

The
Church
Without
Elders

Edited By
Thomas H. Thomas

THE CHURCH

without

Elders!

Edited by

Thomas H. Thomas

The Church without Elders
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Introduction

Problems in the Lord's church? Surely there must be some mistake! Yet, we all recognize that there are problems in the church today. As a minister of the Gospel, I have not had the pleasure of working with an eldership of a local congregation. But I have seen the turmoil and frustration that a lack of proper leadership has produced within the church. To this end I have asked several faithful and knowledgeable brethren to each write a chapter for this book. The content of this book shows their many years of experience in the ministry with a combined experience over 100 years of faithful gospel preaching. The intents of this book are two fold:

To shed light on the need of scriptural leadership.

And to show that proper leadership is to let all of the members know that they are a part of the church and not just participants.

Does this book have all the answers? NO! Each writer was asked to write their chapter in their own way based on experience and I firmly believe that as you read each chapter the book becomes a starting guide to help congregations and brethren to understand leadership the Biblical way. Is there a perfect leader outside of Christ? No, we all have our deficiencies, including knowledge or ideas on how to lead the church without an eldership.

Today the Church is in turmoil because of the false teaching of some, change agents trying to depart from the revealed truth. Many members worship without Elders, hence the title of this book. And to those men who are concerned with trying to lead the church today but are unsure of the "How to". This book was created to be helpful to them.

May this book be used for the Glory of the church.

Tom Thomas, Editor
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GOD'S DESIGN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP
"What the Bible says about Leadership"

Wilburn R. Ashby

OUTLINE

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GOD'S DESIGN FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

I will present in this study what the Bible teaches about the leadership in the church of Christ. Jesus did not intend to leave his church to be a formless, leaderless group of unguided people. His church will be a thoroughly ordered body of people, not a chaotic, self-willed sect. The church of Christ is made up of people who are obedient to God's will.

In this lesson I will be presenting the organization of the Lord's church and concentrate mostly on the "eldership." Since the church belongs to God and Christ, it is up to them to determine the organization. It, then, is our responsibility to see how they have organized the church and to follow that organization. The church should follow the divine pattern revealed in the scriptures, not the plans of man. The apostles were sent out by Jesus to establish congregations and thus were the authority for the churches. There were no successors to the apostles, so the Bible reveals how the church was to be organized when they were gone. The Bible teaches that men who are to take leading rolls are the elders, deacons and evangelists or preachers. Elders are the "key" men in the congregation, with the deacons, and preachers in lesser roles of leadership. The function of the elders is to oversee, superintend, harmonize, and integrate the work of evangelists, teachers and the whole membership. Therefore, a strong faithful eldership is needed in every congregation of the Lord's church.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH:

The church of Christ is an absolute monarchy with Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords." The church belongs to him and he serves as its head (Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18). The Bible teaches that Jesus holds all power and all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). Thus, He and he alone, has the authority to make and establish laws. His laws and teachings for the church is the New Testament, his last "will and testament. "The New Testament must be our authority in all things.

ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL CONGREGATIONS:

Only the local churches (congregations) has officers and are organized on earth. In the New Testament each congregation was autonomous, or self-ruled. Each one is independent of all other congregations and organizations in its government. Each congregations is left free to follow the direction of the Lord as revealed in the scriptures in carrying out the work which God has given the church to do. This arrangement means that each congregation is not necessarily affected by the teachings or actions of other congregations. The proof is this is taught in Acts 20:17, 28 where Paul called together the elders of the church at Ephesus and in verse 28 told them to "take heed...to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." It is conclusive that the extent of the oversight of an eldership is only to the flock in which they have been appointed as overseers. Peter's words also prove autonomy of each congregation. In 1 Peter 5:1-3 he states: "Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising

the oversight." The exercise of the elders' oversight is confined to one particular church or flock. An advantage of local autonomy is that if one church digresses, it cannot carry another with it. Such is the "safety valve" against apostasy provided we hold the pattern of sound words.

THE ELDERSHIP:

God ordained that the local church should be overseen in its work and worship by men qualified for this special task. These men are known as elders, pastors or bishops. Their special assignments are due to the Lord's directives for the church as revealed in the New Testament. They are not the ultimate authority, but rather have the authority to lead the congregation in the decision to carry out the commands of Christ. Every congregation of the Lord's church should want and have elders because it is the will of God. Elderships are not optional. Paul said to Titus, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5). Paul and Barnabas "ordained elders in every church...and commended them to the Lord on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23). No other individuals have the responsibility of these men. A congregation will never be truly organized until the will of God is carried out in this area. The number one reason every congregation should have elders is that it is the will of God.

THE OFFICE OF ELDERS:

We need to understand first the meaning of the word, "office." I Timothy 3:1 says, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." This shows that the meaning of an office in the church is a "work." An office in the church is an area of responsibility. or work. Many think that officers in the Lord's church are like officers in the government, having a desk and telling others what to do. Each elder in the Lord's church has a responsibility or work to do. Elders have the responsibility of oversight (I Peter 5:2). They are to watch in behalf of the souls of the members (Hebrews 13:17). They are spiritual shepherds of the flock (Acts 20:28).

NAMES OF ELDERS:

Elders in the Lord's church were called by six names, that are translated from three Greek words. Each name has an important meaning.

(1) Elders. This is the most common name and means an older person. This refers to one older in faith as well as years. Elders are the most mature and experienced Christians in the church. One of their qualifications was they were not be novices (I Timothy 3:6). The Bible says that Paul called the elders of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:17). In several cities elders were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23). Titus was left in Crete to ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5). The name elders shows they were to be older, more mature and thus have respect which years of faithfulness brings.

(2) Presbyters. Another name meaning exactly the same as elders translated from the same Greek word is Presbyters. It is found in the Bible one time, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (I Timothy 4:14). This word has the same significance as the word "elders" and should be understood from the above definition.

(3) Bishops. Another name for elders is bishops meaning "overseers." It is found in I Timothy 3:1,2; Titus 1:7 and Philipians 1:1. It is elsewhere used to refer to Jesus as the overseer of our souls, (I Peter 2:25). This name shows the work of over-seeing which elders must do. I Peter chapter five says that they are to have the oversight. This emphasizes that elders themselves do not necessarily do all the work of teaching and leading, but they do oversee all such work. They must superintend or administer the work of the local church. As all organizations must have overseers, God has ordained that the Lord's church have bishops or overseers.

(4). Overseers. As seen above, this word means exactly the same as bishops, and is translated from the same Greek word as bishops. An overseer looks out over the church. He is a watchman over the welfare and business of the congregation. Acts 20:28 says that the Holy Spirit had made the Ephesians elders overseers of the flock. It was their responsibility to keep out false teachers which would come (verses 29,30). The name "overseers" tells of the important work of oversight which is so necessary in the Lord's church.

(5) Pastors. This name for elders is found only once in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:11). It is another word meaning "shepherds." Spiritual leaders over the people of Israel were called pastors (Jeremiah 2:8). Woes and curses were pronounced upon those pastors who destroyed and scattered the Lord's sheep (Jeremiah 23:1-7). The word pastor is similar to the word pasture. This further shows the meaning of a shepherd and sheep. Denominational churches differ from the Bible in that their "preacher" is called a pastor. In the Bible preachers were evangelists, not pastors. Pastors were elders in the Lord's church, and there were always more than one in each congregation.

(6) Shepherds. In writing to elders the apostle Peter tells them to feed the flock among them. Then he says when the chief Shepherd shall appear (Christ), they would receive a fadeless crown (I Peter 5:1-4). This shows that elders are shepherds in the congregation under Christ the chief Shepherd. The comparison of elders to shepherds is meaningful. Shepherds in Bible lands were very interested in their sheep They loved them and nurtured them (Psalm 23). They always led ahead of them, never driving them from behind. They knew each problem of each animal and loved every one of them. They protected them, fed them, and watered them. Shepherds would suffer great hardships to find a lost sheep or to keep their flock from harm. This is the kind of officers the Lord wants as elders. The name "shepherd" and all other names for elders in the church help

to give us a good understanding of these men. Elders are presbyters, bishops, overseers, pastors, or shepherds.

To prove from the Scriptures that all these names refer to the same group of men, we will look at three Bible references.

(1) In Acts 20:17-28, all three Greek words that are translated by the six English words are used to refer to the same group of men. In verse 17 Paul calls to him the "elders of the church" at Ephesus. In verse 28 Paul is yet speaking to these elders and charges them: "take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops. Notice carefully, the apostle addresses the ELDERS and says that the Holy Spirit made them BISHOPS. They are the same men! Further, Paul continues in verse 28 and tells them "to feed the church of the Lord" This word, feed, is the Greek word translated "pastor" or "shepherd." It may be viewed from the meaning of each word as follows: The elders, older qualified men, are bishops who oversee the church, or who pastor the flock of God as spiritual shepherds. These names are used in speaking of the same group of men and are not to be distinguished from each other.

(2) A second passage of Scripture is I Peter 5:1,2. In this passage once again all three of the Greek words translated by the six English words are used. Consider: "The elders therefore among you I exhort...Tend (pastor or shepherd) the flock of God which is among you , exercising the oversight (Bishop or overseer). So Peter agrees with Paul that elders, bishops, and pastors are the same!

(3) The third Scripture is Titus 1:5-7. In this passage only two of the Greek words are used but shows they are the same group of men. In giving the qualifications of elders, he says in verses five and six that elders must be blameless. Then in verse seven states, "for the bishop must be blameless. It is obvious that qualified elders become the overseers or bishops of the church.

THE NUMBER OF ELDERS:

The number of elders for each local church is always in the plural in the New Testament. Every example in the Bible presents a plurality of elders over a single congregation. Notice the following passages to see that this was the New Testament pattern. There were a plurality of elders in each of the churches at Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra as appointed by Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:23). At Jerusalem the church had a number of elders (Acts 15:2,4,6,22). The church at Ephesus had a plural number of elders (Acts 20:17,28). The epistle to the Phillipians was addressed to saints with their "bishops and deacons,:" thus plural in number (Philippians 1:1). The church of the Thessalonians had a number of "them" that were over the saints (I Thessalonians 5:12). Titus was to appoint elders in each place (Titus 1:5). The churches of Christ at Iconium, Derbe, Lystra, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Phillipi, Thessalonica, and the churches

in the cities of Crete without exception had elders. There are no examples to the contrary in the whole of the New Testament. This is God's plan for his churches throughout time. If not, nothing in Scripture could be said to be a guide to us today. The departure from this order of things was gradual, resulting finally in a falling away from the New Testament pattern. That falling away resulted in the Roman Catholic Church. The pattern for the church of the New Testament includes in its local government a group of men qualified to serve as elders, overseers, spiritual shepherds. A church can exist without elders while it matures them for appointment, but no local church can find authority for one elder or bishop to rule over it. This shows great wisdom by Christ. If a single man ruled each congregation he might easily think of himself as the "chief" of the church. He would be tempted to seek prominence for himself, since he would be sole ruler. There must always be more than one elder in each church.

It needs to be pointed out that in the Lord's church all elders have equal authority. I Peter 5:4 speaks of Christ as the "chief Shepherd," but nowhere does the Bible call an elder, "chief elder." Never do we read of any man as "the bishop" of a church or of a group of churches. Each congregation has "overseers", not "an overseer or pastor." The apostle Peter called himself a fellow elder in speaking to other elders (I Peter 5:1). Elders are warned against being lifted up with pride and falling into the condemnation of the devil (I Timothy 3:6). One of the first departures in the early church was in its government. It later led to the Roman Catholic idea of bishops over several churches. All elders in a church have equal authority. None has greater power than any other.

RELATIONSHIP OF ELDERS TO THE CONGREGATION:

The church is not a democracy. It is an absolute monarchy with Christ on the throne. While elders are not kings, they have been authorized to expedite the work of the church as Christ commands. Elders cannot make laws where God made none. They simply carry out those God has commanded, and God has given them authority to do this. Notice scriptures where this authority is taught. Elders are to "TAKE HEED" to themselves and to the flock. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28). The word "heed" means to "hold to , turn one's attention to." The Holy Spirit made them overseers and they have the right to turn their attention to every member and see to it that what they are doing is pleasing unto the Lord.

Elders are to "TEND" the flock. In I Peter 5:1-3 we read, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." The word "tend" or "feed" means "to shepherd, to nourish, promote the interest of, direct, superintend, to rule."

Elders have the "RULE" over the congregation. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief" (Hebrews 13:17). "Rule" means "to go before, to be a leader, to rule, command, to have authority over, leading in respect to influence, controlling in counsel." They must give the congregation organization and direction.

Elders also have the duty of keeping the church "PURE." In doing so, they teach the word (I Timothy 3:2). They are able by sound doctrine to "convict the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). "Convict" means to "bring to light, expose, demonstrate, convince, reprove, and correct those who speak against or contradict the truth." They are to "warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all" (I Thessalonians 5:14). They also take the lead in church discipline (II Thessalonians 3:6).

Since elders have authority over the congregation, the congregation has responsibilities to their overseers. First, the Bible says they are to "Know them, and esteem them." "We beseech you, brethren, to KNOW them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to ESTEEM them very highly in love for their work's sake" (I Thessalonians 5:12,13). Second, they are to "Be subject to them." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and SUBMIT yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account" (Hebrews 13:17). Third, they are to "Receive not an accusation against them, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses (I Timothy 5:19). Fourth, they are to support them who devote full time to their work financially (I Timothy 5:17,18).

QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK OF ELDERS:

In selecting men for the office of elders, some congregations just choose the "best we have." This is done because it is hard to find men who meet the qualifications God gave in the New Testament for elders to meet. God gave these qualifications because they are needed to be able to do the work. The work of elders is very requiring, as we will see. The total picture can be presented under two heads: BE and DO. God says this is what they "must be" in order that they "may do" their work.

QUALIFICATIONS: The qualifications of elders are given in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Even though none will meet these qualifications perfectly, each elder must meet all of them to some extent. I will not give a detailed study of these qualifications in this lesson, but the list of qualifications are as follows:

1. Blameless. (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). This means above reproach, nothing laid to one's charge.
2. Husband of one wife. (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). In Greek, a "one woman man."
3. Vigilant. (I Timothy 3:2). One who is watchful, alert, on guard against danger.
4. Sober. (I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). Of sound mind, able to make good judgments.
5. Of good behavior. (I Timothy 3:2). Orderly, modest,

well-behaved, upright.

6. Given to hospitality. (I Timothy 3:2). One who is friendly and generous to guests, who enjoys fellowship and association with others.

7. Apt to teach. (I Timothy 3:2). Skilled in teaching. Able to give instructions.

8. Not given to wine. (I Timothy 3:3). One who does not even get "one drink drunk."

9. No striker. (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). Not a brawler, quarrelsome, or quick tempered person.

10. Not greedy of filthy lucre. (I Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7). A materialist, whose goal is gain.

11. Patient. (I Timothy 3:3). Gentle, forbearing, mild, not easily disturbed.

12. Not a brawler. (I Timothy 3:3). Not abusive, quarrelsome, or looking for a fight.

13. Not covetous. (I Timothy 3:3). Not a lover of money, who values spiritual treasures less.

14. Ruleth well his own house. (I Timothy 3:4). A man who is head of his family, having his children in subjection.

15. Faithful children. (Titus 1:6). Having children that believe. ASV. Children who are believers, as faithful Christians.

16. Not a novice. (I Timothy 3:6). Not new in the faith. Not a new convert.

17. Of good report by those without. (I Timothy 3:7). Of good and honorable reputation by those who are outside the church.

18. A lover of good men. (Titus 1:8). One who loves good things, including good men.

19. Just. (Titus 1:8). Right in character.

20. Holy. (Titus 1:8). Not wicked or defiled by sin. A Godly person.

21. Temperate. (Titus 1:8). One who is able to exercise self control in speech and actions.

22. Holding fast the faithful word. (Titus 1:9). Able to keep the word when opposed. Able to "exhort and convince the gainsayers" by "sound doctrine."

23. Not self-willed. (Titus 1:7). One who must have his way in everything. Stubborn.

24. Not soon angry. (Titus 1:7). Ready to "fly off the handle," hot tempered.

WORK OF ELDERS: Many men have sought the office of "elder" for various reasons, and for what would seem good reasons, but not all have desired the "work." Again we state the qualifications (what they are) is necessary for the work they are to do. In the New Testament their work is as follows:

1. A Watchman. Notice the Apostle Paul's words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20: "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore WATCH YE..." (Acts 20:28-31). The Hebrew writer also charges: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they WATCH in behalf of your souls" (Hebrews 13:17). I would also urge you to read Ezekiel 3:16-21 for a descriptive portrayal of God's watchman. This is an awesome responsibility to watch for the souls of others

and warn them with the word of God. That is why one of the qualifications is "apt to teach."

2. MATURE THE CHURCH. Ephesians 4:11-16 gives a list of gifts from Christ for the perfecting or maturing of the saints. In this list are "pastors" (elders) along with evangelists and teachers, which are given to mature the church. The "children" in this scripture are spiritual babes, that can be "tossed to and fro and carried about with any and every wind of doctrine" because of their lack of knowledge and maturity in Christ. Pastors, together with evangelists and teachers, are to go about "speaking the truth in love," that is, teaching the word to those saints, that they may no longer be spiritual children, but may grow up! A work of elders then, is to see that spiritual babes mature into spiritual men. Again we see how the qualification, "apt to teach," makes them able to do the work.

3. DISCIPLINE THE CONGREGATION. "But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all. See that none render unto any one evil for evil," (I Thessalonians 5:12-15). Notice the phrase, "Esteem the highly for their WORK'S SAKE." The work of elders include admonishing disorderly brethren, encouraging fainthearted brethren whose spirits need lifting, supporting the spiritually weak, who may be new babes in Christ or may have suffered a crisis in their lives. This work would require elders to go to the homes and perhaps even businesses of these members. Only qualified men can accomplish this work.

4. SHEPHERD THE FLOCK. (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3). The word translated "feed" or "tend" in these scriptures is from the same word in Greek that is translated "pastor" or "shepherd." The work of a shepherd (elder) is to shepherd the flock. A partial description of the work of a shepherd is given by Jesus in Luke 15:3-7. READ IT. When a sheep strays from the fold, the shepherd leaves to search for it until he finds it. Then tenderly bearing it on his shoulders, he returns it to the sheepfold with rejoicing. The better word for this work is tend, since there is more to do than to "feed" or teach the flock.

5. PRAY FOR THE SICK. Read James 5:13-18. The prayer of godly men will avail much. This is not a miraculous thing. James illustrates the matter by the example of Elijah, who prayed fervently to God and received an answer to his prayers. Read the account in I Kings 18:41-46 to see that God did not answer with a miracle, but interfering into the natural order, as he must to answer men's requests today, he gave Elijah his request. So will God answer the supplications of righteous elders in behalf of the sick, according to his will.

RESTRICTIONS WHILE DOING THE WORK, (I Peter 5:1-4).

1. Not of constraint, that is, by compulsion or reluctance, but willingly.
2. Not for filthy lucre. Elders can be supported to do their work on a full time basis (I Timothy 5:17,18); Thus the warning against exploitation of the eldership for a livelihood.
3. Neither as lording it over the charge allotted. Elders are not to use their authority as dictators.
4. According to the will of God, as opposed to a self-willed desire.
5. Exercising their oversight only over the charge allotted, their oversight limited to the

flock of God among them.

When the various words and terms used with regard to elders are considered, it is clear as to the high standards which they must reach, and the nature of their work can be seen. In this connection it should be pointed out that if elders are to accomplish their highly important and God-given task, it is necessary for the flock to "obey" and "submit" to the rule of the elders in the area of their authority (Hebrews 13:17).

DEACONS:

Deacons are a special group of men in the church who serve under the authority of the elders or pastors (I Timothy 3:8-13; Philippians 1:1). In Philippians 1:1- Paul addresses his letter to the saints at Philippi with the "bishops and deacons." This shows that deacons served as officers with the elders in the leadership of the congregation. Deacons are not "junior elders." The New Testament says nothing of deacons aiding the elders in church government and decisions. They do not have the same authority as elders, but are given authority to carry out jobs given them by the elders. Deacons have to meet qualifications to be placed in their position. These qualifications are found in I Timothy 3:8-13. What their duties are must be learned from a study of the original language of the New Testament. Deacons are not mentioned in Ephesians 4, therefore, they are not necessarily teachers.

DEFINITION - THE TERM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE: The word "deacon" is defined as "one who executes the commands of another...a servant, attendant, minister." (Thayer's Greek Lexicon). The word is sometimes translated servant or minister. There is no indication from the word itself as to what kind of work or ministry is to be done. Only the context of the scripture can determine the kind of work deacons can perform. We know from Philippians 1 and I Timothy 3 that this word refers to a special group of men, a position or an office, since qualifications are given for them to be appointed. The word "deacon" distinguishes them from other servants or ministers in the church.

THE WORK OF DEACONS: To determine the work we must study the word, "DIAKONEO", which is translated "deacon." The word is used in Acts 6:2, and is rendered "serve." During this time relieving the apostles of serving widows' needs was necessary in order that they might continue preaching. In Acts 6:1-6, seven men were appointed to "serve" the widows' tables. Thus they could be called deacons. Thus, in these verses we have (1) A business to be accomplished, v. 3; (2) Qualifications to be met, v. 3; and (3) An appointment to be made, v. 3, 5-6. It seems from the context of Acts 6 and the very meaning of the word translated deacon, that deacons' special work would be to relieve the church of any burden needing attention in order to enable her to function most effectively in evangelism and edification of the church.

Some have stated that they look after the physical needs of the congregation, while elders

look after the spiritual needs. If this be true, then deacons have an unlimited range of activity. Good men well qualified for their particular tasks should be selected and given the authority to function in that particular area of work.

The question may be asked whether deacons may be appointed in a congregation where there are no elders. The answer is "no," for these reasons: (1) There is no Bible example of it. Instead, elders were always appointed first (Acts 14:23) and deacons are always mentioned together with elders (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-13). (2) Since deacons are assistants to elders, it is impossible to be an assistant when there are no elders to assist. (3) If deacons are mistakenly appointed where there are no elders, they will likely try to rule the church and usurp the place of elders. For these reasons deacons may only serve where there are elders appointed. But elders may serve where no deacons are yet qualified, as their work is not under the deacons (Acts 14:23).

EVANGELISTS:

Those who publicly proclaim the gospel, or the word of God, are known as evangelists (Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11; II Timothy 4:5). An evangelist is defined as "a bringer of good tidings" (Thayer's Greek Lexicon). They are also called preachers (I Timothy 2:7; II Timothy 1:11; Romans 10:14). Preachers are "heralds or messengers of the gospel." Other terms evangelists are called are: ministers of God (II Corinthians 6:4), ministers of Christ (II Corinthians 4:1), ministers of the word (Luke 1:2), and stewards of the mysteries of God (I Corinthians 4:1). Thus an evangelist is a preacher or a minister in the church. He is not an officer in the Lord's church, but he has a particular work to do. Evangelists are under the oversight and authority of the elders. They have no authority or rule in the church. A preacher (evangelist) working under elders should have great respect for the elders (I Timothy 5:17), but his authority is not the elders' word, but the Word of God. The Bible shows that a disorderly elder is even to be rebuked when necessary by the preacher (I Timothy 5:19,20).

Evangelists are essential to spreading the borders of the kingdom or church. Romans 10:14 states, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Some have thought that evangelists become unnecessary after the appointment of elders. But this is not true according to the Scriptures. Even though the church at Philippi had elders and deacons (Philippians 1:1), Timothy was sent to them by Paul to do the work that an evangelist needed to do (Philippians 2:19).

WORK OF EVANGELISTS: The apostle Paul charged Timothy, "do the work of an evangelist" (II Timothy 4:5). The following arrangement seeks to set forth the work of evangelists in ascending levels of requirement in knowledge and experience.

1. **EVANGELIZE - PREACH.** The definitions of the words tell the work. They are to bring good tidings to the lost, preach the word to the world. His is a job of soul-winning by use

of the Word of God. This work is shown in II Timothy 4:2-5, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. but watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

2. EDIFY THE LOCAL CHURCH. Read Ephesians 4:11-16. Cooperating together with pastors and teachers the evangelists teach and preach to raise the level of spiritual maturity. Only experience of the word and Bible study can provide the ability for this work.

3. APPOINT ELDERS. (Titus 1:5). Through preaching, teaching, and praying, the evangelists help to bring men to qualified maturity to serve as elders. These men are then selected by the members as they recognize their qualifications and are appointed by the evangelist.

4. DEFEND THE FAITH. (I Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:10-13). This part of the work is not the easiest; sometimes it is the bitterest, but often it is necessary. Error must be rebuked! (II Timothy 4:2,3).

5. TRAIN PREACHERS AND TEACHERS. II Timothy 2:2 states, "The things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

QUALIFICATIONS OF EVANGELISTS:

1. DILIGENT, NOT LAZY. (I Timothy 4:15; II Timothy 2:15). The reference in II Timothy 2:15 more than likely does not mean to study the Bible as many have interpreted. Rather it means to be diligent in the work of the evangelist, and thus there will be no reason to be ashamed before God or men.

2. EXAMPLE TO THEM THAT BELIEVE (I Timothy 4:12). No one will despise a young preacher because he is young, but only if he does not practice what he preaches to others.

3. TAKES HEED TO HIMSELF (I Timothy 4:16). See also Acts 20:28 and II Corinthians 13:5. The preacher actually is to work on himself for betterment.

4. TAKES HEED TO HIS TEACHING (I Timothy 4:16). The work of an evangelist is to proclaim God's message, not his own. He must not mislead people by teaching error.

5. PURE (I Timothy 5:22). His life must be pure from sin, so he can be an example.

6. STEADFAST IN THE FAITH, LOYAL TO TRUTH. Evangelist are to refuse false doctrines, and to be uncompromising to those who teach error. (I & II Timothy, Titus).

SUPPORT OF EVANGELISTS: The right to be supported by those served is one of the

clearest teaching in Scriptures.

1. The Principle and the commandment. (Romans 15:27; I Corinthians 9:1-14). The apostle Paul, upon gathering money for the Jewish brethren during famine, said that "if Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things." A debt is actually incurred by one who receives the gospel. In I Corinthians 9, Paul speaks of paying the preacher. He sets forth nine different cases where men partake of their labors and then adds, "If we sowed unto you spiritual thing, is it a great matter if we reap carnal things?" Finally Paul declares, "Even so did the Lord ordain that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (verse 14).

2. The Obligation of Churches to Support the Evangelist (Galatians 6:6-8. Also read II Corinthians 11:7,8; Philippians 4:10-20). The passage in Galatians 6 is especially needful for churches today. Paul wrote, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." The word "communicate" is also translated "fellowship" sometimes. It means to share, or partipate. This is what the New Testament commands the church to do with her teachers.

3. Examples of Preachers and Workers being Supported: "...brought on their way by the churches," (Acts 15:1-3; Titus 3:12-14; III John 5-8).

"CLERGY - LAITY" TERMINOLOGY: There is no separation of brethren into clergy and laity in the scriptures. There are no special titles given for evangelists or preachers. The Bible says "we all are brethren." Elders, deacons, evangelists and all members have responsibilities in the church, but there is no separation into clergy/laity positions. Rather Jesus spoke against those who love to have chief positions, and to be called by religious titles (Matthew 23:5-10).

Evangelists have been called the life-blood of the church. Well they may be, for they carry the message of saving grace to the world; they establish churches and keep them going; they stay when all others leave; and they work to develop mature churches and finally elderships.

CONCLUSION:

The church of Christ is built according to the pattern revealed in God's word: his divine pattern. Jesus is the head, the apostles the law revealers, and the elders the caretakers of the local congregations. The deacons serve the congregation. Preachers proclaim the word. All are brethren.

Is the church to which you belong built according to the pattern revealed in the scriptures? Is it autonomous in government? Is the local church run by a plurality of elders? Is there a clergy/laity separation? Is it built according to the pattern revealed in the scriptures? Won't you follow the pattern revealed in the scriptures?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF WILBURN ASHBY

Wilburn Ashby was born in Moulton, Alabama in September of 1946. He was reared on a Boy Scout Camp, of which his father was a ranger, in Florence, Alabama. Wilburn attended Freed-Hardeman college for one year in 1964-65, and then joined the Air Force for four years. During his military service years, He spent 21 months in Vietnam as an airplane mechanic.

After leaving the military, Wilburn attended Sunset School of Preaching in Lubbock, Texas for two years. He has served as minister for four churches since then as follows: Eight years he was a missionary in Tylertown, Mississippi. Two and ½ years was spent in Ruleville, Mississippi. About nine years He was minister for Chapman church in Ripley, Mississippi. He presently ministers at Cedar Springs Church of Christ, Louisville, Kentucky where he has been for the nine years.

While a missionary in Tylertown, Mississippi, Wilburn met and married Lucille Miller, who has become a great wife, mother and partner in the Kingdom. They have four sons, Matthew, Luke, Aaron and Caleb. Matthew is married to Kenzie Herron, and they along with Luke and Aaron are presently attending Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee.

Editors Note: Many thanks to Wilburn for his assistance in checking for typographical errors. Spell checkers don't work as well. Wilburn passed away not long after completing this manuscript. His counsel and friendship will be missed.

Leadership: The Heart of God's Plan

Ray Pack

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- A. Leadership Is a Vital Subject
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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a vitally important subject; it involves guidance, inducing one to follow a line of action by example and persuasion, acting as a chief, direction, governing, commanding. Therefore, when we speak of leadership, we speak of the act or state of direction or the state of governing. The subject of leadership is recognized in every aspect of life. When one travels to a foreign land, they need a guide. In military affairs, nothing is more important than having a great leader. The leader in affairs of the government is one of the main factors of success. If such leadership in the earthly life is of such great importance, is it not of much greater importance in the spiritual life. In the earthly life, we may be led in the wrong direction, and after many failures may succeed.

Our leader must be one that understands the way in which we travel. Look at **Matthew 15:14**. “Let Them Alone: They Are Blind Guides. And If the Blind Guide the Blind, Both Shall Fall into a Pit.” Going back to the Old Testament one can see that man cannot direct his own footsteps. **Jeremiah 10:23** states: “O Lord, I Know That the Way of Man Is Not in Himself: it Is Not in Man That Walketh to Direct His Steps.” There is so much at stake for our spiritual life that we should be willing and anxious to search diligently to find a qualified leader.

While leadership styles vary in secular organizations, God has clearly outlined a style of leadership for our spiritual life which should characterize each local congregation of his Church. Church leadership is much more than just managing the business affairs of the church. It demands courage and spiritual vision. Most importantly, it demands that Gods goals be achieved. The church today needs true leaders, one’s that will lead us down the path that leads to heaven.

OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPTS OF A LEADER

With a proper understanding of Old Testament Hebrew words that point to the New Testament Greek words we can understand God’s plan for leadership in the church. They also will give us an understanding of God’s plan for the leadership of man throughout life. Let us all remember that the Old Testament is a shadow of the things that were to come. The basic thoughts for these words are from Goebel Music’s book entitled: **Efficient Leadership in the Church**. (Strong’s reference number in parentheses.)

THE CONCEPT OF A WATCHMAN

1. **Shamar(8104)** - to hedge about, i.e., guard; to protect, attend to - beware be circumspect, take heed (to self), keep, mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save, sure, wait, watch. Used about seven times.

Isaiah 62:6

“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence.”

Psalms 127:1

“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

Jeremiah 51:12

“Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon”

2. **Tsaphah(6822)** - to lean forward, i.e., to peer into the distance, by implication - to observe await lay hold, espy, look up, wait for keep the watch. Used about 20 times.

2 Samuel 18:24-27

“And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone. And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near. And the watchman saw another man running: and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings. And the watchman said, Me thinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings.”

Jeremiah 6:16-17

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.”

Ezekiel 33:2, 6-7

(2) “Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:”

(6-7) “But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.”

3. **Natsar(5341)** - a primary root; to guard, in a good sense (to protect, maintain, obey) or a bad sense (to conceal) - besieged, hidden thing, keep, monument, observe, preserve®, watcher. Used about three times.

2 Kings 17:9

“And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.”

2 Kings 18:8

“He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.”

In the New Testament we find several Greek words that have the same concept of the watchman. It is critical that we know how the meaning applies to the leadership of the church.

1. **Agrupneo(69)** - to be sleepless, i.e., keep awake - watch.

Hebrews 13:17

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

Mark 13:33

“Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.”

Luke 21:36

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

2. **Gregoreuo(1127)** - to keep awake -, i.e., watch (ful), be vigilant, wake.

Acts 20:28-31

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

As one reads these passages it should be apparent that those who are given watch over you must take the lead in preventing any danger, whether it is physical or spiritual, from happening to you. Being a watchman was certainly a dangerous job. The watchman was worked in a tower on the walls of the city to look out for invading enemies. The concept of the watchman goes back to early Hebrew/Egyptian history. As the children of Israel left Egypt, the night was divided into different watches (**Exodus 14:24**). Whether we go to the Old Testament or the New Testament, we have been given a great concept of the watchman.

THE CONCEPT OF A SHEPHERD

Perhaps the concept of a shepherd is one that more familiar to us. The Old Testament gives insight to this concept.

1. **Raah(7462)** - to tend a flock, i.e., pasture it.

Ezekiel 34:1-10

“And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.”

From the New Testament we find a number of thoughts about the shepherd and his role.

1. **Poimen(4166)** - a shepherd, pastor. Used numerous times in conjunction with **poimaino(4165)** which means to tend as a shepherd.

John 10:1-15

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more

abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

1 Peter 5:2

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind”

1 Timothy 3:4-5

“One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)”

Consider several traits of a shepherd, that are important as it relates to leadership.

1. **He Knows Them (John 10:3, 27)** - He knows their personality; by ability, by weakness, by needs, and by name he knows them. Truly, "he takes heed unto the flock" (**Acts 20:28**)(1)

2. **He Is Faithful to The Flock (John 10:27;**

Zechariah 11:17) - He takes heed, he is steadfast, keeps qualified, and corrects his own faults, as David did his (**Psalms 51**). He heeds his conduct at home, work, play, worship, and in his thinking.

3. **He Feeds the Sheep (Jeremiah 3:15; Ezekiel 34:14; Isaiah 40:11)** - "Feed" and "tend" are from the same word, (**poimaino**)(**Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:9; John 21:16**). He sees whether the doctrine is true or false (**Ephesians 4:11-14; Acts 15:22-31; 16:4-5**). He teaches the truth to others (**1 Timothy 3:1-2**), exhorts in sound doctrine (**Titus 1:7-9**), convicts the gain-sayers and even preaches (**1 Timothy 5:17-18**), better to have full time elders for some real pastoral work than assistant men in 'ministerial' work), and he speaks the truth in love (**Ephesians 4:15**). We perhaps need to remember that "feeding" is only a small part of his work (**Acts 20:28-31**); note **Jeremiah 23:1-4**, which, of course, may be a little weak in English.(3)

4. **He Leads the Sheep (John 10:1-5)** - He does this by being an example (**1 Peter 5:2-3**), be it in recreation, business (honest), family life, social life, worship, service, speech, personal deportment, and he should be the best example. Special decorum must be his (**1 Peter 5:3, Greek, tupos, example**), as the word means "the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made." This is an essential element in the manner of executing their official duties. It is one of the specifications of the manner of taking the oversight. Their lives must be worthy of imitation (**Hebrews 13:7; John 10:4**), as he "leads," goes before them. We bring into play just here his "blameless reputation" (**1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7**) and note the "example" found in such

passages as **1 Timothy 4:12; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; Titus 2:6-8.**(4)

5. **He Provides For the Sheep (Psalms 23)** - He doctors the sick and the needy (**Acts 11:27-30; James 5:14-15**), restores the lost sheep (**Galatians 6:1-2; Luke 15:3-5; James 5:19-20**), and comforts the weak and sad sheep in times of sickness and death, thereby ministering to all the sheep (**Ephesians 4:11 - 12**). Yea, even in family crises.(5)

6. **He Protects The Sheep (John 10:27-30; Psalms 23:5)** - He does this work in two ways: (1) he watches (**Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:29-31**), and (2) he guards (**John 10:27-30**). He is concerned about foes "without" and "within" (false teachers and schismatics). Elders are guardians and as such guard against worldliness, lukewarmness, divisions, etc.(6)

7. **He Unites The Sheep (Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 Peter 2:25; John 10:16)** - He sees that God's word and it alone is taught. A man is hired to build up, not tear down (**2 Corinthians 13:10**). This man is impartial, he refuses to gossip, gets along with the members and tries to perfect the saints.(7)

THE CONCEPT OF ELDER

This concept is used in a variety of ways, both in the Old and New Testaments. Some of the New Testament words refer back to the Old Testaments.

1. **Zaqen(2205)** - of older men or heads of families in Israel who exercised a patriarchal government over their posterity.

Exodus 4:29

“And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel”

Exodus 19:7

“And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him”

2. **Presbuteros(4245)(NT)** - members of the Sanhedrin, consisting of chief priests, elders and scribes, learned in Jewish law.

Matthew 16:21

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”

Matthew 26:47

“And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.”

The word elder also makes reference to those who managed public affairs in the various cities (**Luke 7:3**)and among the Gentiles, rank or positions of responsibility (**Genesis 50:7; Numbers 22:7**) The word "elder" often means older (**Luke 15:25**) or the eldest (**John 8:9**).

Therefore referring to a person advanced in life (**Acts 2:17**). In **Hebrews 11:2** the "elders" are the forefathers in Israel.

THE CONCEPT OF RULER

The thought found in "overship" is that of ruling. It means to set or place over, to be over, superintend, to preside over. There are two words so translated from the Greek.

1. **Proistamenos(4291)** - to rule, are over you, rule well

Romans 12:8

“Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

1Thessalonians 5:12

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.”

1 Timothy 5:17

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”

2. **Hegemoneuo(2230)** - to lead, to rule, to go before, be a leader, to command, to have authority over, controlling the counsel

Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24

(7) “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation”

(17) “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

(24) “Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.”

THE CONCEPT OF OVERSEER

Directly related to the concept of a ruler is that of an overseer.

1. **Paqad(6485)** - to make or be inspected, to be overlooked.

Genesis 39:4-5

“And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD.”

Nehemiah 11:9

“And Joel the son of Zichri was their overseer: and Judah the son of Senuah was second over the city”

2 Chronicles 31:13

“And Jehiel, and Azaziah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, were overseers under the hand of Cononiah and

Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God.”

2. **Episkope(1984)(NT)** - to look upon. In usage it conveys the idea of looking upon with a view to inspection or control.

THE CONCEPT OF STEWARD

The Hebrew expression **haish asher al** used to mean the man who is over is used in **Genesis 43:19**.

“And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house”

The Hebrew expression **asher al bayith** means who is over a house and is used in **Genesis 44:4**.

“And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?”

In New Testament Greek we have the word **oikonomos(3623)**, and it is translated steward in:

Titus 1:7

“For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre”

This verse informs us that an elder is a person who is entrusted with the goods of another, as that is the very meaning of the term.

THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER

One who wishes to lead must be able to teach those who follow.

1. **Lamad(3925)** - to teach, teacher, or to instruct

Psalms 119:99

“I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.”

Deuteronomy 4:10

“Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.”

Ezra 7:10

“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”

2. **Didaskalos(1320)** - an instructor, doctor, master or teacher

Ephesians 4:11

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers”

This is a qualification as found in **1 Timothy 3:2**, referring to one who is apt and skillful in teaching. This qualification refers to one who is capable of instructing, publicly and privately. He must know the truth (**Acts 20:28**), and he must be able to, by sound doctrine, teaching, both exhort and convict the gainsayers (**Titus 1:9**). Being able to teach necessarily implies the duty of teaching. An individual can never lead unless they also know how to be a teacher.

GOOD EXAMPLES OF LEADERS IN THE BIBLE

As one studies the Old and New Testaments they will find that God has given examples of good leadership. Three such men come readily to mind when looking for examples of good leadership.

MOSES

Moses is mentioned in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament character, therefore making him worthy of consideration. As we study his characteristics, we learn of some great principles of a good leader.

1. **Desire** - Moses was willing to take upon himself the role of leading the children of Israel. His interest is first shown in **Exodus 2:11** - "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren." Stephen shows the importance of this passage in **Acts 7:25** - "For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not."
2. **Trained** - Moses was actually trained for 80 years prior to taking the leadership role of the children of Israel. His first training took place in Egypt, then in Midian. His training shows the importance of training our young people at an early age. Notice **Acts 7:22** - "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds."
3. **Courageous** - Moses was a man of great courage. His greatest challenge would be to face Pharaoh and ask him to say "Let my people go." In **Exodus 3:11**, Moses realizes the great task set before him, "And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I **should go unto Pharaoh**, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" God in the next verse simply says I will be with you. "And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."(**Exodus 3:12**)
4. **Meek** - At first glance this may seem contradictory to being courageous. Many people equate meekness with cowardice or being timid. Notice **Numbers 12:3** - "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Moses' meekness came from a genuine concern for the salvation of the children of Israel.

5. **Delegated Responsibility** - A leader is to lead, not do everything himself. Moses took the advice from his father-in-law, Jethro. Notice **Exodus 18:25-26** - “And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.”

6. **Cooperative** - A man who is not willing to cooperate with others and feels he must do it all will never delegate responsibility to others. Moses showed this trait in **Exodus 17** when he delegated the leadership role to Joshua during the battle with the Amalekites.

7. **Just** - Moses was very concerned with justice. Notice **Deuteronomy 1:16-17** - “And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.” Moses realized that God is a just God and, thus, demands justice from man.

8. **Caring** - Moses cared greatly for the people he was leading. This is first seen when he went out and saw the Egyptian smiting the Hebrew. His concern showed when he slew the Egyptian. Maybe even a greater example is found in **Exodus 32:9-14**. It is here after the golden calf was made, that Moses interceded for the people. Good leaders must show the same care for those they lead.

9. **Humble** - Moses displayed great humility at the time God called him in **Exodus 3-4**. It was here that he humbled himself to God’s almighty hand.

10. **Did not care who got the credit** - Moses was not concerned with receiving personal glory and honor. Moses always acted on behalf of God, therefore giving God the glory and honor.

Moses was truly one of the greatest men in history. He was a great leader because God chose him. Just as Moses led those under his charge, elders today must do the same.

JOSHUA

Subsequent to the death of Moses, a new leader had to be chosen. Joshua was the man God chose. The responsibility was now his, and what a great challenge he was faced with. Why did God choose Joshua?

1. **Wisdom** - Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom. Notice **Deuteronomy 34:9** - “And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.” The children of Israel looked to Joshua for leadership because of his wisdom.

2. **Commitment** - Because of his deep commitment Joshua made sure that the children of Israel understood what lay ahead of them. He instructed them to make proper preparation for the journey that was to be made. His commitment goes back

to the time after the 12 spies returned. It was after God announced his punishment on those who had a lack of faith, that Joshua made his commitment to lead the children of Israel to the promised land.

3. **His ability to confront, rebuke and reprove sin** - The children of Israel committed a trespass in **Exodus 7**. Joshua realized that Israel could not prosper when sin existed in the camp. He found where the sin came from and stood up for that which was right in God's sight.

4. **Courage against opposition** - God knew there would be times that Joshua would face obstacles or opposition. Perhaps that is why God told Joshua four times in **Joshua 1** to "be strong and of good courage."

5. **No room for compromise** - There was no room for compromise in Joshua's attempts to conquer the land of Canaan. The uncompromising exploits of Joshua are found in **Joshua 10:40** - "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded."

Joshua shows some great characteristics of what a good leader should be.

JESUS

The greatest example of leadership to be found in the Bible. Peter says it best in **1 Peter 2:21-22** - "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." Peter simply informs us that there is no better example than that of Jesus. Jesus is our copy, pattern for life. The leadership of Jesus carries with it a number of quality traits left to be an example for all who will follow him.

1. **We must be teachers** - all who followed Jesus learned to lead when they followed his teachings. Look at the words of Jesus in **John 6:45** - "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." When the leaders of the church are strong and teach the word's of Christ then great things will happen in the church.

2. **We must exhibit joy** - the doom and gloom attitude is contrary to the teachings of Jesus. Consider the words of **Matthew 5:12** - "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

3. **We must be pure in heart** - **Matthew 5:8** says - "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." What a contrast to the works of the flesh seen in some of the members of the church.

4. **We must exhibit love** - Jesus taught that we must love God supremely. He also taught that we should love one another(**Matthew 5:43-48**). It was the ultimate display of love when he died on the cross for our sins.

5. **We are to be a forgiving people** - This was a major theme in Jesus teachings. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 shows that forgiveness was to be given to all who ask for it. Peter was concerned with forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-22 - "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I

forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.” Jesus closed his life on the cross by expressing the importance of forgiveness in **Luke 23:34** - “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”

6. **We must be a praying people** - When one thinks about it Jesus really had no need to pray yet, he prayed often. It was done for our example. He taught men a model prayer as well as that they should always pray. Look at Luke 18:1 - “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

Many other traits could be noted about Jesus and his example for us. If we will follow his example while we live on this earth, he will be our leader when all of life is gone.

We ought to thank God for the wisdom he showed in giving us such great example of leadership. Space does not permit us to list in detail all the great leaders of the Bible. Many others come to mind, Noah, Abraham, David, Daniel, Peter, Paul just to name a few.

BAD EXAMPLES OF LEADERSHIP IN THE BIBLE

Not only do we have recorded good leaders in the Bible but, we also have many examples of bad leaders. Consider these three as compared to the good leaders.

PHARAOH OF EXODUS 5:1-21

He is presented as a self-centered, ruthless tyrant. Look through the verses in this chapter and list the character traits discovered about this King.

1. **Full of contempt** - Even though this was initially directed toward God it led him to act contemptuously toward all others.
2. **Inflexible** - Pharaoh refused to follow God’s directions. He understood what was being requested but he refused. His words present a determined resolution to follow Self rather than God. “I will NOT let Israel go!” God’s Word had been spoken and understood but Pharaoh would continue as he had.
3. **Controlled by anger** - Pharaoh’s rage was sinful. He viciously attacked and caused as much suffering as possible. His anger so controlled him that it was impossible for him to comprehend any danger.
4. **Motivated by self-interest** - Pharaoh listened to Moses and Aaron, and what did he hear – a challenge to his monarchy! He did not hear a word about God. All he thoughts were consumed with self-interest!
5. **Lack of respect** - He had no respect for others; ordered their destruction without any conscience.
6. **Ego-centric** - Thought himself greater than Jehovah God. He is an amazing illustration of a headstrong person! He would not listen to any idea that was not his. He refused to examine the God Jehovah that Moses and Aaron said commanded their actions.

7. **Was offended at God's Word** - Refused to acknowledge that he should do what God's Word commanded him to do.
8. **Was a profane person** - Pharaoh thought that one god was just as good as others. The Egyptian religion persuaded Pharaoh to believe that he was also divine. This led to a loose philosophy that advocated, "One is just as good as another." This led him to be insolent and oppose God's authority in his life. A good paraphrase of Pharaoh's attitude would be, "Let Jehovah be whoever He might be, but He has no impact upon my life.
9. **Depreciated God's Holy Word** - Pharaoh's contempt for God is clearly seen in **Exodus 5:9** – "false" or "vain" words are what he perceived God's Word to be.
10. **Persisted in wrong-doing and even escalated his sin** - He is introduced to us as being totally ignorant of Jehovah God. He seemed to know nothing about God, or if he did, he held Jehovah in a very inferior esteem. His ignorance could have been corrected. He could have asked Moses to tell him about Jehovah God, but he chose to remain in ignorance. .
11. **Pride** - Pride blinded Pharaoh to reality. He thought he was invincible and able to easily escape God's authority. He thought himself as never wrong. He speaks in **Exodus 5:2** as though he was the supreme monarch of the universe and there is no one to rival his claim or defeat his power. Even though his pride blinded him, it did not lessen his accountability. He stands in an unwarranted defiance of Jehovah and was exposed to imminent peril.
12. **Sinful speech** - He did not control his speech. His words were bitter and spiteful.
13. **His lack of respect for God impacted others for bad** - Look at the narrative and observe how Pharaoh's attitude brought sad results to all around him. He was crafty in dealing with Moses and Aaron. Instead of admitting they had a legitimate point, he accused them of encouraging slothfulness and encouraging rebellion. He did everything he could to create division between Israel and Moses. He was energetic in taking immediate steps to carry out plans for punishing Israel.

ZEDEKIAH – 2 Chronicles 36:10-13

Zedekiah defines wickedness by a practical vocabulary. A study of King Zedekiah reveals that "evil" and/or "wickedness" are not necessarily practices reserved only for the heathens. Here was a King of Judah who was characterized as being "evil." His life reveals that modern man can also be classified as "evil" if they practice these deeds as well. Zedekiah is known as the king who had no spine meaning that he wanted to be all things to all people.

1. **He did evil** - This phrase is misleading but very instructive. From the history of Zedekiah found in the Book of Jeremiah it can be learned that Zedekiah practiced a passive evil and not an active evil.
2. **Stiffened his neck and hardened his heart** - **2 Chronicles 36:16** offers the tragic comment upon this attitude that Zedekiah possessed. When one refuses to stand up

for God's will and speak out for righteous religion, the only option left is the tragic destiny of Zedekiah

3. **Devotion to Idols** – He recognized Jehovah as Lord God, but he was not fully dedicated to Jehovah. He allowed room for beliefs and convictions that were different from what God commanded. Zedekiah believed in God but he fashioned “God” to be what he wanted. His idolatry was practiced as he tolerated those who practiced and believed differently than what God commanded!

4. **Unbelief to God's Word** – Zedekiah did not destroy God's Word. He listened to Jeremiah and even asked the prophet's advice and prayers. However he did not practice what he heard!

5. **Disobedience to God's Will** – The King was no overt opponent of God but he did not obey God. It does not take a direct rejection of God's Word to be a rebel. It does not require one to shout “I do not believe!” in order to disobey. All it takes is NOT DOING what God commands. This is the root of evil. Do we really believe this or are we too much like Zedekiah to recognize this truth?

6. **Covenant Breaker** – His word was false; his promises were untrue. He lied to everyone. When one makes a promise to God, there is no way that promise can be ignored without suffering divine wrath!

7. **Mistreatment of God's followers** – Even though he did not take an active role in persecuting Jeremiah, Zedekiah was accountable. He could have spoken in defense but he remained silent.

8. **Weak instead of strong** – When challenges to the Almighty God arose, Zedekiah was among those with closed mouths. He never stood up against those who sought to compromise God's will or those who sought to trouble God's followers. God requires us to be very strong and courageous but many follow Zedekiah's passivity instead!

9. **Forever associated with scorn** – He is forever known as the King with a stiff-neck and a hard heart! He marched the Southern Kingdom into extinction. Those who try to remain neutral and tolerant and seek common ground with the enemies of God, will find they are forever associated with Zedekiah's evil. What a tragedy! His permissive attitude toward religious tolerance brought a tragic harvest to his life!

Leadership is vital to anything we do in life. Qualified leaders are essential to any organization's ability to reach its goals, therefore it is imperative to understand that God had a plan for leadership so each of us could reach the goal of eternal life. The church must always seek to be led in the manner in which God has set forth in his Word.

END NOTES

1. Goebel Music, *The Faith Demands Efficient Leadership in the Church* (Colleyville, TX: Goebel Music Publications, 1986) pp 38-40
2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.

Material used for Bad Examples of Leadership are freely quoted from a Sermon Series (Old Testament Kings) by John L Kachelman

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF RAY PACK

Biographical Sketch

Ray Pack was born in Paris, France. He is married to Kay (Montgomery) and they have two daughters, Stephanie and Lauren. He has done local work in Tennessee and Kentucky, and is presently working with the Lone Star Church of Christ in Falls of Rough, Kentucky.

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THE PREACHER

Gary Puryear

This special series of studies lends itself to a fuller discussion of the work of the preacher in the local congregation. Since there remains such an urgent need for more qualified elders in the Lord's church it behooves all of us as preachers to realize more our responsibility in teaching and training these men. In some instances the local preacher also serves as an elder, but in almost all congregations he is looked to as a spiritual leader.

Modern day concepts of the preacher, even among some brethren, have led to an unhealthy reliance upon him and have thus created a "pastor" system of church government that is foreign to New Testament teaching.

Let it be noted first of all that the preacher is not a pastor of the church unless he is qualified and has been appointed as such in the church. His role as a spiritual teacher does not in and of itself result in his being one of the elders. Most of us as preachers have probably served in one or more congregations where there were no elders and thus have worked with the men of the congregation in making necessary decisions for the work of the Lord's kingdom. Your author has done such and in some cases things have gone rather smoothly but at other times good works were halted or never initiated because a few or at times one person was against the idea.

Unless the preacher is serving as an elder he should have no more power in decision making than does any other faithful man in the congregation. I want us to consider for a moment the work of the preacher and then make application as to how he can effectively and efficiently work among God's people.

Our study will now take us to (I-II Timothy). Note the following

- (1) Our teaching and preaching should be edifying to the body of Christ (I Tim. 1:4).
- (2) Need to be such students of the Word of God that we know what we are talking about (1:7).
- (3) Apply the gospel to all men equally (1:9).
- (4) Our focus must always be on our Lord Jesus Christ who saved us and will save others who obey him (1:12-17).
- (5) Know that we are in a war so that we can never give up even to those who would try to shipwreck our faith (1:18-20).
- (6) God's man will be a praying man (2:1-2). We need never underestimate the power of prayer when it comes to directing the affairs of the church. We need to be sure that all meetings of the church have sufficient time set aside for prayer.

(7) Our goal is to see all men saved (2:4). Greater emphasis in all areas of the Lord's work needs to be on seeking and saving the lost. Local congregations can't wait until they have an eldership to start seeking the lost. Even if a congregation has an eldership that has not yet focused on the lost of the community the members must continue to seek out those whose hearts are receptive to the gospel call.

(8) Paul emphasizes the work of the men (holy) of the congregation and why women are not to serve as leaders (2:8-15). It is not a matter of men being holier but rather the order of authority in which God placed man and woman.

(9) Some of those holy men will desire the office of bishop and if they are otherwise qualified should be appointed to that wonderful office (3:1-9).

(10) Other of the holy men will qualify to serve as deacons (3:10-13). If none of the holy men qualify to be elders or deacons they are still responsible for the work of the local congregation and ought to be taught so by the preacher (3:15). A failure on the part of the men of a local work to be active is still no excuse for the preacher to lord it over the people.

(11) Beware of those who attempt to introduce false doctrine (4:1-5).

(12) Keep preaching the word of God and praying so that preachers can be good ministers (4:6).

(13) One of the most precious gifts we have to offer a congregation is our example (4:12).

(14) The proper use of our abilities will be seen by those that we serve (4:13-16).

(15) The end result of our ministry is to save our self and our hearers (4:16).

(16) The preacher must treat and respect the elderly. In the matter of helping conduct the affairs of the church in the absence of elders it is wise for the preacher and other younger faithful men to seek the advice of the older members. Some of those may have served as elders or otherwise have been active in participating in the affairs of the church. Our society caters to the youth but we must not neglect the wisdom of the aged.

(17) Preachers must be very careful when it comes to rebuking the leadership of the church (5:17-21). One of the common mistakes many preachers make in beginning with a new work is their attempt to change things quickly. Remember Paul's advice that we as preachers must live a life of honor before others. It takes time to build the confidence of others and whether a congregation has elders or not it behooves the preacher to take time and although he might have some wonderful ideas for the local work he needs to be very cautious. Those brethren have been there for the most part a long time and they may know better what to do than the preacher, given their location and setting. These are not matters of compromising doctrine but rather the use of wisdom in matters of judgment.

(18) A quite unique situation in the New Testament church was that there might be slaves and their owners in the same congregation. The preacher was to instruct these to encourage and respect one another as members of the body of Christ. Can you imagine a business meeting where some were masters and others were slaves and the master giving the slave opportunity to discuss the work of the local congregation and have an equal say in

what was to be done (in absence of elders) (6:1-2). Our respect for all is quickly evident or absent in business meetings.

(19) The preacher is in a unique position to be able to instruct the men of the congregation about respect and humility when it comes to dealing with one another (6:3-5). If you want to get an argument started and heated discussion to ensue and perhaps create a "cold war" in the local congregation just let men conduct the affairs of the church who are envious, hateful, arrogant and childlike in disposition of having to have their own way. The preacher ought to regularly from the pulpit and classes and even during business meetings (if necessary) to discuss the great value of the mind and spirit of Christ (Philippians 2:4ff) "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men..."

(20) The preacher nor any other Christian ought not be influenced to do or act as others say because of their wealth (6:9-10). A congregation that caters to the wealthy and powerful to the neglect of the poor and sometimes uneducated is doomed to fail. God has always hated a proud heart.

(21) It is very easy to get distracted in a business meeting or an elders meeting over things that are not important to the main function of the Lord's church (seek and save the lost). People will lose their souls (the ones who need the gospel and those who have had it but erred from it) (6:20-21).

(22) Preachers must never be ashamed of the Christ they preach (II Tim. 1:6-8). Though you are only one voice let it be heard loud and clear. The best advice I can give to preachers whether they serve under elders or not is to be faithful to the Lord. You will likely change congregations from time to time but the one constant thing is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Cling to it and be loyal to it's precepts (1:13-14).

(23) You will find yourself being closer to some members than others because of their service and attitude (1:16-18). Do not let this closeness cloud your reasoning in making decisions concerning the local work.

(24) Teach and guide the faithful men so they can teach others (2:2).

(25) Sometimes our work is more like a war zone (and such can be the case in business meetings) but again bring men's attention constantly to the Christ like spirit we need in dealing one with another (2:3).

(26) Striving over words to no profit is always a danger in discussing the affairs of the local congregation (2:14). There is always a need for an orderly presentation of suggestions and oppositions.

(27) Emphasize the importance of being a vessel of honor so that holy men are prepared unto every good work(2:21). I fully recognize that one congregation cannot respond financially to every request for assistance in good works but holy men ought to be ready to

do all the good they can with what they have. A stingy spirit must not prevail in conducting the affairs of the church (2:21).

(28) The preacher ought to encourage men of faith to stand strong. Never should the weak be allowed to determine the direction of the church. This will only happen if godly (mature) men yield to the whims of the unlearned (2:24-26).

(29) There are some frustrations and afflictions that come with the work of preacher (4:5). It is truly sad when men (especially young men) are not fully informed about the difficulties that will be encountered in the local work. This is not said to discourage young men but rather to equip them for the inevitable. Just as no family can go through life without some conflict so goes the church. At best (elders, or no elders) there will be some conflict and the ability of the preacher and other holy men to hold the line on truth and be yielding in matters of opinion will go a long way in making peace among the brethren. Never, stir up trouble just for the sake of having your own way. Many a preacher has set a bad example in pouting and grumbling because his way was not accepted. Again, please take time to consider the matter carefully. Recently, in discussing with a fellow preacher his desire to encourage the congregation where he was preaching to appoint elders I told him all he could do was try. It does no good to try to press the issue if the congregation is neither willing to accept or has men who are not qualified. If the men/congregation are not ready it is futile and frustrating to try to make it happen. The Lord knows far better than we and usually the local members know better than the preacher who may or may not be qualified to serve as an elder.

APPOINTING OF ELDERS:

It would seem the wise and safe course for the congregation to be allowed to suggest those men whom they feel meet the qualifications of the eldership. This task should not be relegated to the preacher for in most instances he does not know nearly as much about the membership as do the members. Most often he has not been there for a long enough time to know the brethren and their past record. Be careful and take into account when the members of a congregation do not seem as excited about appointing a man as does the preacher. We also have a biblical example of how best to choose men to serve in (Acts 6:1ff) as the apostles had the members choose men who were qualified to serve the needy widows.

Preachers, be sure and give the congregation credit for providing a list of men that they deem suitable for the task. Some of those (perhaps all) will not be qualified so there needs to be follow-up by those who can carefully consider each man in comparison to the qualifications given in scripture. The preacher should have preached several lessons on the qualifications, work, responsibilities of the elders and the congregation one to another before ever seeking out men to serve. Having considered the men to serve whose names have been submitted (ought to be done by the most spiritually minded men in the church)

then those men who are otherwise qualified should be approached on their willingness to serve. Those willing to serve (that is at least two or more where are no existing elders) should then be put before the congregation for further consideration (since not all members may have suggested the same man/men).

Some member may know a reason why one or more of the men should not be appointed. In the matter of appointing or ordaining those men who are found qualified please consider the following word study and the application for today's preachers.

The word "appoint" as found in (Acts 6:3) means to designate. It is translated "made him governor" (Acts 7:10) and "ordain elders" (Titus 1:s). The word "ordained" in (Acts 14:23) means to appoint without a vote whereas in (II Corinthians 8:19) it (chosen) means to straighten further. The work of the local church is an ongoing work and even if there are elders we need not content ourselves with saying that we need not be concerned over appointing more men or that we can grow slack in our continuing to make the congregation more involved in reaching out to the lost.

Unless things change in the very near future there will be fewer men qualified to serve as elders. Many young men have never had instilled in their hearts the desire to prepare for the great work of an elder or deacon and thus have often made some horrible mistakes in personal decisions that will affect their future ability to qualify for either area of service. Preachers, need to put forth every effort to encourage the younger to prepare and the prepared to serve.

As more of the world has crept into the church over the years fewer have truly dedicated their lives to prepare academically and spiritually for the great work of shepherding the flock of God. Far too many have the concept of a democratic form of government for the church. Everybody wants their say and their vote. The denominations have been doing this for generations, thus influence of the world encroaching on the government of the church. The younger men have seen the older men shirk their responsibility of leadership and thus have no good role models to follow. Perhaps some older men who are otherwise qualified do not desire the work because of the way they have seen other elders treated. That has never been an acceptable reason for not serving if one is qualified. Look at the spiritual leaders of God's people through the ages and note that man (if not all) have had to suffer much for the cause of the Lord. The devil wins the victory when good men fail in their desire to do the Lord's work (whether in leadership or otherwise).

I want to call on not only preachers but parents and elders and deacons and teachers to please encourage our young men (even teens) to begin early to prepare for their role in the leadership of the church. Even the young ladies in the congregation can be of great value in encouraging the young men to aspire to the leadership of the church. They need to

encourage their male peers when they are preparing and participating in various services of the church.

There is no reason why we have a shortage of elders today except for the fact there was no planning for the future. Being qualified as an elder is little more than being a faithful godly man. I recognize there are some qualifications (married-children-apt to teach) that set some men apart as not being qualified but generally speaking the qualifications set forth by Paul are a wonderful description of God's man. It is a reflection upon past leaders and the membership of the local congregation that we have so few who are willing, qualified and able to serve as pastors in the church. Perhaps some thought that elders just happen without any prior planning.

God spent years preparing some men for leadership.

- (1) Moses-80 years.
- (2) Jesus-30 years.

Much prayer should be lifted up to God in preparing to serve and in the appointing of men to serve. A call to the entire congregation for much prayer is essential to the success of having a good strong leadership.

Preacher, I call upon you to not let the message grow cold of what God wants for leadership in the church and be busy about the task of helping mold the lives of those who are willing to prepare for this great work. Christ is the lifeline of the church (John 1s:1-s) and elders are God's divinely appointed bishops to guide men aright according to the teachings of the Lord. No wonder we have seen so many individuals and sometimes congregations go astray.

The lack of true devoted leadership is a horrible price to pay for the decline in the maturity and spirituality of Christians that God wants. I know the members must be willing to follow the lead of the shepherds but too often the problem has been that there was nothing (no one) to follow except maybe the man in the pulpit or some godly parent or faithful Christian in the congregation. Let these all be good examples but let's have shepherds of the flock to be in the front leading and guiding them.

One day children will leave their parents and sometimes the only protective guide they may have is a godly eldership who will look out for their souls. They need to learn early in life to trust the guidance of godly elders. We have done far too little to honor the men who have served and who are serving as overseers of the flock.

Too often they are men whose names may appear on the church bulletin and stationery but little else is heard or seen of them. The elders ought to be the ones who are well known among the flock. They are the ones who are to be most visible and should be showing the willingness to do. Because of their visibility it is far easier for them to be

recipients of criticism but so be it. When the Lord's work is being done there will be struggles and heartaches and disappointments but lead the elders must.

THE BUSINESS MEETING

In the absence of elders some expedient means must be chosen to decide on matters of judgment in the local congregation. In the first century they had the apostles to rely on but even then when there were men to be selected for certain task in Jerusalem (Acts 6) they gave the congregation a responsibility for looking out among themselves to choose men to serve. The congregation needs to be actively involved in input of decisions affecting the Lord's work. That is not to say they have the authority of an eldership (which has been discussed previously). There are matters that must be decided among the eldership but it is a wise group of shepherds who are willing to seek out the response of the church. I fully realize there can be a problem of setting a precedent in the local work where every man gets to have his say but again wisdom would call on us to consider the desires of others in matters of judgment. In matters of doctrine there is no need to consult anyone else. God's word stands alone as our standard and every eldership must follow it's precepts.

Now back to our business meeting arrangements and some of it's inherent problems. So very often the business meetings don't focus on the most important work of the church. I realize there are minor things that need to be discussed and have brought up such in meetings but the primary focus ought to be on reaching the lost and building up the saved.

A common problem in business meetings is the rehearsing of old news or trying to resurrect old skeletons in the closet from the past. At one time I attended a business meeting and although I do not know all the past history of the congregation it seemed evident to me that some were still licking their wounds. These matters ought to be dealt with initially on an individual basis and not be allowed to create havoc in a meeting of the congregation. Be sure all the laws of God have been followed on these matters (Matthew 18:15ff).

I have been also witness to some business meetings where business was conducted in an expeditious way and there was little by way of sideline discussion (usually conflict of personalities). Far too often, however, it is the case that too much wrangling over minor issues has discouraged many a worker in the Lord (including preachers).

I also think that as a result of business meetings many men are reluctant to serve as elders realizing the conflicts that do exist among the brethren. It is hard to accept that office knowing full well that you will have to deal with many of those after being appointed. A couple of experiences will suffice to let you see the dangers of using the democratic form of government to run the church

Many years ago there was interest and discussion concerning the building of a new building where I was preaching. Due to the size of the congregation at that time and the increasing needs of the church, a new building seemed a wise choice. It seemed the consensus of most present (business meeting) that we would go ahead with some plans.

Some days later it was discovered that at least one brother was discouraging the making of such future plans and thus the whole plan fell apart. It seems even when congregations must have to conduct business with such meetings that there is the danger of dissenting voice becoming the direction that is taken. It is truly sad when one person can have such an influence, especially when others are not strong enough to stand up for what is in the best interest of the church. For a young preacher this can really be discouraging.

I am also aware that in some congregations there have been matters brought before the men that were merely the pet peeves or pet projects of one person. Because some were not willing to object the matter passed and resentment followed (I have personally known of that happening). There is the vocal minority and the silent majority in most business meetings. I've noticed that the vocal minority usually get their way. With so few willing to challenge the outspoken brother in business meetings, hurt feelings usually result. Then once they are out of the meeting they will talk about the matter and it sows discord among the brethren. Have your say in the business meeting but do it in love. When emotions begin to take precedent over reason and (God's truth) then the business meeting can turn into a contest of who can endure the longest by way of competition of words. Some pretty ugly things can be said at business meetings that have lasting consequences. An eldership will be wise to have meetings with the men of the congregation and sometimes the ladies to get some input on certain issues but even then care must be taken to keep the meeting above personalities and personal references. I suggest that if there must be regular business meetings (in absence of an eldership) then be sure the person who is leading the discussion can keep control of the meeting and that an agenda be prepared ahead of time so that subjects can be discussed in an orderly fashion. There should also be someone taking notes and keeping records of all decisions that are made for future reference. It is also wise to set a time limit on how long the meeting will last. If not, endless discussion on irrelevant topics will become tedious to the point of taking away the interest of many. "Chasing rabbits" doesn't just take place in the pulpit. Since generally only a few men will be willing to participate I want to encourage the local congregation to make every effort to involve as many as possible. The more input you have the less likely you are to have several come back and say that they didn't know what was going on. By having these meetings at regularly scheduled intervals the men can make plans and those who don't attend will have no excuse to say they didn't know or were not informed.

Keeping a congregation informed of decisions is a wise choice by an eldership or a business meeting. Most of what is discussed can be publicly presented (written or spoken). It would be wise in most cases to print copies of meeting notes and make available to all who wish to see them. If you will keep the congregation informed it will keep down a lot of speculation and gossip. Anytime brethren are left to wonder they seem more likely to become disheartened and dissatisfied. I also suggest this in relating to the finances of the congregation. A financial statement each month is important so the members may see where

the Lord's money is being spent. If an elder or some men think this is not necessary they only create questions in the mind of the church.

To facilitate the decisions that are made in a business meeting it would seem expedient to appoint some men to see that the work is accomplished. It too often becomes the task of the local preacher to carry out the majority (if not all) of the decisions that were made. It is neither fair to the preacher or the congregation to let such happen. Most congregations don't want their preacher to act like a "pastor" but they are more than willing to give him all the responsibilities of such. Often good works are not completed because no one had the direct responsibility of such.

In (Acts 6) when a need arose concerning some needy widows the apostles had the multitude choose some men to be appointed to that work. If the church could select men to carry out a certain work then it can do so today.

****Important side note:*** The local preacher as a part of the business meeting is to have no more "voting power" than any other man of the congregation but remember he should be allowed equal input.

In conclusion, I want to urge all of you who are reading this material to prayerfully consider the tremendous need for more men in the leadership of the church and to continue to keep in prayer those who are leading as elders. My prayer is that the Lord's church will have an increase in the number of men who are willing to serve. Thank God every day for His shepherds.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF GARY PURYEAR

Gary Puryear presently serves as the preacher and one of the elders of the Henderson Church of Christ in Henderson, Ky. He is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman University and David Lipscomb University. Since beginning full-time work in 1970, he has preached for congregations in Mississippi and Alabama. He is married to Clydeen. They have two children and three grandchildren (with another due to arrive in August, 2000). Gary moved back to preach for his home congregation in Henderson, Ky. in 1990.

LEADING BRETHERN

Paul Vaughn

The church of Christ looks to Jesus Christ as its head for leadership. He is the Supreme leader of Christianity. But each congregation under Christ must have capable, qualified, skillful, and talented leadership for it to be successful. The congregation void of leadership is doomed to failure.

The strength of a godly leader is seen in Joshua. He was not a compromiser who vacillated from the will of God. When the Israelites were assembled at Shechem, Joshua stood for true service to God. “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

The strength of good influence can be seen in Joshua. As leader of the host of Israel he kept the Israelites steadfast in their allegiance to God. “And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel” (Joshua 24:31).

Sound leaders like Joshua are needed in the church today. Leaders are needed who have integrity and high moral character, inflexible principles, and the ability to speak out boldly with the truth. Leaders are needed with courage enough to face difficulties and dangers with complete trust in God and His Word.

Time has the tendency to take away or erase the influence of even a leader like Joshua. After his death and the death of the elders who outlived him, the people of Israel turned from following God. “And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10).

The Book of Judges is a vivid demonstration of the repeated apostasy of God’s people. God raised up formidable and solid leaders like Othniel, Shamgar, Gideon, and Jephthah but still the people returned to their wicked ways. Paul understood this when he gave charge to Timothy to preach God’s Word. “I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; ²Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

It takes strong leaders in the church of Christ in every congregation because there are very few leaders whose influence last more than two generations. Therefore all Christians need to be anchored in the Word of God! Leaders come and go in every congregation. The

power to remain faithful is found in the Scriptures, which never change from one generation to the next generation. “For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: ²⁵But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:24,25).

When Christians respect and study the Bible, strong leaders are developed, the church becomes stronger, and souls are saved. This will only happen when every member has a humble heart, seeking to be pleasing to God.

LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE

In the New Testament, Jesus has given the pattern for the leadership of the church of Christ. Jesus is the supreme leader in the church and He led by example. One can see the demonstration of leading by example in His life before He taught. “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). Another sterling characteristic of a strong leader is that he practices; what he teaches and does not seek glory for himself. This is the very thing that Jesus did in His life. Jesus said, “And I seek not mine own glory: there one that seeketh and Judgeth” John 8:50).

An example of selfish and impoverished leadership can be seen in the hearts of the scribes and pharisees in the New Testament. “Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, ²Saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: ³All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. ⁴For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men’s shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. ⁵But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, ⁶And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.” (Matthew 23:1-7). Sadly, there are members of the church today who like to bind heavy burdens but turn away when it is their time to carry the load. This type of attitude was not acceptable to Jesus in the days of the Scribes and Pharisees, and it is not acceptable to the Lord today.

Leadership by example means that godly leaders practice and teach the “Golden Rule.” “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12). Leaders should lead in a way that they would like to be led. Conduct towards others should always be governed by the “Golden Rule.” It is the law that is exemplified in the life of Christ.

THE LEADERSHIP OF ELDERS

The eldership is entrusted with the spiritual protection of the church of Christ. In his charge to the elders at Ephesus, Paul told them to feed the church that Jesus died for on the cross. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). As the spiritual leaders of the church, they set the example by the lives they lived. Peter warns all elders not to lord over the church. “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: ²Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; ³Neither as being lords over *God’s* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3).

Even in the eldership, some men try to take the lead over the other elders. When one elder takes control of the eldership, he is pulling the church away from the primitive pattern of leadership given in the Scriptures. Every elder will give an account of his leadership. Peter said, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation” (Hebrews 13:7).

Failure to perceive the spiritual principles of the leadership involved in the eldership has led to many destructive, devastating, and disastrous results in too many churches. Men have been appointed who are not qualified to lead but have been put into the eldership because of political, social, or monetary reasons. Some men have been appointed to the eldership who have no concept of the spiritual character, or makeup of the church or their responsibility to watch over the soul of every member in the congregation. Lack of knowledge of the New Testament and lack of preparation to lead God’s people has led some to seek the preeminence, the top spot, in the church. The “Top Spot” is reserved for Jesus! “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

The work of elders is the most important work in the church. Their task is to champion the life and faith of the children of God. They have the responsibility to work together in peace and harmony with each other and with every member of the congregation. This means that every elder will spend time in Bible study, visitation, and helping those about to fall away from the faith. The church needs faithful elders who will work together in leading God’s children along life’s path way, seeing to the edification of the church, the carrying out of the Great Commission, and do all to the glory of God.

THE PROBLEM OF PRIDE

In every congregation there are Christians on different levels of maturity and Bible knowledge. Sometimes one brother will get the idea that he knows more than everyone else in the congregation and insist on having his way. He wants to be “the leader” of the church.

The church must give in to him or there will be war in the congregation. Often good brethren give in to a fellow of this character because they desire to have peace and no problems. Once this happens there is never any true peace, only an endless stream of cowering before to the bully. There are perhaps many reasons why someone would have this type of attitude, but the most prevalent is be pride.

A haughty spirit has caused some Christians to be puffed up and high-minded wanting to make all the decisions for the congregation. This type of person is usually found in congregations where there are no elders. Their heart is filled with pride and the desire is to control the church. The proud heart is unacceptable to God.

Those leaders with a proud attitude have a false view of themselves and are deceived by their own pride. “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Galatians 6:3). They think they are leading the church closer to God, but are actually taking the church away from God because they have assumed a role that is unscriptural. Paul said, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*” (Philippians 2:3).

Christians must never let a person with a high-minded attitude take control of the congregation! It may mean some unpleasant times ahead during this time of purging of this sinful attitude, but the church will be stronger in the end.

The person with a haughty and high-minded attitude does not love the church. In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul said that love is never puffed up. “Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up” (1 Corinthians 13:4) NKJV. Those who truly love the church will not seek to have their own way above everyone else in the congregation. “Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4,5).

The pride of Diotrephes was rebuked by John in his third letter that was addressed to “the well-beloved Gaius” (3 John 1:1). Diotrephes cherished the pre-eminence among the church. He indulged in worthless chatter and meaningless gossip and falsely accused the beloved apostle John. Those who would not bow to the will of Diotrephes were put out of the church. John said, “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth the pre-eminence among them receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church” (3 John 1:9,10). John did not let Diotrephes intimidate, bully, or dishearten him. John was not going to roll over and let Diotrephes keep imposing his will on the church. The sad commentary is that those who the attitude of Diotrephes will exercise domination over a congregation until faithful brethren have the strength to say no! There should be no Diotrephes in the church!

The rebuking of men or women with the character of Diotrephes must be done with love and humility. Paul instructed the churches of Galatia on how to deal with those in sin.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). The restoring of the sinful man must be done gently in the spirit of meekness. The faithful Christian can be dragged down to the level of the sinful man if he is not extremely and prayerfully careful in his actions. One never loses if he deals with people in loving kindness.

LEADERS MUST HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST

The key to spiritual growth in the individual and the congregation are Christians living in harmony, each regarding the needs of his fellow Christians more important than himself. Jesus was depicted as God’s servant by Isaiah. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11). Jesus was a faithful servant because he never sought out to do his own will. His desire was to serve the Father. “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). This humility of spirit is the attitude that is needed in the church today.

Having the mind of Christ means the Christian life is one of service, not one of self-esteem and self-importance. Jesus’ life was one of love and obedient service to the Father. The life of the faithful Christian must be one of service to God and His Son, Christ Jesus. Jesus said, “If ye love me keep my commandments” (John 14:15). One cannot be pleasing to God or Jesus with a high-minded attitude of self.

True greatness comes not from being served, but from serving others. “And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them: and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is great among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Luke 22:25,26). If a man wants to be a strong leader in the church, let him be a strong servant.

In the self-centered world that exists today, the prevalent attitude is one of coarseness, arrogance, and self-will. This type of sentiment has led to a famine of the serving attitude in the church. Most congregations have a difficult time getting people who are willing to serve. But, there is always one who is willing to lord over the church. That person is devoid of the mind of Christ.

Because of the shortage of the servant spirit, congregations have embraced all kinds of activities that emphasize the flesh to get people involved. It is becoming more apparent in bulletins that more churches are more interested in softball, basketball, camping, and exercise class than mission work. This comes from the void of sound leadership and the Christ-like attitude of serving others.

CONCLUSION

There is always the need for faithful leaders in the church of Christ. God has given man the pattern for leadership in the New Testament. It will work if Christians will seek out spiritual leaders who are willing to be servants.

This means at times Christians must stand up to rebuke the bullies who try to take control and terrorize the church. Often a congregation simply lets the bully have his way to keep peace. That is not true peace but compromise with error!

There are ways congregations can help prepare young men and women to be future leaders in the church. Yes, women can be leaders! They cannot be preachers, elders, or serve in a public way in the worship service, but they need to be prepared to be teachers and faithful Christians. Churches must start teaching young people about what it means to be a servant of Christ. Sadly, some congregations are more concerned about entertaining the young people and teaching them selfishness. When this happens, it will cultivate and gather people who demand things be done their way. They will desire to change the pattern of scriptural leadership, modernize the worship of the church, and use gimmicks in outreach programs to attract people. This is rebellion against God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, and the pattern of leadership given in the New Testament!

Today, there is no need for “leading brethren” in the church. But, there is always the need for leaders who will strive to have the mind of Christ and be servants in the Kingdom. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF PAUL VAUGHN

Paul Vaughn, is a graduate of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and is a builder in the kingdom of our Lord. During the past 20 years, Brother Vaughn has Preached in several states; Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas and Florida just to name a few. He has been on several lectureships, held many Gospel meetings throughout the brotherhood and written for several brotherhood papers. He has published two books, *Notes on the book of Hebrews and DANIEL a man who trusted in God*. Paul currently is the Evangelist for the Hawesville Church of Christ, in Hancock County, Kentucky a new work started in February 1999. Working diligently at his side is Ricki, his wife, companion, helpmeet and one of God's finest Christian women.

Majority Rule

David Hammer

INTRODUCTION

As I begin to write this chapter, I owe to Tom Thomas for the patience he had in me to write this chapter; he provided the computer to accomplish the writing; his Christian love for an old man. Thank you Tom!

In all my fifty years of being active in the church, a book covering this material has never crossed my desk and only one tract have I read. It has been and is a sad day for God's people not to study and know the dangers of "Majority/Minority Rule"

These thoughts will constitute my part of the book:

- a. Definition of terms.
 - b. What is "Majority Rule?"
 - c. How does "Majority Rule" come about?
 - d. Ways to prevent "Majority Rule" from happening in the local church?
 - e. How to correct the "Majority Rule syndrome?"
 - f. How should the local church/congregation function without elders?
 - g. Consider the "Minority Rule" in the church without elders.
-
- h. Conclusion reached..

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. Majority

- a. The greater number or part of something.
- b. A number more than half of the total number of a given group.
- c. The number of votes cast in any election above the total number of all votes cast.
- d. The word 'majority' does not appear in the King James Version of the New Testament.

B. Minority

- a. The smaller in number of two groups forming a whole

- b. A racial, religious, political, national, or other group regarded as different from the larger group of which it is a part.
- c. The word 'minority' does not appear in the King James Version of the New Testament.

C. Rule

- a. To exercise authority, to be in control, command.
- b. There are fifteen different Greek words translated by English words/phrases (rule, ruler, have rule over, make ruler, ruler of the city, ruler of the synagogue, chief ruler of the synagogue, rule over, and chief ruler). In our study, we will consider just three terms:
 1. Rule (Strong's number #1018) and means to be an umpire; to decide, determine, to direct, rule.
 2. Have rule over (Strong's number #2233) and means to go before, to be a leader, (to rule, command; to have authority over; a prince, of regal power, governor, viceroy, chief, leading as respects influence, controlling in counsel, overseers or leaders of the church): chief commander.
- c. Rule over (Strong's number 757) and means to be chief, to lead, to rule.

These definitions taken from Strong's Concordance, seem to indicate a single individual. This is not the way "Majority Rule" is used in our study. However, we do see the idea of the function of the ruler in majority rule.

II. WHAT IS "MAJORITY?"

Majority rule is where more than half of the men in a business meeting vote or somehow agree to some change in the local church/congregation That is not the changing of doctrine. For example: there are twenty men in a given meeting and eleven agree to make a change. This would be a majority rule.

If it is a matter of indifference (and not Biblical Doctrine), the majority can rule.

Examples: the time of worship on the Lord's Day can be the best time for the congregation. Bible study at 9:00 A.M. and worship at 10:00 A.M. and 6:00 P. M. If however, the majority wants to worship on Saturday (the seventh day of the week) and not on Sunday (the first day of the week), the majority would be wrong.

III. HOW DOES MAJORITY RULE COME ABOUT?

As in all departures from biblical authority, men think they know more than God and try to change his laws for their own laws. God has always forbidden man to add to or take away from the law of God under which they lived. Today, all of mankind lives under the law of Christ (The New Testament). In Ephesians 4:5, Paul clearly states: "...One Lord, One faith (or law)...". All people are limited by this law in matters of religion. Inspired writers of the New Testament have warned against adding to or taking away from God's Word. An example is found in Revelation 22:18-19; "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

If God has provided the rule, pattern, authority for the operation of his church, man should not, can not, improve on what God wants. Men should not try! Throughout biblical history, we have examples of men disregarding what God said and men did things their own way. The results were always the same, defeat, destruction or driven from the presence of God. Consider these examples: Adam and Eve being driven from the Garden of Eden (Genesis chapters two and three); Cain and Abel and the murder of Abel by Cain (Genesis, chapter four). Cain paid the consequence of not listening to God. The children of Israel and their forty years wandering in the wilderness; Saul, the first king of Israel (I Samuel, chapter fifteen)..

In III John, verse nine, we read: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not." Diotrephes wanted to be first in controlling the church where Gaius worshiped. Today, a man or men want to run the church following their own precepts. And if they cannot, they will ruin it.

Hosea wrote in his book, chapter four, verse six: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Will even one congregation be lost to "Majority Rule" because the members would not stand up for Christ and in obedience to his written will?

IV. WAYS TO PREVENT "MAJORITY RULE" FROM HAPPENING

There are no passages of scripture which specifically say "Majority Rule" is wrong and should not happen or be allowed within a congregation. Yet having lived seventy plus years (most of which in service to the King), I know it can happen. There are always individuals (either family or cliques) whose main concern is to rule - not whether the church grows numerically and spiritually - but who desire is to rule or ruin the congregation where they are members. If this group of individuals are financially strong enough, they can will do what they want whether or not it is in compliance with God's will....

Let us look as some examples of how to prevent such "Majority Rule from occurring in the church of our Lord.

1. Know what God's will is in respect to scriptural organization and work to develop men into biblically qualified elders.

Notice I said "qualified." Not every man who is a Christian is qualified either by age, experience or meeting those things set forth in the New Testament. Having men in the congregation who desire the office of the elder does not make them qualified - they must meet the standards set forth in I Timothy, chapter three; Titus, chapter one and other scriptures. It is better for the local congregation to be scripturally unorganized and run the danger of "Majority Rule" than to have elders, who are bishops in name only.

2. The local congregation (both men and women must study and know what Christ expects of the church. Majority Rule can happen simply because only a few will participate in the work of the church. I do not mean women make the final decisions, but men in leadership positions (eldership if organized and the dedicated faithful, knowledgeable men in an unorganized congregation) will listen to any help and/or suggestions they receive from any source.

3. I want to speak as the author of this paper, not an inspired apostle. I, for one, cannot understand how a man in the church can have any position of responsibility and attend only one hour a week. This does not indicate either a dedicated or a spiritual person.

4. Is anyone really concerned about the direction the church is going. If no, then there can easily be a total collapse of the congregation. **ALL MEMBERS** must be involved in growing the church collectively and individually. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." To correct this malfunction will take a committed congregation (all members) working together for the glory of God and Christ and the salvation of our own souls, the souls of our children and the world that is lost in sin.

5. One thing that must never be done is to quit the Lord and his church. The church, by reason of the redemptive price, the only method God has established for saving a lost and dying world; with the church who will take the gospel to others.

Writing this is not difficult. There is a spell check on my computer so correct spelling is not difficult. What is difficult is you. Will you pay the price?

V. HOW TO CORRECT THE "MAJORITY RULE" SYNDROME?

Someone smarter me once said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." I believe we see the truth of this statement in our everyday life. Someone goes to the doctor with an untreated ailment and say: "Doctor, cure me."The doctor responds. "I cannot." It is too late! They had waited too long to begin the cure. So it is with "Majority Rule." Congregation after congregation have waited too long before treatment is began.

As difficult as it may be, the church that lives under "Majority Rule" will not prosper and grow. WHY?

Men just cannot improve on God's plan of church government and leadership. Some suggestion to cure this spiritual ailment:

1. Realize that the problem exists with the congregation and the faithful members be willing to pay the price for treatment. Treatment may include church disciplining those who so rule; leaving the "Majority Ruled church" and beginning a new work; or perhaps the church scripturally organizing with qualified elders.
2. Getting qualified men to serve as elders may be difficult. WHY? The majority rulers probably have made no attempt to get men qualified to be elders. There is an old saying: "Having kittens in the oven does not make them biscuits." Men bearing the title of Elders" does not make them bishops. The qualifications for overseers can and must be met as set forth in the New Testament. Again these are found in I Timothy, chapter three and Titus, chapter one, as well as in other scriptures found in the New Testament.
3. This act will probably be the most difficult; by getting the rank and file of the church to cooperate in this endeavor. The entire church must want to grow and then pay the price of growth. This price to pay is daily, faithful commitment to and for the cause of Christ. Too many members of the local congregation are NOT committed to Christ. What was it our Lord said in Matthew 6:33; "But seek ye first

the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

VI. HOW SHOULD THE LOCAL CONGREGATION FUNCTION WITHOUT ELDERS?

We know in New Testament time there were scripturally unorganized local churches. We mean by scripturally unorganized churches - those without elders because Luke wrote in Acts 14:23; "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed. This verse shows the necessity of having elders to guide the direction of the church according to the truth set forth in God's Word, the New Testament. Notice that Paul is very clear on elders being in every church.

Again the Scriptures are very plain on what the work of the church is:

1. Evangelization.
2. Edification of the members
3. Benevolence.

God's way is always best; that is with elders guiding and leading the flock. If no elders, the church can serve God scripturally by spreading the gospel, by teaching and preaching to flock to strengthen them that believe and trust in God and his Word and scripturally helping those in need.

The work of the church must always be directed to the saving of souls. Whenever a congregation loses sight of this function of the church, it has the majority rule' by doing nothing. The majority Rule are interested only in holding services and not to working for the Lord.

While regular times of the church coming together to worship (and all the members must be faithful to the assemblies) for edification of the saints, our Lord thought it so important he gave the Great Commission in the four gospel accounts Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:47; John 20:23). The men of the congregation can meet and decide on cases of benevolence. Is it biblical to take care of this work; do we have the means to accomplish it?

Often times a congregation will not think teaching growing the members is important (this cannot be accomplished when the members attend only one hour a week and never open and study their Bibles at home). Will the church become like the people of God that Hosea wrote about? "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of God, I will forget thy children. (Hosea 4:6). To see the fulfillment of this prophecy simply read the Old Testament history of the Jewish people. The church

today, must do ALL things as commanded in God's Word (the New Testament) or we will lose the souls of our children. Look around and see that is happening.

Oftentimes the work of the church (without being scripturally organized with faithful, dedicated, biblically qualified men (plural) is left up to the preacher or evangelist. Too often the men of the congregation think the only responsibility is to hire, fire the preacher; count noses at the assemblies, lock and unlock the building, and count the contribution. There is some work of the local church that is the responsibility of each member who is physically able to do it. All are required to evangelize (SEE the Great Commission), all are required to visit the sick, all are required to be faithful to ALL of the assemblies of the church. When it comes to teaching a lost soul what to do to become a Christian the excuse is given: "I do not know how or enough!"

Shame on us! Every Christian must know what is required to obey the gospel, to be able to provide book, chapter and verse. Remember the man who was given one talent and went and buried it (SEE Matthew, chapter 25) The master saw an ability in each servant and expected them to serve to the full measure of that ability. Jesus will not accept excuses from his people today.

There are some things we, as individual Christians must do common sense dictates. No one needs to tell us to clean the building, mow the grass, shovel the sidewalks when covered with snow, or greet the visitors as they visit our assemblies. There are many other things we should do for the cause of Christ - because we love God and not because someone said we should do them.

Man, regardless of his learning in the knowledge from this world, cannot improve on God's plan. Members of the local congregation must understand that elders are necessary to be organized scripturally. We as members of any congregation must submit ourselves to these men. Each member must understand the responsibility he or she has to the eldership and gladly submit oneself to them. Elders are not lawmakers or givers of new laws. They must follow Christ's law without addition or subtraction to the New Testament.

Finally, a congregation can be led by "Majority Rule" in two ways:

1. If we, as members allow this to happen.
2. If we do not seek and demand that the church be lead by men who carefully follow the commands set forth in the New Testament. Consider carefully what Paul wrote which places a great responsibility on the individual Christian: (YOU) Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (I Timothy 2:15).

VII. CONSIDER THE "MINORITY RULE" IN THE CHURCH WITHOUT ELDERS

Neither the "Majority Rule" nor the "Minority Rule" have any place in the organization of the New Testament church which we read about in the Bible. The things that are doctrinally correct are clearly spelled out. As our earlier definition will show: a minority is the smaller of two groups; that differ from the larger group. In the experience I know about, usually one man wants to run the whole show. This person may be a wealthy, prominent citizen of the community, or he began the church at this location. We have an example in III John verse 9. Diotrephes was his name and this verse reads: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. His problem was: "he wanted to be first and run the church."

Because of his influence (either financial or importance in the community) he had to run the church. It has been my knowledge of such they usually run the church right into denominationalism. How sad when one or two men will destroy the church because of their personal pride.

Again the question should be asked: how does the church correct such a problem? It is never easy, but in light of the eternal nature of one's soul, it must be corrected, First, the faithful brethren should go and reason with the individual(s). Secondly, if the minority rulers do not correct the problem, then all the faithful men should go. If this does not work, take it before the whole congregation with discipline as the last resort.. If as it happens so many times, he/they own the property, begin a new congregation.

I know these are drastic measures. One is not talking about a building or land, but the eternal destiny of men's souls. This should be the first consideration of all the churches of our Lord.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Conclusion means the last or closing part of something and in part this is true with this writing. I am finishing my thoughts on this topic. However, "Majority and/or Minority Rule" is not concluded in many churches of our Lord today. As long as men think only in terms of themselves, and not what the Lord wants, we will have this sin plaguing some congregations.

Use this study as the beginning of correcting this work of Satan. Put Your minds and dedication to making the church strong - the way God wants it - and see the church grow spiritually and numerically. God help us all.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DAVID HAMMER

David Hammer, a Gospel preacher for over 50 years, served the Lord faithfully in Ohio, Virginia, Michigan, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois just to mention a few of the places. David along with his lovely wife Marion have retired from full time preaching to Sparta, Il after having preached for the Sparta church for several years. A student of the Bible, David is concerned with the direction of today's church and to this end will assist this editor to publish materials much needed in the church today.

Editor's Note: I thank God daily for David, since my father and father-in-law have died, David has allowed me to adopt him and Marion. David is my Paul, as I hope I am his Timothy.

SHOULD WOMEN ATTEND BUSINESS MEETINGS?

by Rod Rutherford

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Decisions have to be made in churches which have no elders.
 - 1) Usually made by the faithful men in business meetings.
 - 2) Today women are demanding a voice in decision making.
- B. These demands stems from two sources:
 - 1) The influence of the feminist movement.
 - 2) Declining respect for the authority of God's Word.
- C. To learn the Lord's will on women's role, we must go to the Scriptures.

DISCUSSION:

- I. The Creation (Gen. 2 & 3).
 - A. Man alone was incomplete (Gen. 2:18).
 - B. God made woman to complement and complete man.
- II. The Fall (Gen. 3).
 - A. God gave man one prohibition (Gen. 2:16,17).
 - 1. Satan deceived Eve.
 - 2. Adam sinned deliberately.
 - B. Adam and Eve were punished for their disobedience.
 - 1. They were driven from Eden.
 - 2. Woman was told her husband would rule over her (Gen. 3:16).
 - 3. New Testament restrictions upon women stem from the creation and the fall (1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34,35; 1 Tim. 2:1-15).

- C. There were many women used by God in both Old and New Testaments.
 - 1. There is no indication they deviated from God's role for women.
 - 2. The majority of faithful disciples have been women.

III. New Testament Teaching:

- A. Salvation is available to both men and women on the same basis (Gal. 3:26-29).
- B. God's roles for men and women are based on their natures.

IV. First Corinthians 11:3:

- A. In Corinth Christian women were disgracing their husbands by refusing to appear veiled in public.
- B. Paul teaches the order of headship:
 - 1. God
 - 2. Christ
 - 3. Man
 - 4. Woman

V. First Corinthians 14:34, 35:

- A. The church at Corinth was blessed with miraculous gifts.
 - 1. These gifts had become a source of jealousy and confusion.
 - 2. Love is the better way (1 Cor. 13).
- B. The wives of the prophets were forbidden to ask questions.
 - 1. They should ask their husbands at home.
 - 2. The command for their silence is based on the law (Gen. 3:16).

VI. First Timothy 2:1-15:

- A. Paul uses two different Greek words for men:
 - 1. Anthropos: mankind.
 - 2. Andras from aner: male
- B. The roles of men and women in worship are contrasted:

1. Men are to lead; women are to learn in quietness.
2. Men are to teach; women are not to "usurp" authority over men.

C. Two reasons are given for women's subjection to man:

1. Adam was created first.
2. Adam was not deceived but Eve was.

VII. A Summary of Scripture Teaching:

A. Women were never in leadership roles with God's approval.

1. Women were not included in the Old Testament priesthood.
2. Prophetesses did not prophesy in public places.
3. There were no female apostles.
4. There were no female evangelists.
5. No females were used by the Holy Spirit to write the Bible books.

B. Women are not qualified to be elders

(1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1).

1. They cannot be the husband of one wife."
2. They cannot rule the house.
3. They cannot convict those who contradict.

VIII. Women in Business Meetings:

A. Women attending business meetings is incompatible with their role as given by God.

B. Women can be informed of what is happening in the work of the church.

1. Married women should be informed by their husbands.
2. Unmarried women, widows, and those whose husbands are not Christians can also be informed:
 - a. Elders should meet with them periodically.
 - b. Minutes of business meeting should be read to the church.
 - c. A suggestion box for all to make comments, criticisms, and suggestions should be kept.

IX. Silent Women in Business Meetings?

A. Some congregations allow women to attend business meetings, but do not permit them to participate.

B. This is a very unwise practice.

1. Sooner or later it will break down and women will begin to participate actively.
2. It is unnecessary to take this risk for women can be informed otherwise (see comments above).

CONCLUSION:

A. Let us respect our God-given roles as males and females.

- 1) It is not a question of equality.
- 2) It is not a question of superiority or inferiority.
- 3) It is a matter of obeying the God who made us.

B. God's way is best!

DISCUSSION

SHOULD WOMEN ATTEND BUSINESS MEETINGS?

In those congregations which do not yet have a plurality of men who meet the Scriptural qualifications to be elders, decisions still have to be made in order for the church to carry on its work. Traditionally, in churches of Christ, decisions in churches without elders have been made by convening periodic business meetings composed of all the faithful male members of the church. This has been judged to be in harmony with the Word of God respecting the affairs of the church and the roles of men and women. This is still the norm, but times are changing. More and more women are demanding an active voice in decision making in the church.

The increasing demand by women to have a voice in church affairs stems from two sources:

- (1) The pervasive influence of the Feminist Revolution (the so-called "Women's Liberation Movement') and,
- (2) A declining respect for the authority of God's Word in all religious matters.

The impact of this Feminist Revolution on churches of Christ can be seen in a growing number of congregations which have admitted women to public roles in the worship of the

church and have added women to various committees governing certain aspects of the work of the church (for documentation on this, please see my chapter entitled "Innovations in Worship: Women in Leadership Roles," in Shall We Restructure the Church of Christ: 1995 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures. Curtis A. Cates, editor. Memphis, Tennessee, pp.652-667).

If it is our utmost desire to please the Lord in all things (and what is the point of calling ourselves Christians if we do not submit to the headship of Christ in all matters?), we will go to the Word of God to learn the Lord's will on this matter. Has God spoken on woman's role in the church? If so, what do the Scriptures say?

The Creation

The creation of mankind is recorded in Genesis, chapters one and two. The inspired record tells us that God created the first man, Adam, of the dust of the earth.

Then God said: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Gen. 2:18 - NKJV). He caused all the animals to pass before Adam. Adam named every one of them, but among them a suitable companion for him was not found. God then caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. He took from his side a rib from which He fashioned woman. When the woman was presented to Adam, he exclaimed: "This is now bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was take out of man (Gen. 2:23- NKJV).

Woman was designed by God for man. She is his companion and perfect complement physically, emotionally, and spiritually. In fact, it is not far-fetched to state that man is incomplete without woman and woman is incomplete without man!

The Fall

The fall of man is recorded in Genesis, chapter three. It is imperative that we are aware of, not only the order of the creation of man and woman, but also the respective roles of each in the fall, in order to understand fully the later legislation by God regulating the respective roles of men and women in the church.

God placed man in the Garden of Eden to "tend and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Only one restriction was given him so far as Inspiration records: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16,17- NKJV).

Sometime after this, Satan made his ominous appearance in the garden. It is significant that he approached the woman rather than the man to tempt her to eat of the forbidden fruit.

Eve fell into the Devil's trap. She ate of the forbidden fruit. She gave it to Adam and he also partook of it. But there is a crucial difference recorded by the Holy Spirit:

"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (1 Timothy 2:14 - NKJV). Eve was deceived by the Devil's lie. Adam was not. Is there not a clear implication that Satan approached the woman rather than the man knowing it would be easier to deceive her? Adam went into sin fully aware of what he was doing. Because of this, he must take full responsibility for sin. The Bible regards him as the first sinner, the one who brought sin and death into the world (Rom. 5:14-21; 1Cor. 15:21,22).

Both Adam and Eve were punished for their disobedience. Both were driven from Eden and therefore were cut off from access to the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24). Each was given specific punishment for his disobedience. To the woman, God said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be to your husband, and **he shall rule over you**" (bold letters mine-RR) (Gen. 3:16- NKJV).

We have discussed the creation and the fall because of the foundation they provide upon which the respective roles of men and women in both the home and the church are based. The inspired writers of the New Testament find both precedent and authority for the restrictions placed upon women in regard to leadership in these historical events (1 Cor. 11:3; 14:34,35; 1 Tim. 2:1-15).

In the Old Testament era, there were many notable women of God. Very few of them, however, served in any leadership capacity over God's people with God's approval. Even in cases such as Deborah who judged Israel (Judges 5), there is no indication that she in any way deviated from the God ordained role for women (for a discussion of this, please refer to the aforementioned chapter in the 1995 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures).

In the New Testament, many godly women played a key role in the Lord's ministry and the work of the early church. Among those especially worthy of mention are Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other women who followed Jesus and ministered to Him of their substance (Luke 8:2,3). They were the last to leave the cross and the first to arrive at the tomb on the morning of His resurrection (Luke 23:49, 55,56; 24:1-10; John 19:25-27; 20:1-18). In the early church there were godly women such as Dorcas, Lydia, Priscilla, Lois, Eunice, Phoebe, and many others (Acts 9:36-43; 16:1-3; 2 Tim. 1:5, 3:15; Acts 16:14,15; Rom. 16:1; Acts 18:1-3, 24-28).

It Is beyond the possibility of successful denial that the majority of the most loyal disciples of our Lord in any generation have been women!

Without the influence of these great and good Christian women, many elders would not be in their positions of service today, many churches would not be in existence, and most congregations would languish! Women have taught other women, their own children, and the children of others. Most of us learned our first lessons in the Bible either from our mothers or from female teachers in the Bible school. Women have taught also the Gospel to the lost including, in many cases, their own husbands! They have cared for the sick, the elderly, and the needy. They have cooked, cleaned, sewed, served and been ready for every good work assigned them by the elders or the men's business meetings of the church. Thank God for such women!

I shudder to think where the church would be today without them! The place God has given to women in both the church and the home could not possibly be filled by men. The contribution made to the advance of the kingdom by Christian women cannot be estimated and will only be known fully in eternity!

New Testament Teaching

God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34,35). Salvation is available to all, both men and women, on the same basis. Paul wrote: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; **there is neither male nor female** (bold print mine - RR), for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:26-29 - NKJV).

Because men and women are equal in God's sight and have equal access to the spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ does not mean that the roles God has ordained for them in His church are identical! God's respective roles for men and women are based on their nature as God created them! It is not a question of one sex being either superior or inferior to the other. It is a question of function as given to us by God! Man has his God-given place. Woman has hers. Both are essential to the well being of the kingdom. Neither is complete without the other.

I Corinthians 11:3

The church of Christ at Corinth was troubled by many problems. Among them was the misunderstanding by some of the Christian women of their new found liberty in Christ. Because they were equal to men in receiving salvation and in their importance to the kingdom, some felt they no longer needed to be under the restraint of their husbands. In

ancient Corinth, it was the custom of women to show their submission to their husbands by wearing a veil when appearing in public. It was considered a matter of modesty, dignity, and respect. A respectable woman would never appear in public without her head covering which included a veil. However, the cultic prostitutes who serve at the temple of Aphrodite in Corinth flaunted their profession by going unveiled in public.

Some of the Christian women, thinking they were free from the restraints of their husbands, began appearing in the assemblies of the church unveiled. They thereby brought shame to their husbands and embarrassment to the church of the Lord. Paul dealt with the matter by laying down the principles of headship as ordained by God Himself. But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3-NKJV).

Notice that Paul began by reminding man he has a head who is Christ. Then he told woman she has a head who is man. Finally, he pointed out that even Christ has a head who is God the Father. Is man somehow mistreated because he has to submit to the headship of Christ? Is Christ somehow demeaned by the fact that He is subject to the Father? The answer is an obvious "no" in both cases. Why, then, should a woman feel God has discriminated against her by telling her she has a head and it is man? The headship of man must be respected both in the home and in the church.

1 Corinthians 14:34.35

The church at Corinth was wonderfully blessed with members who had received various miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of an apostle's hands (See Acts 6:6-8;8:12-22; 19:1-6). Because these gifts had become a source of jealousy and division among the cantankerous Corinthian Christians, Paul gives a large section of the First Corinthian letter to dealing with them. In chapter 12, he points out that the gifts ought to be a source of unity, not division because they all came from the same source and the church was like a body with many members and each member had his own place and worth. In chapter 13 he extols a better way than miraculous gifts and that way is love. At the close of this chapter, he points out that miraculous gifts belong to the infancy of the church and would pass away when the completed Word of God was available.

In chapter 14, Paul goes back to the exercise of miraculous gifts and tells how and when they should be used in the assemblies convened for the purpose of exercising such gifts. In verses 34' 35, he prohibits women (likely, the wives of the prophets for in the Greek the word for wife and the word for woman is the same) from speaking or asking questions: "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are

to be submissive as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is shameful for women to speak in church."

The mention of their husbands is a further indication that not all women were being addressed here, but only the wives of the prophets for not all Christian women have husbands. Some may not yet have married and others would be widows. Therefore they would have no husbands. However, the principle upon which Paul forbade their speaking in the assembly is important to remember - as also the law says." By the law, specifically he is referring to Genesis 3:16. However, the tenor of the Old Testament as a whole was that women were not to speak up, lead, teach or preach in religious assemblies in which both men and women were present.

1 Timothy 2:1-15

In this chapter, Paul is dealing with public worship. He begins by commanding that prayers be made for all men. The "men" for whom prayers are to be made is translated from a form of the Greek word *anthropos* which simply means "mankind." Therefore, prayers are to be made for both men and women. In verse four, Paul says God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Again the word used is from *anthropos* and means that God wants everyone to be saved, both men and women.

In verse eight, Paul, by inspiration, commands that prayers are to be made: "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing." This time, Paul uses the Greek word *aner*, which is a form of *aner*, the Greek word used exclusively for the male. Paul then contrasts woman's role in worship with the public role of man: "In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. 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"(bold mine - RR).

These verses clearly teach that in the assemblies of the church when both men and women are present, women are to be in quiet~ submissiveness (that is the meaning of the word translated "silence" as used here by Paul). They are not to teach or to take authority over the man. Paul gives two reasons for this: (1) God made Adam first, and the woman was made for the man, not the other way around (see also 1 Cor.11:9); (2) Adam was not deceived, but the woman was.

Man is given the leadership position in the church because he is first in order of creation and he was not deceived as was Eve. Perhaps the more trusting nature of woman, which

makes her ideal to be a wife, mother and teacher of the young, does not best suit her for the hard decisions man's more rugged nature suits him to make?

Perhaps the difference in the nature of man and woman is the reason that Satan approached woman rather than man in the temptation? If woman, by her nature, is more easily deceived than man (generally speaking), then man would be more suited for the role of leader where tough decisions are made. David Lipscomb's comments on 1 Tim. 2:14 are as true today as they were when written a century ago:

Priority in creation was the ground alleged by Paul as the reason why the woman was never to exercise authority over man. Paul now refers to the general basis of his instruction concerning the exclusion of woman from all public praying and teaching contained in the preceding verses, Adam and Eve both sinned, but Adam was not beguiled. He followed Eve into sin with his eyes wide open. Eve, on the other hand, was thoroughly deceived. She fell into Satan's deceit. Both were involved in the sin, but only Eve allowed herself to be deluded. It would be difficult to find a more vivid illustration of the essential difference between the masculine and feminine nature. If there be this distinction between the sexes, that distinction furnishes the basis of an argument and a reason for the instruction here given. The catastrophe of Eden is the beacon for all generations when the sexes repeat the folly of Eve and Adam, and exchange their distinctive position and functions. So, according to inspired teaching, she is not to be the leader, but to be in subjection (David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd; A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles. Vol.5; Gospel Advocate Company; Nashville, TN).

A Summary of Scripture Teaching

The sum of Scriptural teaching on the role of women is that women are not to take leadership roles. It is not a part of their nature as God created them. Under the Old Testament law women were not included in the priesthood which ministered in the tabernacle and the temple, nor were they numbered among the Levites who served the priesthood in a supportive role. Occasionally, women were given the gift of prophecy, but they exercised this gift in private, not public situations. They did not appear in the king's court, the marketplaces, or the temple to proclaim God's message as did Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and other male prophets. Instead, they spoke to those who came to them privately. The case of Huldah who prophesied in the time of King Josiah is a good illustration of this (2 Chronicles 34:22-28).

In the New Testament, no women were called to be apostles. No women were public proclaimers of the Word. Even though some women had the gift of prophecy (Acts

2:17,18; 21:8,9; 1 Cor. 11:5), there is indication they prophesied publicly in mixed groups of men and women. It is interesting to note that while two books of the Old Testament bear the names of women (Ruth and Esther), and deal with their lives as God worked providentially in the affairs of mankind to preserve His people and make possible the coming of the Savior, that not a single book was penned by a woman!

God has designated elders to have the rule over local congregations (Acts 11:30: 14:23;20:28; Phil. 1:1; Heb. 13:7,17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). Those who serve in this vital leadership role must have specific qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-11). Not only does the overall teaching of Scripture rule out the possibility of women ever being elders, but several of the qualifications do as well. For instance, an elder is to be "the husband of one wife." He is to be "one who rules his own house well" (cf. Eph. 5:22-24). He also must be able to "exhort and convict those who contradict" (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 2:15). Women cannot do this without violating the restrictions God has placed upon them regarding public teaching to mixed groups.

Women In Business Meetings?

It is clear from the Scriptures that the leadership role in the church, which involves the making of decisions, both spiritual and physical, pertaining to the affairs of the church, was given to men, not women. For women to seek to be part of the decision making process is for them to go beyond the authority of the Word of God and to be guilty of transgression. Surely, any faithful Christian woman, who loves the Lord and respects His Word, will have no desire to do this. It is completely incompatible with the role that God has designated for women for them to attend business meetings, participate in the deliberations, and be a part of the decision making process.

How then can women be informed of what is going on in the local church? There are a number of ways this can be done without violating God's Will. In a congregation where I served as one of the elders, the eldership worked diligently to keep all members informed, to seek their input in all matters, and to encourage their participation in the work of the church. We met with all the faithful male members of the church on a regular basis. We informed them of plans and happenings and invited their questions and comments. We met in separate meetings on a regular basis with the preacher and the deacons. We also met periodically with the widows, unmarried women, and those whose husbands were not members of the church. We expected the women who had Christian husbands to be kept informed by their husbands.

Another congregation for which I preached did not have elders. The faithful men in the small church met monthly to plan the work of the church, discuss the spiritual needs of

the various members and what we could do to help them, and any other matters pertinent to the work of the Lord. The following Sunday, the minutes of the business meeting would be read by the secretary to the whole congregation. This was usually done at the close of the Sunday evening worship hour. If any personal problems of any individual had been discussed in our meeting, anything that might be embarrassing to the individual or to his family members was kept private. Also, we had a suggestion box set up in the foyer where anyone could write comments, criticisms, commendations or suggestions pertaining to any part of the activities of the local church. This suggestion box was opened in our monthly business meetings. Every comment was carefully read and considered.

This particular congregation was the best church with which I was ever associated in local or mission work. The degree of love, unity, and soundness exceeded that which I have seen in most congregations in the forty years I have preached the gospel. I think the fact the members were kept informed and felt very much a part of the work of the church was one of the reasons for this.

Silent Women in Business Meetings?

A good Christian woman told me she attended a congregation which allowed women to attend business meetings of the church, but did not permit them to have a voice in the discussions or a vote in the decisions. I do not see any purpose in this. If the thought is that the

women would be kept informed of what is going on in this way, I believe it can be handled better as suggested above. Having women in the business meeting exposes them to the temptation to speak. The good sister who related this to me said: "You know how we women are. We can not sit quietly through discussions, some heated without opening our mouths!" I believe such an arrangement is inviting trouble. Sooner or later, women will clamor to have a voice in the deliberations and some of the men will cave in to it. Division may occur. Certainly women will have violated their God given role and men will have capitulated in theirs!

Conclusion

Let us respect the authority of God's Word! Let us respect the roles God has ordained for each sex. It is not a question of equality. It is not a question of one sex being superior to another. It is a question of obeying our Maker by staying in the role He has given us, and which best suits our nature. God has made man the head of woman in the home and in the church as has been amply documented from Scripture in the discussion above. He gave man the leadership role for two reasons: (1) Man was created first and woman was created out of him and for him; (2) Woman was deceived in the transgression. Man was not.

God's way is neither chauvinistic nor discriminatory. It is what is best for both man and woman. It is what is best for both the home and the church. Let us humble ourselves before our Maker, accept and obey His will to the best of our ability, and work to build up His kingdom on this earth! Only by doing this can we please our Heavenly Father and find fulfillment in this life and salvation in the world to come!

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ROD RUTHERFORD

Birth: Livonia, Indiana - July 28,1939.

Education: Washington County Public Schools
David Lipscomb College - BA degree in history and Bible
Memphis School of Preaching (Undergraduate and graduate diplomas)

Alabama Christian School of Religion - MA in Bible

Family: Married to the former Brenda Luttrell - June 2,1963 One daughter (Mrs. Debra Davis) and two sons (Kevin and Brett), Five grandchildren, (All the children and their marriage partners are faithful Christians; both sons are preachers of the gospel).

Preaching:

Churches in Humphreys Co, Tennessee 1960-65

Mission work in Zambia 1966-1973

Mission work in Australia 1975-1982

Teaching at Florida School of Preaching 1982 - 1984

Teaching at East Tennessee School of Preaching 1984 - 1987

Teaching at Memphis School of Preaching 1987-1992

Truth for the World 1992 to the present

Writing: Director of Publications for Truth for the World

Edited gospel papers in Zambia and Australia

Contributed articles to many brotherhood publications

Author of 30 tracts

Author and co-author of 3 Bible correspondence courses

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“In Light of Scriptures”

C. Ira Price

INTRODUCTION:

1. The discussion by two co-workers about religion.
2. The offer of a meeting with a Catholic priest.
3. The use of the Bible as a standard of authority in religious matters.
4. How does the Bible authorize?

I. The Bible is God's Inspired Word.

1. It must be divided.
2. God speaks to us now through His son.

II. He Speaks by Direct command.

1. Things to take into consideration.

III. The Bible Authorizes by Example.

1. The definition of example.
2. An illustration of an example.

IV. The Bible Authorizes by Inference.

1. What is a necessary inference
2. An illustration of an inference.

V. Bible Expedience.

1. What it is.
2. How it works.

CLOSING DISCUSSION

IN LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE

C Ira Price

Several years ago I received a phone call one evening. It was a friend of mine. He informed me that he had been in a religious discussion with a Catholic co-worker. The co-worker told him if he would go with him and talk with the Catholic priest, he would get him set straight on things religious.

My friend said that he would go if he could bring someone with him. I told him that I would go, but I would rather have a public discussion where the Catholic priest could tell what they believe and why for about twenty minutes and I would do the same thing and then open the meeting for questions from the public.

We were informed that in order to do this we would have to get permission from the bishop over the diocese. His response was, "ABSOLUTELY NOT" but the priest said he would like to meet privately. To this we agreed.

At the first meeting I took with me several translations of the Bible. At that meeting I used this illustration: if I operated a dry goods store and you came into my store to buy a yard of goods, I told you there was 30 inches in a yard and you said there was 40 inches, the bureau of standards says there is 36 inches to a yard and we agree and do business. I believe there is a standard in religion and I believe the Bible is that standard. Will you take the Bible and it only as the standard in our discussion? His answer was "No, I must also have the writings of the Apostolic Fathers."

Herein lies the problem in the religious world today. What do we use as authority in religion? Do we have a thus saith the Lord for that we teach and practice in religion? Remember the statement made by Paul, "And what-soever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." (Colossians 3:17).

The Bible is God's inspired word. The Bible claims inspiration. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto good works," (2 Timothy 3:17) and "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20,21).

I have heard it said, "I believe every word of the Bible." So do I but I must recognize that not everything the Bible says is not directed to me. Paul in writing to Timothy said,

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15).

What are some of the divisions that I must make? The first division is between the New Testament and the Old Testament. In the Old Testament God told Noah to build an ark. (Genesis 6:14) He never did tell me to build one. He gave Moses the ten commandments to govern those born of Abraham's seed or bought with Abraham's money. (Deuteronomy 5). It was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).

The writer of Hebrews said, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Hebrews 1:1,2).

We are in that period of time called the "last days," therefore the message to us comes from His Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord. He told his apostles that they would be guided into all truth (John 16:13). Since Christ's words are truth and the apostles were guided into all truth and we have all of truth today (2 Peter 1:3).

How does the Bible authorize? It authorizes by direct command. While this is true, we must take in consideration who is speaking, to whom it was spoken to and the time it was spoken. We must also take into consideration, is it a matter of faith or opinion or another way to say it is faith or human judgment. For example: The Bible says in John 3:2 that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. I can accept that as a matter of faith because faith comes by hearing the word of God. I have an opinion why he came by night. The Bible doesn't say. It is a matter of human judgment.

There are many other things to bear in mind such as: temporary or permanent; circumstance or condition; incidental or essential, means or principle; or custom or law.

Authority is also established by example. The word "example" according to the dictionary means, "A person or thing to be imitated; model; pattern". We mention this definition to point to that an "example" is to be followed or imitated. An example is "binding." The question is: When does the Bible account of an action constitute an example? I am commanded to observe the Lord's supper (I Corinthians 11:24,25.) I am instructed by example to observe it on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). There is no option here. I am authorized, by example, to do this. There are many other examples that we could use to make this point, but I think this is sufficient.

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I am authorized by "necessary inference." I heard Bro. Roy Deaver say upon one occasion that if it was an "inference" the word necessary is not necessary. We need to realize that there is a difference between "inference and assumption." Let me give you an illustration. In the book of Acts 16:14, 15 we read about the conversion of Lydia. We learn that she was baptized and her household. There is an assumption by some that a household has infants; therefore this gives us authority to baptize infants, but this is not an inference, it is an assumption. There is no authority for the baptizing of infants anywhere. In fact, the prerequisite for baptism would forbid it.

When an action, fact or teaching is absolutely demanded by the Biblical information at hand, without being specifically stated, then that action, fact, or teaching is inference. Illustration: If Saul of Tarsus became a Christian, and if one cannot become a Christian without repenting, then we boldly declare that he repented. That he repented is a matter of "inference."

Everything the Bible teaches it teaches either (1) explicitly (2) implicitly; and whatever it teaches implicitly is just as true, factual, binding, authoritative as is that which is taught explicitly. When geometry sets forth explicitly the axiom that the "whole of anything is the sum of its parts" then geometry sets forth implicitly that the whole of anything is larger than any of its parts, and that the part of anything is smaller than the whole to which it relates. That which is here taught implicitly is just as true as is that which is taught explicitly. Just so with the Word of God. In dealing with "inference" we are dealing with implicit teaching.

Having shown that the Bible authority is established by direct command, approved example and necessary inference. Before we close the chapter perhaps we should say a few words about how Bible authority is established by expediency.

In the carrying out our obligations there is an area of expediency. Every obligation which God ever gave involved expediency. In connection with every obligation which God ever gave it may truly be said that, with regard to carrying out obligations, God did say how and yet He did not say how. Expediency involves human judgment. So far as concerns church obligations, elders of the congregation are authority in the realm of expediency.

Expediency is that which expedites. There is no expediency where there is no advantage. So far as concerns congregational obligation, and expedient is that which is in harmony with the Scriptures, in which there is inherent advantage, and which may be selected by the elders in carrying out any obligation of the church, that obligation growing out of that for which there is approved example, necessary inference or a direct statement.

We should keep in mind also that there is no expediency where there is no obligation. I cannot justify thus and so by arbitrarily calling it an "expediency."

Maybe some illustrations would be helpful. We have an obligation to assemble (Hebrews 10:25). To carry out the obligation we must have a place. The type of place is an expedient. It could be a tent, a grape arbor or a nice building or a river bank. All would come in the realm of being an expedient. Let us look at the Lord's supper. We have an obligation to partake of it on the first day of the week; but what about the containers?

The plate that holds the bread and the container that holds the fruit of the vine can be Metal, glass, stone, silver or gold; because the container is an expedient. I know that problems have arisen in the past over the number of cups to be used in serving the communion. In Luke 22:17 it says, "and he took the cup;" therefore we shall use a single cup. He was not talking about the container but he was talking about the contents. Read the entire verse.

Let us think about the music we use in worship to God. The Bible has given us the obligation to sing (Ephesians 5:19), (Colossians 3:16) and other places.

The question has been asked, "What is your authority for a song book?" The song book is an expedient. Isn't the piano or some other instrument an expedient? Not at all. You have added another kind of music. Singing is vocal music and music made with an instrument is instrumental music. One is authorized by the Bible, the other is not.

Brethren we have sought to consider the matter of how God authorizes, the matter of establishing Bible authority. In this study we are working in the highly important and tremendously complicated field of Biblical hermeneutics.

It is necessary that we respect and be governed by divine authority. Our actions and our attitude, to be right, must be authorized by the Scriptures. May God help us to think seriously and prayerfully about these matters; and to determine to be governed by a "thus saith the Lord."

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF

C. IRA PRICE

C. Ira Price was born in Barr Township, Daviess County, Indiana, June 16, 1923, to Thomas Lester Price and Dicie May (Smith) Price.

He attended Barr Township High School and after finishing served in U. S. Air Force during World War II, flying several combat missions in European Theater. He married Corabelle Grow on October 15, 1944, and they have four daughters.

He began preaching in 1952 and has served several small congregations in Southern Indiana while providing for his family by selling insurance. He is presently serving the church of Christ in Petersburg, Indiana.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Owen G. Solomon

As the chapter title indicates, this chapter will concern itself with some final thoughts, or observations concerning a congregation without an eldership. It is hoped this book, including this final chapter, will help remedy this all too common problem. We shall focus our attention on how a congregation can function where there are no elders, and specific steps which should be taken by such congregations to see that a scriptural eldership is in place within a reasonable time frame.

This work appropriately begins with a discussion of “God’s Design for Church Leadership”, that is, what the BIBLE says about church leadership in the Lord’s church. This recognizes the Bible is God’s final authority! We need to remember that God’s word has “...all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). This means we can find, in the scriptures, all the information needed to have congregational leadership which is pleasing to God!

Any group of people needs leadership! The Lord’s Church is certainly no exception! Jesus was very concerned about people having proper leadership. Matthew records of Jesus, “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36) In reference to this passage, our readers are to be reminded of Ezekiel 34:1-19 where the improper leadership of Israel by evil shepherds is discussed. Thus, there is the principle of leadership involved here. After all, elders are also known as shepherds. Ezekiel 34 has already been discussed more thoroughly in chapter 2 of this book. It would be better to be a congregation without shepherds than a congregation with shepherds like those described in Ezekiel 34!

Ideally, no congregation should be without proper (scriptural) leadership. The contents of this book should assist brethren who want to eliminate the problem of lack of proper leadership, or the absence of shepherds. It also discusses how to make the best of a situation in which a congregation has no elders, thus lacking in leadership. When brethren study the contents of this book, they should find assistance in helping a congregation function scripturally until a proper eldership is appointed. Each congregation without elders should set a goal to have a scriptural eldership, and work diligently to achieve that goal within a specific time frame.

Leadership begins with the head of any organization! This is certainly true of the Lord’s church! Christ is the head of His Body, the church (Colossians 1:18). As head of the church, Jesus has chosen that each congregation of his body be overseen, or led by a plurality of faithful, qualified male members called elders, bishops, shepherds, pastors or overseers. Paul wrote to Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the

things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5). Luke tells us, “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

The primary question of this present work is, How shall a congregation scripturally function when it has no elders, and what are measures such congregations can take to assure that it will eventually have a scriptural eldership in place? The church without elders-What is it to do?

The fact that congregations of the Lord’s church DID exist without elders for some time in their infant days is apparent to any serious student of the Bible. Congregations were established in various locations by the apostles and inspired evangelists. Paul’s first missionary journey began in Acts 13. In Acts 14:20-23 we are told that Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch where they strengthened the brethren and appointed elders in those cities.

HOW these congregations functioned before elders were appointed, we simply are not told. But, they did! This operation without elders, and before the New Testament was completed may have been enhanced by the use of spiritual gifts imparted to members by the apostles. There are no such gifts today. A congregation without elders today can follow the teachings of the inspired New Testament, preserved for all generations, and function in an expedient fashion.

But great care should be taken. Some have suggested that, in the absence of elders, some brethren be selected as “leaders of the church” However, this would not solve but rather would complicate the problem. This would be, in the view of this writer, unscriptural. To appoint men as “leaders of the church” to, in effect, do the work of elders simply would not be acceptable to God. If such brethren are truly qualified to be elders, they should be so appointed, and so addressed! If not, leave well enough alone. Congregations can carry on the mission of the Lord’s church, which is primarily evangelism, until qualified men can be appointed as overseers.

BROTHERLY LOVE

First, and foremost brotherly love MUST be in abundance for a congregation to function properly in the absence of an eldership.! The apostle Peter admonished, “And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Love is the essence of Christianity. Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is

the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). When brethren in the Lord REALLY love one another, they will work together in a harmonious spirit to promote the cause of Christ, even without elders! We shall note more about this when we discuss unity.

Love is self-denying in its very nature. A good definition of love is the degree to which one is willing to deny himself for the good of another. In other words, love is unselfish. It is interesting that one of the qualifications of an elder is : “...not self-willed...” (Titus 1:7). Paul commanded, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). One who is self-willed is self-centered, self-pleasing, and in violation of the scriptures. In contrast to that spirit, listen to the apostle Paul. “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good unto edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me” (Romans 15:1-3).

Verse three is from Psalms 69:9, a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ. There have been many problems in the Lord’s church because of brethren who were self-willed, that is, wanted to have their own way and set aside the wishes or needs of others. This self-willed attitude can result in brethren viewing the ideas of others as threatening, personal opposition. When this spirit is present, confrontation is sure to follow.

KNOWLEDGE

Any congregation without elders needs a thorough knowledge of God’s word, specifically on the subject of leadership..Through the prophet Hosea , God said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). Knowledge of God’s word requires individual study. In Acts 17:11 we are told of the people of Berea , “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so.” Paul charged Timothy to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). For one to be a diligent student of the word of God requires desire. Peter wrote, “As newborn babes , desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). Members of the congregation should be well learned concerning the qualifications and duties of elders. They should also know what God expects of them once an eldership is in place. Qualifications, definitions, and duties of elders have been adequately discussed in another chapter of this book. A through knowledge of this information will help a congregation prepare to properly appoint an eldership.

However, not all study and learning is dependent upon the individual. Any congregation without elders especially needs a faithful gospel preacher, true to the word of God, to preach sound doctrine unto them. The preacher in such congregation is surely not to conduct himself as an elder! He is to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). Any congregation without elders who has a false teacher for a preacher is in greater danger, in the opinion of this writer, than a congregation with a faithful eldership in place.

A faithful eldership would soon detect and remove a false teacher. The members of a congregation without elders needs to learn thoroughly the qualifications, and duties of elders. This information is found in 1 Timothy 3 and in Titus 1. These have been ably discussed in previous chapters of this book. A thorough knowledge of the qualification and duties of elders will help a congregation to properly prepare for the selection of elders.

When proper preparation has been made and the time comes to select an eldership, great care should be taken NOT to select elders based upon the domestic qualifications (husband of one wife, having faithful children), to the exclusion, or minimizing of the other qualifications. Just because a man has a wife and children who are Christians does not automatically qualify him to serve as an elder! For example, other qualifications include “...able by sound doctrine both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers.” For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” (Titus 1:10).

Another qualification is, “...apt to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2). Apt means, “able to instruct” (Strong’s) or “skillful in teaching.” (Thayer) These qualifications require a knowledge of God’s Word! A man may even possess some characteristics of good leadership, but if he does not have a thorough knowledge of the Word of God, he cannot serve as an elder! For example, one must have a ready knowledge of various Bible doctrines such as, the church, worship, baptism, and apostasy, and know how to refute errors concerning these and other subjects. False teachers need to be halted in their tracks. This requires biblically informed elders. Any congregation needs to understand this qualification of an elder before appointing an eldership!

UNITY

A congregation without elders needs to be united. Of course, this is true of a congregation with elders. However, unity should be more easily achieved and maintained where a qualified eldership is in place. It is sad, but true that in some congregations with an eldership, there is division. Sometimes this division is even within the eldership itself. Still, it is more likely there will be a lack of unity in a congregation without elders than in one

with a qualified eldership. If qualified elders are present, they should oversee the congregation in such a way as to maintain unity.

The congregation without elders should make a special effort to be united among themselves. David said, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalms 133:1). Two proper synonyms for unity are kindred and agreement. The prophet Amos asked the rhetorical question, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed” (Amos 3:3)?

A congregation without elders can achieve unity if two essentials are in their hearts—love for God (Matthew 23:37) and love for one another as brethren in the Lord. The apostle Peter admonished, “Finally, be ye of one mind, have compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8). Courteous is defined as, “Friendly of mind, kind.” (Strong’s) The apostle Paul gave yet another edifying charge, which when heeded, will promote and maintain unity among brethren in the Lord. He wrote, “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Corinthians 13:11). Paul also said, “Let nothing be done through strife, or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”(Philippians 2:3). This requires a spirit of humility which is not characteristic of a self-willed (arrogant) man.

VISION

Any organization must have vision, or purpose, in order to be successful! When a congregation of God’s people do not have an eldership to lead them, careful attention must be given by the members to see to it they have vision. Proverbs 29:18 declares, “Where there is no vision the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” The word vision, as used in this verse, means: “A sight (mentally), i.e., a dream, revelation, or oracle.” (Strong’s) God’s people, the Lord’s church, must have vision, or purpose. Certainly, the work of an eldership includes the responsibility to place before the congregation a vision, of things the congregation should set out to accomplish.

A congregation without elders to lead and encourage them should pay special attention to vision. They should see to it that their vision for the future of the congregation is in harmony with the will of God! This would include taking every step possible to reach the goal of putting an eldership in place. Most assuredly , this should be a paramount vision of a congregation without elders! Simply put, vision means purpose for the future. No congregation without elders should be content with that condition indefinitely.

Faithful preachers should encourage a congregation without elders to make every effort possible to reach the goal of appointing elders. Was not this the idea behind Paul’s statement to Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the

things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5). For any preacher to be faithful to this charge, he must be a diligent student with a thorough knowledge of God’s word! NO pulpit, ESPECIALLY a congregation without elders, should be disgraced with a preacher who does not know the Book!

WORKERS TOGETHER WITH GOD

The members of a congregation without elders should and can work together to advance the cause of Christ, but it will require special effort in the absence of proper leadership. We have already discussed the need for unity. A spirit of unity will enable a congregation without elders to work together in an effective way! The rebuilding of the temple, as recorded in Nehemiah, was accomplished because, “...the people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4:6). This is an important principle in any congregation without elders and especially congregations who do not have shepherds (elders) to guide and encourage them.

Paul told the church at Philippi to, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Jesus had a mind to work! He said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). He also said, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work” (John 9:4). So, if a congregation without elders would have the mind of Christ, it will be a congregation whose members are workers together with God, even in the absence of elders. Paul wrote, “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1). Christians are charged , “...to be ready to every good work” (Titus 3:1).

One of the best illustrations of how Christians are to work together is found in 1 Corinthians 12:14-27. Paul wrote, “For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour: and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked : That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

This passage teaches that all the members of the body of Christ should work together with each other, having the same care and concern for one another, with each member using his own individual ability to accomplish the will of God. If each and every member of a congregation has this attitude in heart, the work of the church will be accomplished, even in the absence of elders in that congregation!

Even without elders the first congregation accomplished much for the cause of Christ! Luke tells us a major reason for the success of this infant congregation of the body of Christ. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which they possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32). If this spirit prevails in a congregation today, success will be her destiny, even in a congregation without elders!

This writer is well aware that the matters discussed in this chapter are essential in a congregation with elders as well as one without elders. Nonetheless, particular attention needs to be given to these issues where no eldership is present to oversee the practice of these principles.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF OWEN G. SOLOMON

Owen Greer Solomon was born in Chattanooga, TN, March 20, 1942. He grew up in Pikeville, TN and graduated from Bledsoe County High School. He attended Freed-Hardeman University and later received a B.S. Degree from Alabama Christian School of Religion in Montgomery, AL.

Owen married the former Marietta Lashlee, of Camden, TN on June 12, 1964. They have two children, Laura, who lives in Chicago, IL and Mark of Littleton, CO. Owen and Marietta have one grandchild—Sadie Greer Solomon.

Owen began preaching soon after he obeyed the gospel on July 3, 1957. He has served congregations in Tennessee, Illinois, Alabama, and Kentucky and is presently in his eighth year as minister of the Hartford, KY congregation.