over these involves a lot of hard work. It cannot be carried out by the lazy, marshmallow type. It requires energy, vigilance, industry and zeal. Neglect of these serious duties will bring severer penalties and consequences (Js. 3:1). No doubt, one who is not willing to shoulder these responsibilities should never accept the office.



“ADMINISTRATING” IS INHERENT IN THE TERM “OVERSEERS”

In the classical Greek usage it means: any guardian whatsoever; a municipal officer, or one who was appointed to oversee and take care of the interest of some particular town or district; or a viceroy or magistrate, sent to superintend the affairs of conquered provinces. Thayer defines the Greek word for overseer as "...a man charged with the duty of seeing that things are done by others are done rightly,..." (p. 243).

An administrator is one who manages or supervises, directs, rules, leads, has the power to control, command, or govern. The board of directors or the board of trustees in secular organizations has an administration or supervisory function which is parallel to some extent the duties of an elder.

OVERSEEING THE CHURCH

Elders are commanded to take the oversight of the church. Peter commanded his fellow elders to "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers,..." (1 Pet. 5:2). The apostle Paul informed the Ephesian elders to *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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"* (Ac. 20:28).

It should be clear that the preacher has not been given the duty of overseeing the church. When a local congregation doesn't have a program of work which is planned by the elders and which is larger than the local evangelist and not totally dependent upon him, it is an indication that the elders may have abdicated at least part of their responsibility. Many preachers have been PASTORIZED. Too many overseers expect a preacher to be the administrator, to supervise personal evangelism programs, put the members, deacons, and even the elders themselves to work. If the preachers then fails to be a good administrator the church panics and the overseers fire him. A preacher is never commanded to take the oversight of the congregation. Preachers were never made overseers by the Holy Spirit according to the New Testament. This situation would never result if overseers were not so eager to pass the buck to a preacher.

Elders who fail to oversee leave the church unsupervised. Many overseers are too busy doing the deacons' work to do their own. They oversee the money, building, preacher, but when it comes to the other realms of their administration they end up overlooking instead of overseeing. Some elderships become departmentalized appointing a deacon to each department with an overseer simply being over each group of deacons. Elders using this approach are nothing more than senior deacons over junior deacons. A system of having one overseer in charge of one area and another over another area is unscriptural, because no one overseer should be left to make all are part of the decisions for the congregation. Deacons, however, can function individually. Elders must function as a group, that is, as an eldership.

The oversight includes several areas of

responsibilities. Oversight involves: 1) Seeing that proper worship is conducted. 2) Seeing that teachers are teaching soundly and adequately. 3) Seeing that the Lord's money is being properly appropriated. 4) Seeing that the weak are being strengthened. 5) Seeing that the members are attending. 6) Seeing to it that the members are growing. 7) Seeing the word is being spread throughout the community. 8) Seeing to it that the sick and needy are cared for. 9) Seeing that all the members are busy doing the work of the Lord. 10) Seeing to it that those walking disorderly are properly disciplined

Overseers are to watch over the church..they keep watch over your souls..." (Heb. 13:17). The noun form of "watch" means guardian of souls, one who watches over their welfare" (Thayer, p. 243). The equivalent term for this duty in both Testaments is "watchman." In Ezekiel 3:16-21 and 33:1-9 we learn about the responsibilities of a watchmen in the Old Testament. 1) They were to watch over the work of the people of God. 2) It was their duty to give the warning when God's Word was being disobeyed. 3) They are warned to do this to be free from the blood of all men (Ac. 20:26,27; 18:6)

Overseers are God's watchman in the New Testament. Their duties are similar to those mentioned above. 1) They are to be on the alert for false teachers even among themselves (Ac. 20:30,31). 2) They are to watch over the souls under their charge (Heb. 13:17). A Gospel preacher by the name of Tommy Poarch wrote:

"I know of a preacher who was contacted about some members of the church whose souls were endanger. He contacted an elder and related the information and asked what he should do. He was promptly told that this was a matter of the elders to handle and that he should go on about his study and classes."

A wonderful example of elders taking the oversight, instead of just leaving it up to "the preacher." The ultimate result of his watchfulness is to help all go to heaven.

SIX "IZE" OF PROPER ADMINISTRATION

- *Visualize*
An overseer must have good spiritual and

scriptural eyesight. To visualize means to determine the aims, goals, and objectives to be achieved. Overseers need to envision what the church needs to be. Where will the church be in 5,10,20,50 or even 100 years down the road? Wherever it will be is largely determined by the present administration of its overseers. Some overseers never consider where the church has been, is or will be. Churches are destroyed when their administrators lack vision. The church is like sheep without a shepherd. Such overseers are blind leaders of the blind (Mt. 15:14). Too many overseers are just meeting and keeping house.

To visualize means to get a clear picture of the way things will be when programs have been successful and problems have been solved. This is what gives overseers the ability to set goals. Without vision there are no goals. Without goals the church goes no where but down.

- *Organize*

Organization means a division of labor and an allocation of resources. A little time spent planning and organizing will save a lot of time. The early church organized itself to meet certain goals. The seven men selected to take care of the needy widows in Acts 6:1-6 is a good example of this. Orderliness is commanded for the church (1 Cor. 14:40). Overseers should avoid over organization as well as under organization. Businesses must be effectively organized so must the local church. Organization creates an atmosphere in which the work can be carried out efficiently.

- *Deputize*

Perhaps a better term would be "delegate". Delegation of responsibility must be made to others if the work is to be done. Overseers can't do all the minor day to day decision-making and work themselves. Overseers of the New Testament deputized men to do certain work (Ac. 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:14). Today, many never delegate any responsibility. Deacons serve for years without doing anything and being responsible for nothing. The reason is that many of these elders have taken over the deacons' work. Overseers either do everything themselves or it doesn't get done. Overseers should not be hesitant in calling upon individual Christians to do specific tasks and should do so without apology. Overseers need to give others a certain amount of decision-making authority to perform their work.

- *Advise*

In Acts 21:17-25 the elders advised Paul to fulfill purification ceremonies to enhance his influence

among the Jews in Jerusalem. Overseers need to determine some general policy guidelines and job descriptions telling each deacon, preacher, teacher, treasurer, what decisions he is authorized to make on his own, how much money he is authorized to spend on his own, and when matters should be brought to the attention of the overseers. To properly advise there must be a channel for two way communication open at all times. Overseers are not to advise on every little detail but should never be afraid to advise when necessary. Work is not done without advising how. However, just telling members what to do is not enough.

► *Supervise*

Remember Thayer's definition of an overseer, "...a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly..." The overseers have final responsibility over all work. Failure of a deacon could mean failure of the overseers. They need to require written or oral reports on how things are going.

► *Analyze*

Overseers need to check to see if things are running properly. Modify, advise, change goals, change workers, etc. to accomplish desired end. Noting which things worked and trying them again. Noting things that did not work and try to figure out what went wrong. They need to increase efforts and expand goals. Brethren should be challenged to accept weightier works. A man may begin by lifting fifty pound weights on a regular basis, but six months later we would not expect him to be carrying the same poundage. He needs to "abound yet more and more."

OVERSEEING VARIOUS GROUPS

► *Deacons*

Deacons are servants. Generally, they take care of the lesser more physical aspects of the local work. Overseers function in administrating the over-all program of church work. Each deacon functions in administrating a specific program of work assigned to them by the elders. Yet keep in mind that deacons are not apprentice elders or assistant overseers.

Overseers are to put deacons to work. Deacons as servants do not rule, lead or oversee anything on their own initiative. Again, most

overseers are too busy with deacons work while deacons are doing nothing. One deacon resigned because he had no real responsibility and felt that his work was done by the elders. Deacons are servants and must be kept busy by the overseers in the service of the Lord.

Overseer - Deacon Meetings should prove most helpful for both groups as well as the entire local congregation. Overseers could make assignments for the deacons to carry out. Deacons could report concerning the progress they have made on anything assigned to them in the past. All problems and questions could be explored. The time and the talents of these important servants would not as likely be wasted.

► *Preachers*

Many problem areas can surface in the overseer-preacher relationship. Preachers sometimes try to dominate the elders. Many preachers act as sole judges of who is and who is not qualified to be elders in a certain place. Some preachers go as far as claiming the position and authority of elders when they begin regular work at a place. Preachers begin exercising oversight in the place of the eldership. Some even to the extent of exercising authority over the elders themselves. Then there is the problem of elders exercising too much authority over the preacher. This happens when they hinder him in preaching the whole counsel of God. None of this would happen if overseers were not simply taking care of the building, treasury, and hiring and firing the preacher.

Overseers should never make a pastor out of a preacher. They should not expect him to be head overseer. Though he is a personal evangelist he does not have oversight over the personal work program of the church, overseers do. Though he is to teach he has no oversight over teaching, teachers, or edification of the church. Though he is to feed and rebuke Christians he has no oversight over the wayward members. They are not his sheep. He is not one of the shepherds. He is not to be expected to do any of the overseers' work for them. An evangelist has no oversight concerning the goals of the church. He has no responsibility of assigning overseers to do any work. Elders are to put preachers to work (Ac. 13:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:14). Preachers merely help the overseers. They are not over them in any way.

Overseers are administrators over the preacher and his preaching. They should keep the preacher from being lazy, sinning, or teaching falsehood. It is easier to fire a wayward preacher "for the good of the congregation" than to deal with the real problem, and

show oneself a true shepherd of souls. Preachers are Christians and members like all the others in their flock. Overseers have a responsibility for the preacher's soul as well as all the others. He is to be treated like any other sinner in the congregation. However, his preaching and teaching must be overseen carefully in order to guard the flock against error.

Again, preacher-overseer meetings can be mutually beneficial. Overseers can assign specific areas for the preacher to study, preach, and teach. They can assign certain evangelistic programs for him to work on and point out certain individuals they would like him to teach. Overseers can also require a report on the various aspects of his work. This can provide them with information on how to help him, provide him with helpers, material, and equipment to do his work, and receive constructive criticism from the preacher on changes and improvements they need to initiate.

► *Teachers*

Elders have the oversight over the teaching and teachers of the congregation. Overseers are responsible for all teaching done. They must set the curriculum goals, organize the classrooms, deputize the teachers, advise them on teaching guidelines, supervise, and constantly analyze the teaching program.

What is the goal of a teaching program? If it is simply to conduct classes then most overseers succeed. If it is merely to promote learning some succeed. However, if it is to change and mold lives few administrators succeed. The edification of the church will never succeed so long as it is being neglected by the administrators. Just as a school district must have a superintendent and administration to teach thousands of children effectively so must a local church have superintendents to administrate the teaching program.

► *Women*

Women can and should be doing certain tasks within the scope of their role in both home and church (1 Tim. 3:11; Rom. 16:1,2,6; Phil. 4:2,3). Here are some suggested works that women can do: 1) Clothe the needy (Ac. 9:36). 2) Extend hospitality (Ac. 16:14,15). 3) Teach the word of God (Ac. 18:26). 4) Invite people to come and see Jesus (Jn. 4:28,29). 5) Train younger women and be a teacher of what is good (Tit. 2:3). 6) Teach her children and other children (2 Tim. 1:5). 7) Glorify God in her home by creating the proper atmosphere there (Tit. 2:4). 8) Encourage her husband in his God given role

in the home and in the church. 9) Lead her husband to Christ (1 Pet. 3:1). 10) Be devoted in doing good works in every way (1 Tim. 5:10). Overseers will rob themselves, the local church, and even God of the great encouragement and help the women of the church can offer. Overseers do this by overlooking their great influence for good. In most congregations these good women represent its greatest untapped resource. Overseers need to administrate the work of the women. Ladies Bible Classes should be placed under their oversight to see that they are conducted effectively and properly. Nonetheless, it is wise to allow the older women to teach the class.

► *Youth*

Contrary to the attitude of some, preachers do not have the oversight of the young people in the congregation. Remember, the parents have the number one responsibility for their children (Eph. 6:4). Good overseers need to assess the needs of the young and find the solutions to their problems. They can set up classes in such a way to meet their needs. Also, they should set such a good example of what an elder should be that they gain the younger members respect and encourage them to emulate the eldership. Parents may be the main reasons why the church is losing so many of her young people, so overseers are a close second.

CONCLUSION

We conclude with a look at an article by Bill Hall entitled "*Two Elders Oversee*."

"Two men are appointed elders, but they vary greatly as they oversee the flock. The first man is a mere spokesman for a small minority of the congregation. He has little contact with anybody beyond his family and closest friends... The second man is concerned for all the group. He cultivates friendship with all and values the thinking of the less vocal ones as highly as he does that of his closest friends. The first man calls on the same few people for every task to be performed. When he visits the sick or shut-ins, he is always accompanied by these same ones. He is unaware of the spiritual development of those on the 'fringe'; in fact, he hardly knows them... The second man works for the spiritual development of every member... He knows that good leadership

develops leadership in others,...The best word to describe this man is 'awareness'. He knows the people and they know him. Their problems are his problems; their sorrows, his sorrows, their joys, his joys. He is aware of their potential, their strengths, their weaknesses, their needs. It is obvious that it is the second man in our article who pleases God as an elder. In fact, our article might best be entitled, 'One Elder Oversees,' for our first man does more 'overlooking' than 'overseeing'; more resting in the sheepfold than pastoring the flock. 'Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock...' (Ac. 20:28)."

REVIEW

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| <p>1. An overseer is a) a decision maker b) a shepherd c) an administrator. (Chose the best answer).</p> <p>2. T F Though elders oversee the church, preachers have the oversight of the evangelism of the church.</p> <p>3. What is wrong with having each overseer exercising oversight over different areas?</p> <p>4. What were the duties of the Old Testament watchmen?</p> <p>5. Show the connection between the vision of overseers and the goals of the church.</p> <p>6. Give a New Testament example of a church organizing itself to meet certain goals.</p> | <p>7. Give examples of where overseers deputized men to do a certain work.</p> <p>8. T F Failure of a teacher could mean failure of the overseers.</p> <p>9. Why must overseers put the deacons to work?</p> <p>10. What positive results come from regular overseer/deacon meetings.</p> <p>11. How much oversight does a preacher have over the elders?</p> <p>12. List some things elders should do in their oversight of the preacher.</p> <p>13. T F Teachers, not elders, have oversight of the teachers, teaching program, and curriculum.</p> <p>14. List some of the work women can do for the Kingdom of God.</p> <p>15. T F Elders, not preachers, have the primary responsibility for the youth of the members.</p> |
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THE DUTY OF SHEPHERDS

Elders are referred to as shepherds in Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:2 and Acts 20:28. Again, this is not an honorary title but a position of duty. *"Shepherd the flock of God among you,..."* (1 Pet. 5:2). *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to 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"* (Ac. 20:28). Jesus demonstrated what a spiritual shepherd is and does in Matthew. 18:12-14; John 10:1-18; and Luke 15:6. Shepherds can learn their work from the Chief Shepherd. Perhaps one of the most beneficial studies elders could undertake would be a careful consideration of Christ's dealings with individuals. How do you react to a woman taken in adultery? How do you deal with a disciple who betrays you and a friend who denies you? How do you deal with a lamb that has gone astray? The Chief Shepherd can show shepherds how to deal with these and many other problems he will face.

God prophesied that He would raise up new spiritual shepherds for a new spiritual Israel (Jeremiah 23:1-5). He condemned bad shepherds who represented the leaders of Israel in Jer. 25:32-38 and Ezekiel 34:1-10. He pointed forward to a time when He would have dedicated shepherds over His people (Ezk. 34:11ff). In Psalm 23 God Himself demonstrates the Good Shepherd. The parallel between spiritual leaders and shepherds is adequate and natural for all were very familiar with the work of a shepherd. Both sheep and shepherds were quite common throughout both Old and New Testament history. Job had 14,000 sheep (Job 42:12) in the end. Solomon dedicated the temple with 120,000 sheep (1 Kings. 8:63). Even Homer and other secular writers frequently called kings and governors shepherds (Iliad, I, 263; II, 243, etc.)



TEND & FEED THE FLOCK

1 Peter 5:2; Acts 20:28

Vincent defines *"feed"* or *"tend"* as

"since the verb denotes all that is included in the office of a shepherd - guiding, guarding, folding, no less and feeding, which latter is expressed by *bosko*. There is, doubtless, a reminiscence in the word of Christ's charge to Peter (Jn. 21:15-17). Both words are used there: 'feed (*boske*) my lambs' (ver. 15); 'tend (*poimaine*) my sheep' (ver. 16); 'feed (*boske*) my sheep' (ver. 17). The A.V. obliterates the distinction by rendering all three 'feed'. Bengel rightly remarks, 'Feeding is part of tending'." (vol. 1, p. 665). The word embraces more than feeding; signifying all that is included in the office of a shepherd; tending and shepherding. This clearly shows that an overseer or elder is to be a shepherd - he is to perform his duties to the church as a shepherd would to a flock.

Real shepherds are responsible for the feeding and watering of flocks. They would take them wherever the food could be found for them.

"In late autumn or winter months, there are times when the shepherd can find no pasturage that is available for his flock, and then he must become responsible for feeding the animals himself. If the flock is small there may be times when it is stabled within the peasant house, and the family lives on a sort of mezzanine floor above it. At such seasons of the year the shepherd must provide the food. This is what Isaiah meant when he said: 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd' (40:11)". (Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, p.152.)

The shepherds of the church need to be personally involved in the feeding of the local flock. After all, one of the qualifications of a shepherd is that he be apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Yet some elders seldom teach, this is wrong. Shepherds may feed by filling the trough full of gospel meetings, classes, and

home studies, but they should not turn the entire burden of feeding over to others. The flock looks to those who actually feed them. If a shepherd turns sheep over to a hired hand to tend them, when the hired hand says, *"let's go to the back forty"*, the shepherd cannot step in and say *"NO."* The sheep will not listen to him, because they no longer recognize him as shepherd.

Shepherds must provide the necessary things so the sheep can be fed. They must take the lead in equipping the saints. *"And He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ"* (Eph. 4:11-12). Part of this is done by hiring a preacher. He is not to be a shepherd. He is to assist in feeding the flock from the pulpit, classroom, bulletin, etc. Still, the shepherds have the overall responsibility for the diet of the flock. Shepherds should also provide a program of worship and instruction at every service that members will not want to miss. They need to provide adequate Bible classes and teachers. The flock is to *"live by the word of God"* (Mt. 4:4). The Word is their food (1 Pet. 2:2). Yet, some shepherds fail to teach men and women on how to be teachers, to provide adequate facilities and materials or just let anybody teach a class. A good library, a well-supplied tract rack, religious journals, special classes, Vacation Bible Schools, a bulletin, etc. are excellent ways to feed the flock. Other areas of this duty involve admonishing, (1 Th. 5:12); being good examples (1 Pet. 5:3); and rejecting false teachers (Tit. 1:9).

The shepherds' failure to feed will famish the flock. An untrained, untaught flock will soon return to the worthless weeds of the world. If shepherds of literal sheep fed their flocks like some elders feed theirs, wool would indeed be a scarce commodity. Shepherds need to lead their sheep to still waters and let them lay down in green pastures (Ps. 23). Without this the flock will starve. God condemned shepherds in the Old Testament who starved the flock to feed themselves. *"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds; 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and the clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock'"* (Ezekiel 34:2,3).

God's shepherds today need to be busy with this task. Lazy shepherds will lose their flock. Remember, God gave us two ends: one to sit on and

one to think with. Success depends on which one we use the most - heads we win, tails we lose.

WATCH OVER THE FLOCK

Acts 20:31; Hebrews 13:17

Two Greek words represent this duty. In Acts 20:31 *"watch"* is defined, *"gregoreo, to watch, is used (a) of keeping awake, (b) of spiritual alertness"* (Vine, p. 1213). The Greek word for *"watch"* in Heb. 13:17 is defined *"agrupneo, to be sleepless (from agreuo, to shace, and hupnos, sleep), is used metaphorically, to be watchful...The word expresses not mere wakefulness but the watchfulness of those who are intent upon a thing"* (ibid.).

Three areas require the shepherds to be watchful. 1) They must be watchful of themselves (Ac. 20:28). 2) They need to watch for wolves in sheep's clothing (Ac. 20:29). These will enter in using stealth and deception. Alert shepherds will notice and thus spare the flock. 3) They must watch out for the souls of the flock (Heb. 13:17). Be on the alert for troubled souls. Watchmen ready to warn souls wandering too far from the boundaries of God's Will.

This watchfulness is not to be merely exercised when the church is assembled. Paul shows that it is a watchfulness that is constant, both day and night, (Ac. 20:31). They are to watch out for even the sheep that do not attend. A real shepherd doesn't watch and do nothing. He watches to warn, protect, and be able to give an account. By keeping track of attendance they will spot those who are having trouble. A system set up to keep an individual attendance record on each member has proven itself effective. When one is missing from feeding he is not left to starve to death. He is cared for and warned.

God condemns poor watchmen in the Old Testament. *"Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth and give them a warning from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will certainly die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked about his way, that wicked person shall die for his wrongdoing, but I will require his blood from your hand. But if you on your part warn a wicked person to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die for his wrongdoing, but you have saved your life"* (Ezek. 33:7-9; see 3:17-21). When a watchman fails to warn he brings the blood of the lost soul upon his own head.

Why? He has caused others to die in their sins. It would be the same as if one failed to warn another who was asleep in a burning house. Too many shepherds do not watch and warn because they themselves are asleep on duty (Eph. 4:15). During times of war watchmen who were caught sleeping on duty could face court marshal and the firing squad. Woe to the shepherds whom the Chief Shepherd will find asleep when He comes again. They will have to give an account for the sheep lost while they slept.

PROTECT THE FLOCK

Titus 1:9-11; Acts 20:29-31

Shepherds in the Bible lands went to great lengths to protect their sheep. David defended his flock from a lion and a bear (1 Sam. 17:34-37).

"The sheep need to be guarded against robbers not only when they are in the open country, but also when they are in the fold. The bandits of Palestine are not apt to pick locks, but some of them may manage to climb up over the wall, and get into the fold, where they cut the throats of as many of the animals as possible and then sling them over the wall to others of their band, and all of them attempt to escape without being caught. Jesus describes just such operations: 'The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy' (Jn. 10:10)" (Wight, pp. 161,162).

Shepherds had special weapons to assist them in protecting the flock. Wight describes the shepherd's most common weapon. "It is like a policeman's club. It is often made of oak wood and has a knob on the end of it. Into this knob nails are sometimes driven so as to make a better weapon" (p. 149).

Elders must use the sword and rod of God to protect the fold. The enemies of God's people are many. False shepherds and false teachers take their toll on the church. Thus, shepherds need to be skilled in spiritual swordsmanship. Our present crisis in the church over institutionalism, fellowship, and individualism, etc. would never have happened or at worst would only have been minimal if elders had been doing their job. Shepherds will give an account for their failure to protect the sheep. They should even be willing to forfeit their very lives to protect

them, but instead some behave more like hirelings. *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep"* (Jn. 10:11-13).

LEADS THE FLOCK

Hebrews 13:17

Despite their harmlessness, sheep suffer from a lack of initiative amounting to weakness, so that, like many human beings are easily lost or led astray. The shepherd must use his staff, rod, voice, and sling to lead them.

"The shepherd knows how to gather sheep that have been scattered. Especially is this necessary when the sheep must be led back to the fold, or when they are to be guided to another pasture. It is accomplished by his standing in the center of his scattered sheep, and giving them the call which serves as the notes of a bugle to any army of men. Pebbles are sent by means of his slingshot in the direction of and beyond members of the flock that fail to heed the call, in order to get their attention and then bring them back. He does not commence to lead them away until he knows they are all there." (Wight, p. 155,156).

"The Eastern shepherd never drives his sheep as does the Western shepherd. He always leads them, often going before them. 'And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them' (Jn. 10:4). This does not mean that the Shepherd is always in front of his sheep. Although he may be usually in that position when traveling, he often walks by their side, and sometimes follows behind, especially if the flock is headed for the fold in the evening. From the rear he can gather any stragglers, and protect such from a sly attack from a wild animal." (Wight, p. 157.)

"The skill of the shepherd, and personal relationship to them is clearly seen when he guides his sheep along narrow paths. The Shepherd Psalm says: 'He leadeth me in the

paths of righteousness' (Ps. 23:3). The grain fields are seldom fenced or hedged in Bible lands, and sometimes only a narrow path runs between the pasture and these fields. The sheep are forbidden to eat in the fields where crops are growing. Thus in guiding the sheep along such a path, the shepherd must not allow any of the animals to get into the forbidden area, because if he does, he must pay damages to the owner of the grain. One Syrian shepherd has been known to guide a flock of one hundred fifty sheep without any help, along such a narrow path for quite a distance, without letting a single sheep go where he was not allowed to go" (Wight, pp. 157,158).

God's shepherds must lead with the rod - the Word of God. He must lead them down the strait and narrow way which leads to life everlasting (Mt. 7:14). As he leads them it must be done with gentleness. God condemned the wicked leaders for their mistreatment of His sheep. *"Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them"* (Ezek. 34:4). Sheep cannot be dealt with harshly. The shepherd cannot harshly order, coerce, demand or merely point the way. He must lead the way. He leads them. He does not drive them. Such would be equivalent to lording it over the flock. A party of tourists was on its way to Palestine and its guide was describing some of the quaint customs of the East. *"Now,"* said he, *"you are accustomed to seeing the shepherd following his sheep through the English lanes and byways. Out in the East, however, things are different, for the shepherd always leads the way, going on before the flock. And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."* The party reached Palestine, and, to the amusement of the tourists almost the first sight to meet their eyes was that of a flock of sheep being driven along by a man. The guide was astonished and immediately made it his business to accost the shepherd. *"How is it that you are driving these sheep?"* he asked. *"I have always been told that the Eastern shepherd leads his sheep."* *"You are quite right, sir,"* replied the man. *"The shepherd does lead his sheep. But you see, I'm not the shepherd, I'm the butcher."* And so it is with some overseers. They have become butchers instead of shepherds in leading the flock.

BE AN EXAMPLE TO THE FLOCK

1 Peter 5:3; Hebrews 13:7

Sheep are excellent imitators. Once a ram jumped through a hole in the fence to get to some grass on the other side. It plunged into a uncovered well. The other sheep followed him. They continued to leap through the fence into the well until the farmer came and stopped them. Sheep are such natural imitators. If they are going down a path in the woods and one of them becomes spooked at a certain spot on the path and jumps for fright all the others following behind will jump when they come to that same spot. They continue to jump even though there is no reason. Shepherds have been known to play with their flock in this manner. They will do things and then sit back in amusement as the sheep try to imitate.

Members need the example of the shepherds in several areas: 1) In serving the Lord (Rom. 12:11). 2) Domestic life. Elders need to set a good example as a husband, father, and neighbor. 3) Hospitality. 4) Serving one another. 5) Community life. 6) Generosity (Ac. 20:35). 7) Helping the weak and the wayward (Gal. 6:1). 8) Personal work. 9) Bible Study. 10) Habits. It is tragic to see elders lead the "smokers' parade" out of the building between services. Too many shepherds are slothful in their work for the Lord. Thus, it is next to impossible to encourage the sheep to get up out of the shade and get to work.

KNOW AND LOVE THE FLOCK

John 10:14; Hebrews 13:17

Jesus pointed out that the shepherds of His day knew and loved the sheep. *"I am the good shepherd, and I know My sheep, and am known by My own"* (Jn. 10:14). He knows them so well that he can call them by name (v. 3). He loves them so much that he is willing to die for them (v. 15).

"Today, the eastern shepherd delights to give names to certain of his sheep, and if his flock is not too large, all of his sheep may be given names. He knows them by means of certain individual characteristics. He names one:

'Pure White'; another, 'Striped'; another 'Black'; another, 'Brown'; and still another, 'Gray-eared.' All this indicates the tender affection which he has for every one of his flock" (Wight, p. 157).

The shepherd is deeply interested in every single one of his flock. Some of them may be given pet names because of incidents connected with them. They are usually counted each evening as they enter the fold, but sometimes the shepherd dispenses with the counting, for he is able to feel the absence of any one of his sheep. With one sheep gone, something is felt to be missing from the appearance of the entire flock. One shepherd in the Lebanon district was asked if he always counted his sheep each evening. He replied in the negative, and then was asked how then he knew if all his sheep were present. This was his reply: 'Master, if you were to put a cloth over my eyes, and bring me any sheep and only let me put hands on its face, I could tell in a moment if it was mine or not'. (Wight, pp. 158,159).

"When H.R.P. Dickson visited the desert Arabs, he witnessed an event that revealed the amazing knowledge which some of them have of their sheep. One evening, shortly after dark, an Arab shepherd began to call out one by one the names of his fifty-one mother sheep. And was able to pick out each one's lamb, and restore it to its mother to suckle. To do this in the light would be a feat for many shepherds, but this was done in complete darkness, and in the midst of the noise coming from the ewes crying for their lambs, and the lambs crying for their mothers. But no Oriental shepherd ever had a more intimate knowledge of his sheep than Jesus our great shepherd has of those who belong to His flock. He once said to Himself: 'I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep' (Jn. 10:14)" (Wight, p. 159).

The New Bible Dictionary says that these sheep were "*customarily regarded as docile and responsive to affection*" (1174).

As under shepherds of Christ elders can do no less than try to learn to love all the sheep as the Chief Shepherd loved them. He should love them more than his own life and more than any material gain. His love will be evident in his attitude, his words, and his

actions. If a shepherd neglects the sheep he cannot love them or God. *"But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth"* (1 Jn. 3:17,18).

Having gone to the local shepherds of the flock where I preached, I told them a certain member that was in need of their encouragement. One elder flatly told me that he had no responsibility toward the individual because he didn't even know who I was talking about. The young man under consideration had been a Christian for several months. The congregation was small, less than 50. Yet, this shepherd knew nothing of the new born lamb and was totally unaware of his spiritual standing. Although on several occasions he had conversed at length with the young man after services, he had never really gotten to know him.

Godly shepherds learn each individual sheep's name. They know who is a part of the flock and thus, for whom they are responsible. It is a crying shame when shepherds don't even know who the members are in a small flock. This involves more than just knowing their face and name. They must know each individual's needs, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, background, zeal, desires, etc. Know where they are and when they are not present at services. At a glance they should notice one unaccounted for, not resting till accounted. Too many times only the preacher knows them. If they are absent, people will ask the preacher instead of the shepherds. They can really get to know the sheep by visiting with them. Have them in their own homes. Go visit with them. Remember, not to show partiality with the sheep. View them as individuals not a mass. The mass concept would have disregarded the lost sheep in the parable of the ninety and nine (Mt. 18:12-14). Each sheep is important to the Lord and should be to the under shepherds.

VISIT THEM

James 5:14; 1:27

If a shepherd in Palestine has to be away from the flock for a period of time, he makes periodic visits to check on them. Even during the day with all the sheep in sight he will make rounds to keep a better watch on them. He does not go check up on them only if one cries out. Ezekiel refers to the custom of sheep passing under the shepherd's rod for the purpose of counting and inspecting them. *"I will make you pass*

under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant" (Ezek. 20:37).

"The shepherd is always on the look out for members of his flock that need personal attention. Sometimes a lamb suffers from the ray of the sun, or its body may have been badly scratched by some thornbush. The most common remedy he uses with these sheep is olive oil, a supply of which he carries in a ram's horn. Perhaps David was thinking of such an experience when he wrote of the Lord, 'Thou anointest my head with oil' (Ps. 23:5)" (Wight, p. 161).

Similarly, James describes the elder/member relationship. *"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him"* (Js. 5:14,15, NASV). Many shepherds act like the responsibility lies solely on the member who is going astray to contact them if they have a spiritual need. Though members do have a responsibility to call for the shepherds. Shepherds were never appointed just to sit around and wait for a lamb to cry out in deep distress. Many of the people who have dropped out of the church are not visited by anyone in the congregation until they are hardened in sin. When a member misses a service without reason the shepherds should be the first to notice and first to visit. Most of the time they are the last to notice and the last to visit. After a Christian had come forward in tears confessing her forsaking of the assembly as well as other shortcomings, one of the elders was heard commenting on the situation, "I don't see how these people think we (elders) can do anything for them if they don't show up at services." Remember, the good shepherd goes after the lost sheep and he does so until he finds them..

James also points out that true religion involves visiting others. *"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this; to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unstained from the world"* This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit the orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (Js. 1:27). Many shepherds condemn the misuse of this passage by some of our brethren and rightly so. Yet many of them leave this passage unused by failing to visit these very same

people who are a part of their flock. A shepherd's work would go a lot smoother if he would routinely visit with the sheep, especially those with special needs and situations.

SUPPORT THE WEAK

Acts 20:35; 1 Thess. 5:12;13

Again, Wight informs us of the unique parallel between shepherds of the sheep and God's shepherds.

When crossing a stream of water 'the little lambs may be driven into the water by the dogs, and they are heard to bleat pitifully as they leap and plunge. Some manage to get across, but if one is swept away, then the shepherd leaps quickly into the stream and rescues it, carrying it in his bosom to the shore" (Wight, p.160).

The sheep that are soon to become mothers, as well as those with their young ones, must be kept close to the shepherd while in transit. Little helpless lambs that cannot keep up with the rest of the flock, are carried in the bosom of his undergarment, the girdle turning it into a pocket. Isaiah pictures this activity in his famous passage: 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young' (Is. 40:11)" (Wight, pp. 160,161).

Paul commanded the Ephesian elders to follow his example. *"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'."* (Ac. 20:35). Again, in a general command to the brethren at Thessalonica Paul says, *"And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men"* (1 Thess. 5:14).

Shepherds of the flock can assist the weak in many ways. 1) Making themselves available for counseling. Jesus is called Counselor (Is. 9:6). Counseling involves giving good advise that results from personal conversation and application of Divine wisdom from God's Word. Most members would rather go to the preacher for help. Though he should desire

to help them to the best of his ability, the greatest assistance he could give them is to refer them to the elders. During one week alone I had to deal with a older man who came to me in deep depression stating that he was contemplating suicide. Another member had attempted suicide by means of an overdose. I had to take him to the hospital for his stomach to be pumped. And before the week was over a woman came to me concerning her bad temper with her son which resulted in child abuse. A young gospel preacher is not readily equipped to deal with such alone. Even if he has the total confidence of the members, elders, and himself. God never intended for His young servants to shepherd His sheep. The only logical alternative was for me to do the best I could and put them in contact with the shepherds. 2) Shepherds need to be gentle with the weak. 3) They must never engage in the habit of gossiping about the weak's problems with others. 4) They should pray with and for them. 5) Using the rod and staff to comfort and show them God's answer to their problem.

Several different groups of weak members need the attention of the shepherds. 1) The Bereaved. Those who are suffering from death in the family, poverty, health, etc. In such cases shepherds should weep with those that weep (Rom. 12:15). 2) Those with marital problems. Too many times a marriage ends in divorce before the shepherds are even awake enough to know the couple has problems. The elders should be the first *"marriage counselors"* a couple talks to. 3) Newborn babes. Shepherds recognize that all lambs born into the fold are immediately their responsibility, not the ewe alone. Lambs require special attention. Some lose their mothers and these will soon die if they are not cared for promptly and constantly. Novices need special attention. They don't have the encouragement of a home, parents, friends, or spouse that other Christians do. Many shepherds want to see the fold increase, but don't wish to take responsibility for the lambs. New converts' classes need to be held with them to ground them in the faith. Shepherds need to personally visit each new lamb. They need to keep a close eye on their growth and development. Remember, if a lamb dies the shepherd would be held accountable. If he did his best he will be exonerated. If he left it to die of malnutrition, from exposure to the elements, or from predators he will be held accountable. 4) Christians who have recently moved into the area. Shepherds need to check immediately to see if they wish to place membership. Some weak Christians do not realize that this is necessary. It can be difficult especially for

those who are shy. Those that do place membership need immediate attention. They are in a new place away from familiar brethren who knew them and encouraged them, thus they are weakened by the situation. Many a young couple as quickly fallen away after moving to a new area. Some of these could have been prevented if shepherds would care for their needs. 5) Members who have been recently restored. This is an open invitation for them to study and pray with them. If these are not strengthened they will soon fall right back into the same rut. 6) Those with special problems.

CORRECTING AND RETRIEVING

It is very important that sheep should not be allowed to stray away from the flock, because when by themselves they are utterly helpless. In such a condition, they become bewildered, for they have no sense at all of locality, and if they do stray away, they must be brought back. The Psalmist prayed the prayer: 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant' (Ps. 119:176). The prophet Isaiah compared man's waywardness to that of sheep: 'All we like sheep have gone astray' (Is. 53:6). David sang of his Divine Shepherd: 'He restoreth my soul' (Ps. 23:3)" (Wight, 158).

"The shepherd, in addition to using his sling against wild animals or robbers, found it very handy in directing the sheep. A stone could be dropped close to a sheep that was lagging behind and startle it into coming along with the rest of the flock. Or if one would get away in another direction, then a stone would be slung so as to drop just beyond the straying sheep, and thus bring him back" (Wight, 150).

"Being responsible for anything that happens to one of his flock, the Eastern shepherd will spend hours if necessary in traversing the wilderness or mountain side, in search of sheep that has strayed away and is lost. After weary hours of hunting for it, it will usually be found in some waterless hollow in the wilderness, or in some desolate mountain ravine. The exhausted creature will be borne home on the shoulders of the sturdy shepherd. And what happens then is best described by the Parable

of Jesus: 'And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost' (Lk. 15:6)" (Wight, 162,163.)

First, elders should use instructive discipline to teach the sheep not to stray from the Will of God. They are to *"admonish the unruly"* (1 Th. 5:14). The Greek word here means *"to put to mind"* or *"training by word"*. However, Freud as well as our current society condemns religion for giving people guilt feelings. Even some Christians will argue *"We can catch more flies with honey than vinegar."* However, we are not trying to catch flies, but lead lost souls back to the fold (Lk. 15:3-7; Mt. 18-12-14; Ezk. 34:12). When a lamb is not present in the fold a shepherd finds out what is wrong and tries to correct it. Dedicated shepherds cannot rest so long as there are sheep lost in the hills and bushes. Second, if all efforts to restore the wayward sheep prove to be ineffectual the shepherds must consider corrective discipline. It is interesting to note that in the same context where Jesus speaks of the one lost sheep, he talks about church discipline (Mt. 18:15-18). Those who do the work of shepherding the flock will to well to study and gain a working knowledge of proper church discipline (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Th. 3:6-15).

It has been charged that most communities contain as many *"out-of-duty members"* as active members. Most dismiss them from their mind never feeling any responsibility, never going to visit to encourage and admonish. A growing policy among some elderships is to build walls of sound proof materials around them so they do not hear the cries from the sick sheep or they white wash a matter and just let it go. God will condemn such shepherds who so neglect the sheep as He did in the past (Ezek. 34:5,6,10).

GIVE AN ACCOUNT

Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:4

Real shepherds have to give an account to the owner or the chief shepherd concerning the condition of the flock. Shepherds are to number them when returning from pasture according to Jer. 33:13. *"The shepherd on duty was liable to make restitution for any sheep lost (Gen. 31:39), unless he could effectively plead circumstances beyond his foresight*

or control (Ex. 22:20-13)" (New Bible Dictionary, p. 1176).

The Hebrew writer plainly tells us that leaders of God's people will have to give account for the souls placed under their charge. *"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."*(Heb. 13:17). At the Second Coming and subsequent Judgment they will give an account to the Christ. *"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away"*(1 Pet. 5:4.) As real shepherds know where their sheep are and what their condition is at any given time, so must elders of God's flock. The Chief Shepherd might show up at any moment and require an account. Yet, this takes a great deal of time to be so well prepared. As a good brother once said, *"Big men have time, little men are too busy."* It takes big men to be shepherds. Someone else has said, *"Interruptions are a preacher's business."* Why? Because people are his business, and the needs of people will often interrupt the flow of a well regulated schedule. Shepherds need to make the sheep their business.

It is feared that far too many shepherds are doing the work of a deacon instead of tending the flock. The shepherding is left up to the *"Pastor"* to do for them. Others are simply ignorant of their role as a shepherd. Still others are just plain lazy, loveless and/or negligent. A shepherd is a shepherd only when he functions as one. An elder in name only is no better than a Christian in name only. In both instances the name is disgraced. I had an elder tell me with regard to the wayward sheep. *"You mean to tell me that all those lost sheep who have gone astray are my responsibility. No they are not my responsibility!"* No matter what the wayward sheep's attitude might be, God still holds the shepherds responsible for at least trying to do their work. This attitude of *"the sheep ought to know better"* and *"that's their problem not mine"* will not suffice come Judgment Day. This is why some shepherds will not be able to give an adequate account to the Lord come Judgment Day.

CONCLUSION

Each shepherd of God's flock needs to maintain a close relationship with the Chief Shepherd. The elders do not have a group of men or shepherds watching over them. Elders only have the Chief

Shepherd plus the other shepherds. As David, the shepherd, wrote "*The Lord is my shepherd*" (Ps. 23:1). So Christ is their Shepherd. When He returns they will receive their reward for properly tending and accounting for His sheep (1 Pet. 5:4).

The elders are our shepherds. As they obey God and fulfill this awesome task we must obey and submit to them. They deserve respect for their works' sake. However, when elders do not tend the flock then our shepherds' psalm reads as follows:

"The elders are not my shepherds. For I am in great want. They make me to lie down in beds of laziness. They lead me away from the waters of life. They disregard my soul. They guide me in paths of apathy. For their name's sake. Even though I walk toward the abyss of sin and eternal death. I have no help, for they are no where near me. Their rod and their staff; they are unknown to me. They have prepared me as a fatted lamb on a table set before my enemies. They have emptied my head for evil. My cup is empty. Surely wickedness and corruption will follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the torments of hell forever."

Let us praise and thank God for the hardworking, righteous shepherds who do just the opposite for us.

REVIEW

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| <p>1. T F Shepherds over God's flock can learn their work by studying the life of Christ, the Chief Shepherd.</p> <p>2. List some ways shepherds can feed the congregation.</p> <p>3. In what three cares do God's shepherds need to be watchful?</p> | <p>4. How did real shepherds in Palestine protect their sheep?</p> <p>5. By what means and in what manner should shepherds lead the church?</p> <p>6. List some areas where elders should be an example to their flock.</p> <p>7. What things should the elders know about each individual member?</p> <p>8. T F Before elders go visit a member in need they should wait for to call upon them.</p> <p>9. List several ways spiritual shepherds can assist the weak.</p> <p>10. List several different groups of weak members within a congregation.</p> <p>11. What should the elders do if they notice one of their sheep getting into the habit of forsaking the assembling of the saints?</p> <p>12. How can a shepherd prepare himself to give an account of the members?</p> |
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PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

According to Acts 20:28 elders have two areas of responsibility. *"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock,..."* 1) To the flock. Their responsibility to the flock has been covered in the three previous lessons. As elders they are to make the decisions for the church. As overseers they are to administrate the affairs of the congregation. As shepherds they are to tend to the flock. 2) To themselves. This area involves their personal responsibilities which we will study in this lesson.

Before elders can work effectively and properly for the church they need to fulfill some personal duties. The attitude of elders toward members will depend to a great extent on the attitude of the elders toward themselves. Some are more concerned with authority they serving. These need to give heed to their motives. Others don't take the time out necessary to perform their duties. They need to give heed to their priorities. Furthermore, if each elder has his own life in proper order the eldership will function more effectively as a whole.



would rise up teaching falsehoods. A close relationship exists between corruption in the eldership of the church and the apostasy. Apostasy comes slow like the facial change of a man as he ages. A change in the divine pattern for the oversight of the church. This continued over the years until a complete departure from the truth was made evident. Ultimately this apostasy developed into the power structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Another reason, it is every one's personal responsibility to be right in God's sight (Phil. 2:12). The elders do not have a group of men to oversee them. They only have the oversight of the Chief Shepherd. Third, to save themselves from temptation (Gal. 6:1). As Paul commanded Timothy. *"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you"* (1 Tim. 4:16). Finally, to build himself up (Ac. 20:32).

Just as there are several reasons for this self-examination there are a few areas an elder needs to pay close attention to in his daily life. 1) He needs to examine himself routinely to see if he meets the qualifications of an elder. Not only does he need to obtain these qualifications before he is appointed, he must maintain them to remain qualified. 2) He must examine his example (1 Pet. 5:2,3). *"Am I setting the right example as a father, husband, neighbor, in faithfulness, a secular worker, as a teacher, in recreation, as a worker of God, as a lover of weak brothers?"* In other words, *"Do I ask of others what I have failed to do myself?"* 3) He must examine his work. Self-examination of his performance as an elder can be done by asking himself the following: *"Do I have the right concept of my work? Do I have the proper motives for doing my work? Do I show partiality in my work? Do I neglect what I ought to do? Do I do my work in accordance with God's will?"* 4) Examining themselves to correct any personal shortcomings. Elders are not immune to sin (1 Tim. 5:19,20). When any accusation surfaces he needs to honestly examine himself.

"TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES"

Acts 20:28

This command involves self-examination. Self-examination is a daily routine required of all Christians (2 Cor. 13:5). *"Take heed"* is from the Greek word *"prosecho"* meaning *"to hold to, signifies to turn to, turn one's attention to, hence, to give."* As an elder's attention is focused on the flock it needs to be focused upon himself as well.

Elders should watch their own steps closely for several good reasons. Paul told the Ephesian elders of one reason in vv. 29-31. *"Grievous wolves"* that would come into the flock to devour the sheep through false doctrines. This external threat was only a part of the problem. Even among their own number elders

HOLDFAST TO THE WORD

Titus 1:9

Elders should give heed to the example of Paul who held onto the Word to the very end of life. *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have*

kept the faith;" (2 Tim. 4:7). An elder can do this by: 1) studying the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15); 2) contending for the faith (Jd. 3); 3) being able and ready to give an answer to anyone concerning his hope (1 Pet. 3:15); and 4) being humble enough to reject any false concepts they have held in their own hearts. The elder needs to long for the spiritual food as much as the newborn babe desires milk (1 Pet. 2:2).

BE A GOOD STEWARD

Titus 1:7

The word "steward" means *"the manager of a household or household affairs."* Thus, an elder is to be the manager of God's affairs on earth or a good manager of the House of God. He is a good steward of his abilities, time, opportunities, and his family. He manages the church (1 Tim. 3:5). He is a good steward of the souls entrusted to him (1 Pet. 5:2,3). Remember, there is a great reward for the faithful steward. *"Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes"*(Lk. 12:42,43).

PRAY

James 5:14-16

Certainly, all Christians are to pray, but prayer has a special place in the work of an shepherd. If he neglects prayer for the saints he sins. Samuel said, *"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you;..."* (1 Sam. 12:23). To take the oversight of a congregation requires wisdom. Wisdom can be obtained through prayer (Js. 1:5). To shepherd a flock he needs to keep the lines of communication open with the Chief Shepherd. Elders cannot possibly do all the work of the church themselves. However, they can pray to the Lord of Harvest to send in reinforcements so the work can increase its yield (Mt. 9:37,38). Because of the heavy burden his duties bring upon his shoulders, he needs to pray for help (Heb. 4:16). Abraham Lincoln once said that he was often driven to his knees by the

conviction that there was no other place to go. When overseers learn to be dependent on the power of prayer their oversight will improve greatly.

Constant attention needs to be given to his prayer life, because there are many hindrances to prayer. If he is too brief in his prayers, they will not be as effective (Mt. 26:40; Lk. 6:12; Lk. 18:1-12). His life should never be so busy that he cannot take time out to pray. Martin Luther said, "I am so busy now that I find if I did not spend two or three hours each day in prayer, I could not get through the day. If I should neglect prayer but a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith." The elder who takes time for prayer will find ample time for all the other things needing his attention. Another hindrance is marital discord (1 Pet. 3:7). An unforgiving spirit will hinder his prayer life (Mt. 6:14,15). Times may come when he is unjustly wronged by the sheep, but he must be forgiving or forfeit his ability to pray for forgiveness. Furthermore, to pray while living in wrongdoing is to step on the gas while leave the car in neutral with the emergency brake set. Persistence in sin will close the ears of God to his prayers (Ps. 66:18). Those elders whose hearts are lifted up with pride cannot effectively lift up their hands in prayer (Lk. 18:9-14). Something that is hard to keep under a hat is a big head. Also, pride makes it painful to bow on one's knees. Remember, *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"* (Js. 5:16).

SHOW HOSPITALITY

1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8

The literal meaning of hospitality is *"lover of strangers."* According to 1 Peter 4:9 we are to show it to each other: *"Be hospitable to one another without grumbling."* He is to love the members well enough to invite them into his own home. This would include any of the members except for those under church discipline.

By maintaining hospitality he maintains one of the qualifications of a bishop. Showing hospitality helps him do his work. Through it he can get to know and help each member. By getting to know them on a personal basis he is in a better position to help them attain heaven and himself get to heaven (Mt.25:31-46). Hospitality can be a great tool in promoting church growth (3 Jn. 7,8). This is one of the characteristics of the early church which enabled the church to grow both in number and in strength (Ac. 2:46,47).

MANAGE HOUSEHOLD

Proper management of his household must be maintained. He is to rule well his own house (1 Tim. 3:4). A good marriage relationship must be maintained. Those children who are still at home must remain in subjection to him. No matter where his children are he should always use his influence to encourage them to remain faithful.

These are necessary not only for him to maintain certain domestic qualifications, but to set a proper example before the congregation. Members are not as likely to listen to an elder whose household is improperly managed. If he cannot manage his own house, he cannot manage God's house.

MAINTAIN PROPER MANNER & MOTIVES

1 Peter 5:2,3

In this passage Peter, the apostle, preacher, and fellow elder, outlines an elder's attitude, motive, and goal both from a positive and a negative aspect. *"Shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness: nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock"* (1 Pet. 5:2,3).

His positive attitude is expressed by the word *"voluntarily"*. Thayer defines the Greek word as meaning *"willingly, of one's own accord"* (198). He desires to do the work (1 Tim. 3:1). By way of contrast the negative attitude is: *"not under compulsion"*. He does not have a reluctant attitude toward his responsibilities. He is not a lazy man who has to be forced or coerced into carrying out his duty.

"With eagerness" describes the proper motive an elder is to have. "The word is compounded of pro, forward, and iumos, heart or spirit. Hence, with a ready mind, a forward spirit; denoting not mere willingness, but zeal" (Vincent, vol. 1, p. 666). This does not imply that every elder is to be a happy go lucky guy who is bursting with enthusiasm and bubbling over with emotion. This eagerness cannot be detected through a man's outward conduct, but is an inward zeal which drives him forward in his work. Elders are to work zealously. He is motivated by his love for souls and desire to please God. He is not to

be motivated by *"sordid gain"*. *"From aischros, disgraceful, and kerdos, gain. The word filthy is intended to convey the idea which lies in base or dishonorable; becoming such if it is made the motive..."* (ibid, pp. 665,666). Paul wrote, *"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'"* (1Tim. 5:17-18). Although an elder can be paid for his work he does not view his position as a *"money making venture."* He does not do it merely as a means of livelihood. His love for souls is much stronger than his concern for money.

The proper goal of an elder is setting good examples before the flock of God. Vincent discusses the Greek word *"tupoi"* which is translated *"examples."* From which we derive the English word *"type."*

"Peter uses three different terms for a pattern or model; a writing-copy for which classical writers *Perier paradeiyma*, an architect's plan a sculptor's or painter's mode...of which our word type is nearly a transcript. The word primarily means the impression left by a stroke (*tupto*, to strike). ...used of the stamp on coin; the impression of any engraving or hewn work of art; a monument of statue; the figures of the tabernacle of Moloch and of the star Remphan...Generally, an image or form, always with a statement of the object; and hence the kindred meaning of a pattern or model." (Vol. 1, p.667).

Peter points to *"lording it over"* as the improper goal of an elder. *"Other words are used for the exercise of legitimate authority in the church: to be over, (1 Th. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17) as ver. 2 tend. But this carries the idea of high-handed rule."* (Vincent, p. 666). How is he to rule? Since his rule over his house is compared to his rule of the church, looking to his leadership in the home can provide the answer (1 Tim. 3:4). His wife and children are in subjection. His wife and children don't rule the house. He doesn't rule his home as a dictator. If you went to his house and the wife and the children were afraid to ask a question or make a comment such would be a good indication of how he would rule the church. He is to rule like a loving father, who will take the time to show his children how to behave. He is not one who is demanding or telling the members to do things he has not been doing, but shows them by his example.

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ELDERS

Acts 20:28

Of all people elders ought to be able to work together. But as all people must, so elders must develop a working relationship with one another. Mutual cooperation among them takes time and effort. Elderships are made up of men who may be different in several ways. Each must learn to respect the differences which naturally will exist between them. Some elderships though made up of older men may have a couple of generations represented among them. The youngest might be 40 while the oldest is 80 years old. They may vary as to their levels of education. One might have never finished high school while at the other extreme one might have a Ph.D. These men will have various abilities. Although all must be apt to teach one may very well exceed the others in this ability. Another may be a great writer while another is an excellent preacher, and still another is an experienced personal worker. Their personalities may vary from the quite serious type to the loud effervescent personality. As a result of their differing backgrounds they will naturally have differing opinions. These need to be equally respected. Their occupations will differ as much as those of the apostles of Jesus Christ. If they could cooperate with each other despite their differences, so can elders.

Proper respect and treatment of fellow-elders needs to be maintained at all times. An elder should treat other overseers as all other Christians are to treat them. Remember, fellow-elders are Christians. Therefore, treat them as such (Rom. 12:9-21).

One of the beautiful things which results from the elders being different is that they can compliment each other. The plurality of elders with their various experiences and abilities serve as God's cross check at times. Whereas one elder may be quicker to react another elder with far greater patience can ease a trying situation. One elder's business experience can supplement those elders who lack such. Their varying strengths, talents, and weaknesses can be used to counterbalance each other.

Elders should not only be watchful for the flock and themselves, but also for one another. Many areas require them to examine one another. Check to see if the other overseers are maintaining their qualifications and good morals. Be on guard for shepherds who begin to teach doctrines contrary to

the Word. An overseer should never look the other way when he discovers something amiss in the life of another. He should even be willing to resign himself if the other elders have disqualified themselves and refuse to resign. If necessary, he should be willing to lead the congregation in disciplining an shepherd who refuses to repent.

In summary of this point here are some don'ts every elder should be mindful of: 1) don't force your opinions, 2) don't demand to have things your way, 3) don't overlook their shortcomings, and 4) don't compromise the truth for peace and unity.

CONCLUSION

An overseer who had problems himself went to one of the members to point out where he thought his brother was in error. The member told the elder to *"go sweep around your own back door instead pointing out the dirt around mine"*. Although the member didn't express the proper attitude in his response he demonstrates the need for overseers to take heed to themselves as the first order of business as an overseer.

REVIEW

1. List some reasons why elders need to examine themselves.
2. How does an elder holdfast to the Word?
3. What are the duties of a good steward?
4. How is a good prayer life vital to the work of an elder?

5. List some possible hindrances to an elder's prayer life.

6. Why should an elder continually show hospitality as part of his work?

7. T F If an elder cannot manage his own house, he cannot manage God's.

8. Matching:

_____	voluntarily	a. Negative motive.
_____	with eagerness	b. Negative goal
_____	sordid gain	c. Positive attitude.
_____	not under	d. Positive motive.
_____	compulsion	e. Positive goal.
_____	not lording it over	f. Negative attitude.
_____	good example	

9. List several areas in which elders will differ with one another.

10. What are some don'ts within an eldership?

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CONGREGATION

It is easy to consider another's responsibilities toward us but difficult to consider our duties toward them in return. Such is due to man's self-centered tendencies. Our duties toward the elders are not less important than their duties toward us. Punishment for failure is equal for both. When all elders perform their duties properly and each member performs his duty toward the elders there will be perfect peace and holy harmony. Yet when either fail in their reciprocal duties the result will be failure for the congregation in the sight of the Lord.

The only way there can be a functional eldership/congregation relationship is for every Christian to be a member of a local church. If a Christian wishes to receive the blessings of the oversight of the overseers he must become a member of the flock. Elders' oversight is limited to the *"flock among them."* Their realm of responsibility includes all those who hold membership in that flock. Therefore, the Christian must become a member of the local church by placing his membership and putting himself in subjection to the shepherds. An approved apostolic example exists for placing membership in a local congregation (Ac. 9:26). Membership not only brings blessings, but added responsibilities. These include one's duties toward the overseers.

Overseers and members exist within a local congregation in harmony only when there is mutual cooperation. This mutual cooperation is seen as both the eldership and the membership of the church perform their complimentary duties. The shepherds are to feed, therefore the flock must eat. The sheep must follow, because God's shepherds are leading. Elders must set the appropriate example. The members are to imitate their godly ways. The congregation must obey and submit as the overseers rule over the congregation. Only when each performs their God given roles will the local church be able to carry out its mission.



KNOW THEM

"And we urge you brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you," (1 Th. 5:12).

Whether or not this verse should be applied to elders has been subject to debate. Some consider it to exclusively apply to the apostles. Though it might apply to the apostles it also refers to elders. Elders are overseers. This verse includes all those who have charge "over" the church at Thessalonica. Therefore, this command has definite reference to elders or overseers. However, it would not include deacons. They are not overseers with the elders. Their office is one of service, not superintendence. Deacons do not oversee the flock, they are overseen by the elders like the rest of the flock.

The word *"know"* is from the Greek word *"oida"*. J. B. Lightfoot defines it as meaning *"to see in their true character, to recognize the worth of, to appreciate, to value"*. Thayer gives its meaning as *"...to have regard for one, cherish, pay attention to; 1 Th. 5:12"*. The New American Standard translates it *"appreciate"* instead of *"know."* It should be crystal clear from this that *"know"* involves more than just mere acquaintance or being familiar with their name or appearance. Members should know something about the men who have charge over them. Just knowing their names is not enough. For example, I am acquainted with the President in that I know what his job is, I recognize his face, I know who his wife is, what his name is, who his children are, I see him on the news, but I do not know him like Christians are to know the elders. Members need to find out the elders' background, family, experiences, abilities, even their likes and dislikes and their personality. How can the eldership lead a congregation if the members don't know anything about the elders.

Each brother and sister in God's family needs to develop a close relationship with the overseers. To know God is not to simply recognize His existence (2 Th. 1:8). It involves being very close to Him. The members can develop such a relationship with the overseers by inviting them into their home. They should feel free to go to them with their personal

problems and concerns. Consider them as friends, not spiritual bosses.

Knowing the elders involves understanding them. Understand their awesome duties. Understand their life and commitment. It must be understood that they too are mere men with imperfections and mistakes in their lives. Furthermore, the church should understand that they are accountable to the Chief Shepherd and not to their whims.

The congregation is to appreciate and take an interest in them. This involves giving thanks for, praying for, and encouraging them in their efforts. Take interest in the good works they are performing for the Lord and His people. Invite them into your home to talk with them about the church. Each member is to make themselves available to cooperate with the eldership.

When Joseph said that Potiphar did not know of his goods. He meant that Potiphar had no regard or concern over them, but left that entirely up to Joseph who served as his head steward. When a Pharaoh came to Egypt that knew not Joseph it meant that he did not esteem Joseph for what he had done. When the Bible says that Eli's sons "*knew not Jehovah*" it didn't mean they were atheists. It meant that they had no respect for Him. When a congregation does not know the elders they do not have the proper respect and appreciation for them. Since knowing them is commanded if Christian does not know them he has sinned against God.

ESTEEM THEM

"And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. 'Be at peace among yourselves.'" 1 Th. 5:13.

The word "*esteem*" is translated from the Greek word "*hageisthai*" meaning "*to consider, deem, account, think to esteem one exceedingly, 1 Th. 5:13*" (Thayer, p. 6) and "*to lead the mind through a reasoning process to a conclusion, and so to think, to estimate*" (Vincent, vol. 4, p. 48). Christians are to access the value of the eldership as being very high. They appraise their worth to the congregation as being nearly priceless.

Historically, there has been a rich tradition throughout the centuries of honoring elders. Among the Hebrews, and even among the ancient Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Germans, and others the elders were respected. The idea of age merged with dignity and often with authority. Elders were

looked to for religious and civil guidance and judgment. The Greeks also honored their elders in their pagan religious observances. The Korean language Hangul is arranged with prefixes and suffixes which are attached to words when speaking to the aged. This is done to show respect. However, in today's society it is youth that is glamorized, idolized, and even deified. Many elderships are not valued as much as they should be.

Paul tells us that the manner in which elders are to be esteemed is "*very highly in love.*" This means that they are to be esteemed in such a way as to strive to always act in their best interest. They are to be loved as children love their father or as sheep love their shepherd.

The high estimate placed upon the eldership is not motivated by personal gain, but "*for their work's sake*". They are so important because of the noble work they do, not because they are in a certain position. If they are not doing their work the estimate the congregation has of them will naturally be quite low. However, if the members fail to esteem them for the good work they are doing they may become discouraged and quit. Understanding this will help eliminate personality clashes. If the elder is qualified and doing the work he needs to be esteemed no matter how the congregation might feel about his level of education, financial ability or even his personality. Remember, each new generation is capable of attaining new heights in knowledge and accomplishments, but this can be done only on the shoulders of the previous generation.

BE AT PEACE

"...Live at peace among yourselves" (1 Th. 5:13).

Living a peaceful life is a necessity for all Christians. Jesus commanded his disciples to "*be at peace with one another*" (Mk. 9:50). Peace is an attribute of God (Jn. 14:27; Phil. 4:7; 1 Cor. 14:33). Since He is our spiritual Father peace is part of our lives. This peace comes from God is bound upon His children by commandment (Rom. 12:18; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:3; Col. 3:15). Christians should imitate their Savior who is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6). They are to live by and spread "*the gospel of peace*" (Rom. 10:15). Being a people at peace results in great blessings (Rom. 14:19; Gal. 5:22,23). Jesus Himself pronounced a benediction upon peacemakers (Mt. 5:9).

Nothing can make the atmosphere sweeter for

an eldership to work in than peace. They need the confident and enthusiastic cooperation of the members. They are distracted from their work when they have to constantly deal with bickering among the members. When Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem the only thing that was able to grind the work to a stop was the unpleasant and unpeaceful conflict between the rich nobles and the poor whom they were taking advantage of (Neh. 5). Of course, no congregation is going to be completely at rest without any conflict. Remember, peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to effectively deal with it.

SUPPORT THEM

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'" (1 Tim. 5:17,18).

Just what does Paul mean by "double honor"? "Honor" means "primarily a valuing..." (Vine, p. 560) and "a valuing by which the price is fixed; hence the price itself..." (Thayer, p. 624). The word not only involves the idea of respect and esteem, but also the support of or providing for the elders (1 Tim. 5:3; Mk. 7-8-13). Two basic views dominate concerning this verse. 1) Those who rule well are to be given a double portion of the honor given to other elders. 2) Those who rule well are to be given another kind of honor in addition to the normal honor given to all elders. The latter view seems the most logical and scriptural. It is not reasonable or right for the scriptures to give preference in honor to one elder over another. Exalting one elder more than another will inevitably lead to the apostasy in the organization of the church. An elder either rules well or he rules poorly. If he rules well he deserves to be esteemed if he rules poorly he deserves no honor. Furthermore, Peter implied that his fellow-elders could be paid, but should not allow such to be their motive for serving (1 Pet. 5:2).

The most conclusive proof that this command allows for elders to be paid is found in the context. Paul makes two arguments in defense of giving double honor to elders. First, he reminds them of a commandment in the Law of Moses: *"you shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing"*. In Deuteronomy 25:4 the Law forbade the muzzling of an ox as he

treaded out the corn or grain. As he went around and round he was left to eat as much as he would for he was doing the work. Even among the traditions of the pagans they condemned the prohibiting of an ox the right to eat the grain.

Furthermore, Paul affirms in 1 Corinthians 9:9-11 that God didn't put that verse in the Bible just for oxen, but also for preachers. Now as a preacher I am not delighted with the idea of being compared to an ox, but at least preachers are not alone in the comparison. Second, Paul quotes from Lk. 10:7 and Lev. 19:13: *"For the laborer is worthy of his hire."* An honest day's pay for an honest day's work. This verse does not teach that an elder has a right to wages simply because he is an elder. Support is only for the work that is done by the overseer. The type of work he is to be supported for is specified. The work is not physical labor such as the janitor for the building. The work is not just to assist the evangelist or to make an evangelist out of a shepherd. He is to do the same kind of work he has always done as an elder and as all the other elders are currently doing. The only difference is he is being supported so he can devote more of his time to the work than other elders. After all an elder is already apt to teach and there is plenty of teaching to be done.

Many objections raised are over the support of an elder. 1) Some believe that there is no New Testament example of this. The three ways to establish authority are: direct command, approved example, and necessary inference. Any one of these will provide us with God given authority. We do not need a direct command and an approved example. God has given us a direct command to support elders therefore we have our authority and an approved example is unnecessary. 2) *"This would have a tendency to create a head or presiding elder."* Though this may be true the abuse of God's Law by some doesn't authorize the neglect of it by others. 3) *"Some unqualified men would seek the office as an easy position"*. The qualifications are strict enough to take care of this problem. All unqualified overseers do not have the right to continue to serve much less receive support. 4) *"All elders might think they should be paid."* The only elders who have the right to think this are those who *"work hard at preaching and teaching."* 5) Still others complain that all the work will be left for the paid elder to do. Although this may be true in some cases the argument is invalid. Many churches leave all the work to the paid evangelist, so should we cease to support gospel preachers on that basis.

Churches should consider the present habit of supporting only preachers. Many advantages could be

in store for those congregations who support an elder who works hard and long for them. Such would go a long way in creating greater zeal. It would result in the elimination of indifference and worldliness among the members due to the unruly brethren being dealt with. The preacher would be freed up to do more of his work. This would take away the tendency toward "pastorization" of the preacher. Each individual member could receive more attention and instruction. It would help the spread of the Gospel. What better qualified man could be found for doing this work than an elder?

RECEIVE NO UNCONFIRMED ACCUSATIONS AGAINST THEM

"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses" (1 Tim. 5:19).

Again, Paul points out a commandment from the Law of Moses. In Deuteronomy 19:15 the Law required two or more witnesses in order for any accusation to be sustained against a man. Jesus referred to this when He said, *"It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true"* (Jn. 8:17). A hasty charge against any Christian is wrong. We need to be slow to speak against any brother especially an elder. This is not just a command to preachers though they receive more idle accusations against the elders than most members. Most accusations come in the form of idle gossip, the first Christian who hears such best stop it before it spreads. Any accusation must be confirmed by more than one witness. This does not mean there will never be a valid accusation when only one person brings it forth.

Why is this necessary? 1) Because of the position elders hold. Men of responsibility have always been prime targets for false accusations. The tabloids, newspapers, magazines, TV, etc. are resplendent with examples of false accusations being leveled at people with position in life. 2) Because much of it is merely idle gossip. Say to the one gossiping about an elder or any brother, *"If you do not feel your brother acted wisely in that matter go to him and talk about it. You have no right to criticize him to me, and I have no right to listen to your criticism. We might discuss this matter for hours, but will not be able to accomplish anything constructive."* 3) Because false accusations are dangerous. The twisted accusations by the Pharisees finally resulted in the crucifixion of Christ. Such led to the stoning of

Stephen. Paul labored in peril among false brethren and false accusations by the Jews. 4) Because evil men are always willing to attack those in authority and those who are righteous.

Adam Clarke in his commentary on 1 Tim. 5:19 wrote this warning,

"Be very cautious of receiving evil reports against those whose business it is to preach to others, and correct their vices. Do not consider an elder as guilty of any alleged crime unless it be proved by two or three witnesses. This the Law of Moses required in respect to all. Among the Romans, a plebeian might be condemned on the deposition of one credible witness; but it required two to convict a senator. The reasons for this difference is evident; those whose business it is to correct others will usually have many enemies; great caution, therefore, should be used in admitting accusations against such persons."

Before accepting any accusation we should demand good evidence from all the reliable witnesses. Their evidence must match. If an accusation can be sustained then the next responsibility must be pursued by the congregation.

REBUKE THEM

"Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality" (1 Tim. 5:20,21).

In verse one of this chapter Timothy is instructed not to rebuke an elder, but entreat him as a father. Does this contradict verse 20? Verse one has reference to older men and not to those serving in the eldership. The context will verify this. Older men may need to be rebuked when this is necessary the older man should be approached as one would a father. They should not be rebuked as we would a child. Some elders will need to be rebuked. Overseers of the church are not foolproof. Since elders are older men verse one would apply.

This must be done publicly when the accusation has been confirmed to the congregation with more than one reliable witness. Why publicly? Because of their position and example of leadership. This doesn't demand that they automatically resign. They are to be

rebuked, then they must repent and get back to work. Some brethren fail to know the difference between rebuking and ousting. Sin does not automatically disqualify a man as an elder.

"...that others may also fear..." is given as the purpose of this public rebuking. This is not just for the elder's good, but for the good of all the members. Others will fear the same fate if they fall or are guilty. If elders are condemned they will certainly expect the same. This fear would have a great restraining effect on their lives. It is little wonder that there is no respect for the authority of the elders when many have never witnessed a public rebuking of an erring elder.

Paul very emphatically states in verse 21 that this must be done and without prejudice. This is a very hard duty to perform. Many brethren would be tempted to overlook or ignore proper action in some cases. Some preachers would be afraid of being labeled as trouble makers. Paul wants Timothy to do his work as an evangelist without bias. Everyone one has to be treated alike. Though the temptation to show partiality to elders would be great. Partiality *"according to its etymology, inclining toward. In later Greek, of joining one party in preference to another. In Clement in the sense of factious preferences"* (Vincent, Vol. 4, p. 269). Preachers who rebuke others would be hypocritical if he rebukes not a guilty elder.

Perhaps the most difficult responsibility yet to fall upon my shoulders as a gospel preacher has been the carrying out of this commandment. Having worked with two elders for a several years it became evident that they were practicing error and neglecting their duties as elders, overseers, and shepherds of God's family. On several occasions we met to discuss these things. Before I ever spoke to anyone about this problem I rebuked them privately not once, but twice. After a couple of years the problems became so pronounced again that others began to notice. After the elders began to use the pulpit to defend their views and neglect of duty several men in the congregation came together to discuss these things and point out their error. After this failed, I was forced to consider 1 Timothy 5:20,21. Though I had never seen elders rebuked publicly or had I even heard of it being done I knew I couldn't reject a direct command from God. One Saturday night with the elders present and the entire congregation I rebuked and admonished them to repent. Afterward one of the other men in the congregation backed this up with his added admonition. Such was done in a spirit of love and motivated out of love for the elders and God. The result was differed between the two elders. One

repented of one of his sins and recognized his need to resign. The other said he would never resign. The latter attitude prevailed in the end.

Although this did not end in the most desirable way it must be remembered that failure to rebuke elders who sin is failure of the congregation to obey God and fulfill its obligations to their brothers lost in sin. If they fail to heed our warnings their blood will be upon them and not on us.

REMEMBER AND IMITATE THEM

"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Heb. 13:7).

The phrase *"those who led you"* shows this verse includes shepherds. "Remember" means *"to be mindful of, to remember, to call to mind"*, (Thayer, p. 416) and *"Remember with a view to observing their admonitions"* (Vincent, vol. 4, p. 564). The members are to remember their qualifications and responsibilities, their instruction and examples. To remember is to actively pursue their conduct.

Christians must follow their examples as long as they are following Christ (1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Pet. 5:2,3). We imitate their faith as they hear and follow the Word of God. They should never be followed into sin (Mt. 15:14). We are to consider the blessed results of their conduct as a motivator in imitating them.

OBEY THEM

"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).

"Obey" is translated from *"peitho"* meaning *"to be persuaded to suffer one's self to be persuaded; to be induced to believe...to listen to obey, yield to, comply with."* (Thayer, 497). Not a military term as the Army or Marines would use i.e., obey without question. Rather this obedience is rendered because one is persuaded that a certain action is the thing to do.

Some cite Acts 4:29 and 5:29 to teach that we are not to obey the elders, because we are not to obey men. True we are not to blindly obey them. Yet the Bible does teach we are to obey men. We are to obey our parents (Eph. 6:1,2). Wives are to obey their

husbands (Eph. 5:23,24). Employers are to be obeyed (Heb. 13:17). We are even to obey the government (Rom. 13:1,2). Without the obedience of the membership the eldership would be impotent and superfluous.

Refusal to obey them is rebellion against God. Just as Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the 250 leaders of Israel were considered rebellious when they refused to obey Moses and Aaron (Num. 13,14). The only time disobedience is in line is if the eldership cannot persuade us by the Word.

SUBMIT TO THEM

The Greek word for "submit" means *"to give way, yield; metaph., to yield to authority and admonitions, to submit,"* (Thayer, 638). The difference between submit and obey is slight, but necessary. Submission has to do with an attitude of desire that stands behind the obedience rendered. It is one's will or desire to obey. Convicts in prisons will obey and yet if the walls were removed, you could quickly see that submission is not there. They obey not out of choice but out of force. We are to obey our overseers willingly. The following story aptly illustrates the distinction for us. A mother was traveling on a train with her son. She told him to sit down, but he paid her no mind. She then enforced her request with a treat of spanking his backside unless he was soon setting on it. At this he reluctantly obeyed her command. With a frown on his face he told his mother, *"I may be setting down on the outside, but I am still standing up on the inside."*

Submission to elders should not be difficult for Christians. Christians are told to submit to many others: the Lord (Js. 4:7); wives to husbands, (Eph. 5:24); to older people, (1 Pet. 5:5); and to the government (1 Pet. 2:13).

This submission will be helpful in many areas of the congregation/eldership relationship. It will enable us to cooperate in doing every good work. *"Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work"* (Tit. 3:1). The highest calling of every Christian is to submit to the Word of God. Now if elders are submitting themselves to the Word of God, a Christian cannot submit to God without submitting to the eldership. We should yield in respect for the decisions they render in all matters of judgment even if our opinions widely differ from theirs. And even if we think they are not the most qualified to make a particular decision. If

they are scripturally qualified then they are qualified to make any decision for the congregation. Certainly their will be others in the congregation which would be more qualified in certain areas. Wise elders will recognize this and seek their advice. Harry S. Truman while in office said, *"I'm confident that there are at least a million men in this country that could do this job better than I, but the job is my responsibility and I will do it to the best of my ability."* At times elders will have to admonish us. We must submit to such for our own good. One young man, after hearing a rebuke administered by elders to a wayward Christian, remarked, *"If the elders ever came and talked with me like that, it would be about the most sobering thing that could happen. I respect them so much that I would almost feel as if Christ was rebuking me personally. If I need straightening up, that would do it if anything would."* Little children may resent correction, but mature Christians realize the necessity and value of such love and concern.

The Hebrew writer gives several reasons why Christians should be obedient and submissive to the elders. 1) *"they keep watch over your souls"*. Our eternal destiny is at the root of their concern for us, the decisions they make, and the guidance they give. 2) They will give an account for your souls to God. Their eternal destiny is at stake on how well they do their job. Our cooperation will assist them in giving a good account. 3) It will help them do their job with joy and not with grief. Elders that love to do their work will be far more effective than those who find it a burden and a daily grind because of the disobedience of various members. 4) It would be unprofitable for us to disobey and be unsubmitive to them. *"Literally, not paying for expenses, what does not pay"* (Vincent, vol. 4, p. 572). Some things just don't pay. Failure in this command is one of them. As it did not pay for those of Israel to disobey their leaders in the past.

GREET THEM

"Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints" (Heb. 13:24).

Greeting one another is a command for all Christians (Rom. 16:16). It is a great way to show our love and appreciation for those who lead us. This greeting involves more than just a mere "hello" and hand shake. It is a show of interest in them and an attempt to strength our friendship with our shepherds. You can make more friends in six weeks by showing interest in them than by six months of trying to get

people interested in you. It is vain to condemn and complain about an elder who did not shake hands with you. It is just as much our duty to greet them as it is theirs.

PRAY FOR THEM

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence"(I Tim. 2:1,2).

Because elders are in authority over us we should pray for them. Christians and elders that pray together stay together. Christians that approach heaven in mutual prayer will walk through the gates of heaven together one day. Shepherds need divine help in order to do their job. They need boldness, wisdom, opportunities, vision, etc. If they are to receive these all members need to put them at the head of their prayer list. A prayerless man in the church is like a paralyzed organ of the physical body. If the apostles, prophets, and inspired writers of the New Testament felt the need for brethren praying for them how much more so for our overseers today. Any church may have mighty men of God serving as elders if it is willing to pay the price, and that price is prayer. It will take all the praying they can do, and all the praying we will do to meet the fearful responsibilities and gain the greatest success. Like Aaron and Hur held up Moses's hands when the battle so fiercely raged about them, so we need to hold up their hands by lifting up holy hands in prayer for and with them.

CALL FOR THEM

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Js. 5:14-16).

This controversial passage has sparked several views: 1) Miraculous healing by the elders. 2) Some think it involves spiritually sick members and

not those who are physically sick. 3) On the other side of that are those who contend that it only refers to those who are physically sick. 4) Finally, others believe it refers to both the physically and spiritually sick.

First, it needs to be pointed out that the anointing of oil was used for several different reasons in both the Old Testament and New Testament. It was used for medicinal purposes, in ordinary or cosmetic use, symbolically, and in an official way, such as, appointing one as king. Next, the Greek word for anoint is "*alepho*". It is used in Lk. 7:38,46; Jn. 11:2; 12:3; and Mk. 16:1 and meaning - to apply oil to something to oil. We oil machinery, we don't anoint it. The medicinal usage is found in Lk. 10:34; Is. 1:6; Jer. 8:22 and 46:11.

This passage is not talking about the miraculous healing of the sick by the elders for several obvious reasons. 1) It would imply that all elders had this power. Such was not true even in the first century. 2) Miracles were performed for the express reason of producing faith, not perfectly healthy Christians. 3) It is the prayer of faith that was to heal the sick not the anointing of oil.

It is my belief that this passage refers both to physically and spiritually sick Christians. Verse 14 is intended for the physically sick and verse 15 tells of the spiritually sick. It is the duty of the members to contact the elders. Christians should never complain about the elders not tending to their needs if they refuse to contact them. The shepherds of souls are not omniscient. We need to feel free to call upon them for assistance in any problem or need both physically and spiritually. Elders are not being instructed to sit and wait for the members to call in order for them to do their work. Certainly some members may be too sick to call them. Shepherds will many times notice the spiritual illness of a member long before they do. Besides such an interpretation would violate many other commands.

CONCLUSION

Elders are not mere figureheads that don't do much figuring and do not demand much attention. They are there twenty-four hours a day. The overseer/member relationship will work out for the glory of God if each performs their reciprocal duties to each other. God's plan will work if we will work God's plan. Remember, good elders make good churches, and good churches make good elders.

REVIEW

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why is membership in the local church important?

 2. What does knowing the eldership involve?

 3. What does esteem mean?

 4. How would a peaceful congregation benefit the eldership?

 5. What arguments does Paul use to demonstrate that elders are to be supported financially?

 6. Be ready to discuss some of the objections people have concerning the support of elders.

 7. What are some of the benefits a church could realize by supporting an elder in his work? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Why is it necessary not to receive unconfirmed accusations against them?

 9. Explain the apparent contradiction between 1 Timothy 5:1 and 5:20?

 10. What steps should a congregation take if an elders is found guilty of sin?

 11. In what way should the flock remember and imitate them?

 12. Be ready to explain the difference between "obey" and "submit".

 13. What is the consequence of refusing to obey the elders?

 14. Why are we commanded to submit to the elders? |
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15. What is involved in greeting the elders?

16. Why is it necessary for the members to pray for the elders?

17. What are the various views held on James 5:14-16.

18. Be ready to explain why this passage is not dealing with miraculous healing?

19. T F Elders need to be alert to members who are spiritually ill, but visiting the sick in the hospital is primarily the responsibility of the preacher.