

CHURCH LEADERSHIP SPECIAL STUDIES

BY

DON DEWELT--THE ORDINATION OF OFFICERS

ROY WEESE--THE WORK OF THE ELDERS

SETH WILSON-DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ELDERS

WOODROW PHILLIPS--THE WORK OF THE ELDERS

# ORDINATION OF OFFICERS

## THE ORDINATION OF OFFICERS

BY

DON DEWELT

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It is imperative that we understand the details of this lesson, that we not only understand it, but that we understand it VERY WELL. This is true because so much difficulty has arisen, and is yet with us over the so-called "election of officers".

There are multitudes of both elders and ministers who will testify to the truthfulness of the above statement. Mark carefully each point in this study. "Prove all things and hold fast to that which is good."

### I. THE MEANING OF THE WORDS "ORDAIN AND APPOINT"

These words appear in THREE PLACES in the New Testament:

1. Acts 6:3 ..."appoint"...
2. Titus 1:5 ..."appoint"...
3. Acts 14:23..."had appointed"...

In Acts 6:3 and Titus 15 the Greek work is "kathistemi". Literally it means, "To set, place, put." As pertaining to our subject it means, "T set one over a thing, in charge of it; to appoint one to administer an office". Note carefully that the selection of these seven from among the multitude was the responsibility of the church. The setting or placing was the task of the apostles. More about this in the latter portion of the lesson.

In Acts 14:23 the greek word is "kheirotoneo". This word is translated "ordain" in the King James version and "appoint" in the revised version. Robert Young in his analytical concordance gives this literal meaning: "To elect by stretching out the hand." THAYER defines the word as follows: "To vote by stretching out the hand; to create or appoint by vote; to elect, appoint, create." It would seem here that the entire process of selection and appointment is embraced in this word.

### II. THE SELECTION OF MEN FOR THE OFFICES IN THE CHURCH.

#### 1. The Holy Spirit has a part.

The Holy Spirit has given, in the New Testament through speakers and writers He has inspired, the qualifications for church officers. These men who meet the Holy Spirit's specifications are the ones He has designated to hold the office. Note these references:  
Acts 13:2 ...Holy Spirit said"..."  
Acts 20:28 ..."Holy Spirit hath made"...

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In thinking of the Holy Spirit's part in the selection of the men we must not forget that the direct operation of the Holy Spirit through spiritual gifts probably had a part in the selection of men for the offices in the Apostolic period. This does not however annul the fact that the Holy Spirit is the one today that gives us the qualifications for the men of the offices in the church.

### 2. The evangelists had a part.

a. In Acts 14:23 the appointment involved the selection by the church, the setting into the office by the apostles with the approval of the congregation. In this case the evangelists (apostles) lead in the action of appointment. We say this because of the meaning of the word "appoint", see previous page.

b. In Titus 1:5 Paul instructed Titus to "ordain" or "appoint" elders. We would understand this word to suggest the termination of the ceremony, i.e. after the selection had been made and the approval given, then Titus was to "set" the men into the office.

c. Acts 6:1-3 tells of the whole process of selection and appointment. Note: First, the qualifications are given by the apostles. Second, the multitude selected seven men from among the larger group who meet these qualifications. (Just HOW this was done is purely a matter of conjecture, but that "the brethren" did it we KNOW). Third, after the seven were "chosen" the apostles placed them into the offices by the laying on of hands.

This reference should be a warning to every evangelist that tries to do the will of the Lord: "Lay hands HASTILY on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins;" ... 1 Timothy 5:22.

### 3. The congregation has a part.

From the above references and comments it should be rather clear what part the congregation has. It might be well to briefly outline it again:

a. To "look out" the men who meet the divine qualifications.

b. In 1 Timothy 3:10, men for deacons are to be "proved" before they are placed in the office. If this was true of the deacons it would surely be also true of the elders. This would necessitate a period of time in which the congregation would be made aware of the nominees for the offices, during this period of time the lives and abilities of these men could be either approved or disapproved by the members of the congregation.

c. The men after a period of selection and proving can be presented to the evangelist for appointment.

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### Answer These Questions

1. Why is it essential to understand this lesson very well?
2. Give the two meanings of the word "appoint".
3. What is the Holy Spirit's part in the selection of officers?
4. What is the part of the evangelist in the selection?
5. Concisely state the part of the congregation.

### III. THREE NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF SELECTING MEN FOR OFFICE.

1. The selection of an evangelist. (Acts 16:1-3)

It would seem in this case that Paul found a young man who had demonstrated by his native abilities and work that he was able to do the work of an evangelist. Timothy was of "good report" like the deacons and elders, in his case the source of the report is mentioned; the churches of Lystra and Iconium. From what we have learned previous to this record we know that Paul laid his hands upon Timothy and gave his special spiritual gifts, 2 Timothy 1:6. We also know that the hands of the "presbytery" (elders) were laid upon Timothy to grant him the "gift" of the office of an evangelist, 1 Timothy 4:14. Although such a procedure is not here mentioned it is altogether within possibility that such did take place when Timothy was called from Lystra.

In the light of the above we would say that Paul found a young man well reported of for his labors ("first proved"), by two churches. He circumcised him for expediency, laid his hands upon him to grant special powers, the hands of the elders of Lystra and Derbe and possibly Iconium were laid upon him to grant him the gift of the office of evangelist and they departed for the work of evangelizing.

2. The selection of elders. (Acts 14:23)

Since we have mentioned this case before we will here only say that the New Testament does give an example of the selection of elders.

3. The selection of deacons. (Acts 6:1-6)

This text too has been developed. Deacons were selected for the church.

### Answer These Questions

1. How did Timothy show himself to be a candidate for the office of evangelist?
2. Why was Timothy circumcised?
3. When were the hands of the elders laid upon Timothy? Why?
4. Why did Paul lay his hands on Timothy?
5. Who selected the elders in Acts 14:23 and the deacons in Acts 6:1-6?

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### IV. SOME CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM A STUDY OF THESE EXAMPLES AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCES.

1. All points involved in the method of selecting men are not revealed in any case. So within the limitations fixed by these examples, other scriptures, and good sense we conclude that God has left unmentioned details up to the church.

2. The general method consists of FOUR STEPS, any of which may be first. Circumstances determine the order of these steps.

#### a. A Man Makes Known His Desire To Hold An Office.

This desire can be made known either before or after the man is approved by the church. It is a man's moral and Christian liberty to apply for, accept or decline any office. We say the above for the following reasons:

- (1) An elder must state his desire for the office if his qualifications are to be made known to all concerned. cf. 1 Timothy 3:1.
- (2) It seems reasonable that Timothy desired to be an evangelist (or he wouldn't have been doing the work that he was) and that he made this desire known either with or without a suggestion from Paul or the churches. (Acts 16:1-5)
- (3) The seven men of Acts 6:1-6 may not have known prior to this time that there was an office of "servant" in the church, yet when approached by the church concerning the matter they desired or at least were willing to hold the office of deacon.

To put a man in office who does not desire to be there usually yields poor, if not bad, results and is not in keeping with God's will.

#### b. A Man Proves himself Or Establishes The Fact That He Is Qualified For The Office.

This can be done in giving the man a number of tasks in which he can serve in a "unofficial" capacity. In the discharging of these tasks he gives evidence of his qualities or lack of them to a wise observer. Evidence that this is true:

- (1) Deacons are to be proved (1 Timothy 3:10), and if it is necessary that a deacon be proved it is more important that an elder or an evangelist also be proved.
- (2) It would be impossible for a church to know of a man's qualifications unless he had first proved himself.
- (3) It would be foolish for the church to put in office a man concerning whose qualifications she was wholly or partially ignorant.

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### c. Of The Men Who Have Thus "Proved" Themselves The Congregation Selects The Men They Want In The Office.

Just how this "looking out" (cf. Acts 6:3, was done we are not told. We know that it should be "done decently and in order". A committee of men to receive nominees for the office could be one way. After this nominating committee had received the names of all those the persons in the congregation feel should be in the office their names are posted and a period of time elapses in which any complaint against them can be made known to the nominating committee or to the elders of the church, if they have such. Scriptural proof that such a procedure should be followed:

- (1) In Acts 6:3, the "looking out" was done by the multitude of the disciples. We are not told how, but the above procedure could have been followed. The point is that the responsibility of making a selection among those who were qualified was up to the congregation.
- (2) In Acts 14:23, the meaning of the Greek word indicates voting by the show of hands. The churches in Derbe, Iconium and Lystra were not voting on the qualifications of the office. That was already established by the Holy Spirit. They were voting on a "looking out" or "selection" among the men who were qualified as to just which ones would fill the office. Surely among the 10,000 Christians in Jerusalem there were more than seven who met the qualifications; hence the need for selection. So in the churches in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, there was a need for a selection. It was in this "looking out" or selection that the voting took place.

### d. After The Men For The Office Are Chosen, And A Selection Among Them Has Been Made, After A Period Of Time Has Elapsed For Examination Of Their Lives And The Qualifications, They Are Appointed To The Office By The Laying On Of Hands.

#### Answer These Questions

1. Why is it necessary for a man to make known his desire for the office? How is this to be done?
2. What is meant by the term "first proved"? How is it to be done?
3. In what way is a congregation to "look out" men for the office?
4. What was the reason for the "voting" of Acts 14:23?
5. How are the men finally appointed to the office? cf Acts 6:3,6

#### Specific New Testament Examples:

1. The deacons, Acts 6:1-6
2. Paul and Barnabas, Acts 13:2
3. Elders, Acts 14:23
4. Timothy, Acts 16:1-5; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6

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### SOME CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM A STUDY OF THESE EXAMPLES

#### 1. Concerning the PURPOSE of the procedure.

- (a) To impress upon all concerned their new and added responsibilities. The responsibility of the officer to the Lord and the congregation for the conscientious fulfilling of all his duties. The responsibility of every individual Christian to the Lord and the congregation to honor those in office by maintaining his scriptural relationship with them.
- (b) To make known to all concerning that certain ones are recognized by the church as being duly authorized and set aside for a special work. In this regard it might be well to say that certain ones who were already officers were set apart for a special type of work, within the scope of their respective offices, to a special field of labor. Cf. Acts 13:1-2. Paul was already an evangelist by virtue of the fact that he was an apostle. Barnabas worked with Paul in the evangelistic field prior to this. Cf. Acts 11:22-26
- (c) The purpose is not to impart a spiritual gift or any special power. This may have been part of the purpose in the days of the apostles but it can not be today. Only the apostles had the miraculous ability to bestow spiritual gifts by the laying on of their hands. Cf. Acts 5:12; 8:14, 15; 19:6-11; Romans 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6. The elders could not impart any power to anyone and especially to an apostle. Yet they laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas, Acts 13:1,2.

#### 2. Concerning those who are in charge of the ceremony and are to impose their hands. From the scriptures cited, these seem to be logical conclusions:

- (a) The evangelist or evangelists will preside and impose their hands, Acts 6:1-6; 14:23; Cf. Titus 1:5. If there are elders in the congregation they also may impose their hands with those of the evangelist, 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6. The elders may preside if no evangelist is present or if the one being set aside is an evangelist himself. Acts 13:1,2

#### 3. Concerning the essential parts of the ceremony.

- (a) Prayer, fasting and laying on of hands are three indispensable elements because of our scriptural examples.
- (b) It is clear that more than these three things is necessary for the sake of an orderly and harmonious procedure. Since no more than prayer, fasting and the laying on of hands is mentioned we conclude that God has left the rest of the ceremony up to those in charge. It is important that any additions to the ceremony aid and add to the purpose of the service. Anything that does not is vain, detracts from the service and covers up the real meaning for the occasion.

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### 4. A sample ceremony.

- (a) A time of fasting and prayer is specified. At least one meal should be omitted and the time spent in prayer and meditation about the seriousness of the occasion at hand, and the responsibilities involved. Every Christian in the congregation can participate in this.
  
- (b) A time or place of assembly is specified.
  - (1) The service is opened by the evangelist or whoever presides.
  - (2) He introduces the service with appropriate remarks and prayer.
  - (3) He exhorts the congregation with regard to their responsibility
  - (4) The one being set aside comes before the people and kneels.
  - (5) The evangelist and elders each place their hands (or hand) upon the head of the kneeling officer.
  - (6) The evangelist charges him with the responsibility of his office and prays.
  - (7) This concludes a simple service which may be varied or added to within scriptural and reasonable limits.



## THE WORK OF THE ELDERS

BY  
ROY WEECE  
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### Introduction

#### A. Initial suggestions to Elders and Deacons

1. Remember qualifications - you're now being watched more than ever.
2. We are to be peace-makers - not trouble makers.
3. Speak your feelings here - don't speak against each other elsewhere. Don't conspire or plot against one another.
4. Listen to other' opinions. Respect them! Go with majority vote. Don't always insist on selling only your own idea.
5. Constantly look for growth ideas.
6. Keep "what's BEST for the congregation" in mind.
7. Present a "united front" to the church - you'll be a personality as a group, both Elders and Deacons.
8. Problems will increase as family grows. Don't be frustrated by them.

### THE ELDER'S WORK

1. SHEPHERDING PROGRAM We divide the church into six groups. Each elder is assigned a group for one year. He is to call on every family at least once within the year. This can best be done by appointment with one family each week. When someone is sick, the elder over that group calls immediately. When someone is absent, the elder over that group calls immediately to check why.

2. RECLAIMING DELINQUENT CHURCH MEMBERS We checked the membership list to find who presently showed no signs of love for Christ. We prayed about them and our responsibilities toward them. We contacted them by letter and asked them to meet with us for thirty minutes at the church building. We talked with them about their earlier interest in Christ. We questioned them about their delinquency. We encouraged them to return to Christ and meet with us again. Two of those we talked with stated their desire to "go the world's way." We announced this to the congregation.

3. COUNSELING WITH YOUTH AND ADULTS We have called in youth five at a time and talked with them about their relationship to Christ. We have talked with married couples who were contemplating separation. Also disputes among members who asked that we do so. (Elders must build these "bridges" and people will come.)

4. APPOINTMENT OF TEACHERS IN THE CHURCH Each July the elders meet to appoint all the teachers for Sunday morning classes, Sunday evening classes, Wednesday evening classes, and any special classes to be taught that year. (The elders also appoint annually money counters-- Bible School presider, music man, Bible School Secretary, Organist, Pianist, Song Leader for Bible School, Church dinner sponsors, Church Recorder, Financial Recorder, Floral Arranger, etc).

5. MISSIONS We are presently supporting two Bible Colleges and one foreign missionary with a percent of our offering. We are supporting one man in Canada and two children's homes on a part-time basis. We have sent four young men to other countries for summer work. (One each year for the past four.)

We are presently paying the salary of one man in another country. Our missions' giving for this year will be about 35 to 40 percent of total income.

6. WOMEN'S WORK The ladies of the church who are willing are assigned tasks related to the church life. Twenty different ladies are capably filling jobs related to the church office. Others work in other areas.

7. ASSIGNMENTS FOR DEACONS Realizing that the deacons are a special group of servants in the church, the elders assign each of the deacons a major task in the church life. These assignments release the elders and the evangelist for their responsibilities before God.

8. FACILITIES The elders have determined the needs of the church in the area of building expansion.

9. RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL EVANGELIST The elders have released him for teaching and evangelization throughout the United States. They have recognized the value of his being "itinerant" as well as "located." They have felt free to discuss his work with him and have been specific in work assignments.

10. NEW CONVERTS When a person gives his or her life to Christ and is baptized immediately, he/she is then introduced to the elders and his/her relationship to them is explained. One elder takes three pages of instruction to the home of the new convert. The pages are: "What the Church Teaches." "What you, as a new Christian, can expect from the elders and evangelist." "What God expects of you as a new child."

## What Does the Church Teach by Roy Weece

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH TEACH?  
BY  
ROY WEECE  
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1. The Bible is God's only rule book of life--the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

2 Timothy 3:16 -17

2. God is the only God, the Supreme One, the Creator of the world.

3. Christ is the Son of God and the only Saviour of the world.

Colossians 1:13 - 18

4. The only church God intended for the world as a divine institution is the church of His Son. It is His Body and His Bride.

Ephesians 4:4 - 6  
Matthew 16:18

5. The law of Moses has been set aside and is no longer binding to Christians.

Colossians 2:14  
2 Corinthians 3  
Hebrews 8:13

6. Baptism is by immersion. Baptism is essential. Sprinkling is an idea of man.

Acts 8:27 - 39  
Mark 16:16  
Galatians 3:27

7. The Lord's Supper is to be observed each Sunday.

Acts 20:7  
1 Corinthians 11  
Acts 242

8. Christians are to live holy lives. Christianity is more than just a Sunday affair.

Colossians 3

## What Does the Church Teach by Roy Weece

9. Elders are the spiritual leaders of the church. The only higher authority is Christ Himself.

1 Timothy 3:1 - 7  
Hebrews 13:17  
Acts 20:17 - 34

10. Deacons are a special class of servants in the church.

1 Timothy 3:8 - 13

11. Hell is real. The lost will suffer in this lake of fire eternally.

2 Thessalonians 1:7 - 10  
Revelation 14:11  
Revelation 20:11 - 15

12. Heaven is a tangible material reality. The eternal home of the redeemed.

John 14:1 - 6

13. The judgment day follows the Second Coming of Christ and is inevitable.

Hebrews 9:27

## WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM THE ELDERS AND THE PREACHER

BY

ROY WEECE

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### 1. YOU CAN EXPECT THE ELDERS TO GIVE GUIDANCE AS A GROUP.

They will maintain only Bible teaching in the classroom and from the pulpit. Their purpose will be to lead the members of the church heavenward.

### 2. YOU CAN EXPECT PRIVATE COUNSEL FROM THE ELDERS.

When problems arise in your life, the elders are over ready to help you. If you desire special instruction from the Bible, they will see that you receive it.

### 3: YOU CAN EXPECT WHOLESOME CHRISTIAN EXAMPLE FROM THE ELDERS.

They are interested in displaying Christ through their lives and will do their best to demonstrate the kind of life a Christian should live.

### 4. YOU CAN EXPECT THE ELDERS TO MEET THESE QUALIFICATIONS:

1 Timothy 3

Titus 1

1 Peter 51 - 4

- "Without reproach" --Guarded from error, well thought of by outsiders.
- "Husband of one wife" --Married, happily married, better able to cope with situations that arise in the family of God.
- "Having obedient believing children"--Able to train God's family
- "Given to hospitality"--Both in home and the church house
- "A lover of good" --God is good and all He advocates is good
- "Sober minded" --Steady mind. Not used by "pressure groups"
- "Just" --Natural sense of fairness, can exercise judgment
- "Holy" --Pure. Worldly elders make a worldly church
- "Self-controlled" --Master of his mind and body. Not controlled by doubtful habits.
- "Faithful to the Scriptures" --This demands accurate knowledge
- "Apt to teach" --Able and willing to teach
- "Orderly" --Scripturally organized
- "Able to convict gainsayers" --Able to produce evidence that a teacher is false when it's true that he is.
- "Not self-willed" --Serving the interests of the church, not his own.
- "Not soon angry" --Not "hot-headed." Righteously indignant at times.
- "No brawler" --Not quarrelsome but as gentle as a doctor with a patient.
- "No striker" --Not one who loves to scrap.
- "Not greedy" --A covetous man will not lead the church in a program of advancement.
- "Not contentious" --Not wearing feeling on his sleeve.
- "Not a novice" --Not a recent convert. Let him prove himself

5. THE PREACHER IS HIRED TO INSTRUCT AND HELP SET THE CHURCH IN ORDER

You can expect counsel, guidance, and wholesome Christian example from him also.

# Duties and Responsibilities of Elders by Seth Wilson

## DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

BY

SETH WILSON

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### Introduction:

#### Importance of eldership.

The most important institution in the world is the church of our Lord. The most important institution in any community is the local church. In Phil. 1:1, Paul addresses the church as "saints," "overseers," and "servants." Every member is a saint and should walk worthily of the high calling. To have a church we must have saints--men cleansed from sin and sanctified unto God, who have come out of the world and "hid their lives with Christ in God." Officers are not essential to the existence of a church. As need arises and as men are qualified, our "Rule of Faith and Practice" makes provision for selection of two classes of officers--elders and deacons, amenable to the local congregation and subject always to the authority of God's word. The church is not for the officers but the officers for the church. If the church is the most important institution in the world, then we can hardly attach too much significance to the office of deaconship and eldership. It is the zero hour in the life of a congregation when elders and deacons are selected by that congregation.

#### Scriptures concerning Elder's Work"

Acts 20:17, 28-32, 35; 1 Tim.3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11; 1 Tim. 5:17-19; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Thess. 5:11-14; Heb. 13:7, 17.

### I. They have a work to do.

(1 Tim. 3:1 "he desireth a good work." It is a job, not simply a position of rank or honor. The elders have no special right to do works of Christian service; but have the special responsibility to do and to see.)

- A. The names used to designate the officer indicate the duties attached to it.
1. elders (πρεσβυτεροι, old men), Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1.
  2. bishops or overseers (επισκοποι), Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; Titus 1:7;
  3. pastors or shepherds (ποιμενες), 1 Peter 5:4; Eph. 4:11;
    - a. feed (ποιμαινω) literally, shepherd, Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2.
  4. rulers or superintendents (προισταμενοι), 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17.
  5. teachers (διδασκαλοι), Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2, 5:17; Titus 1:9.
  6. rulers or leaders (ηγουμενοι), Heb. 13:7, 17.  
(The elders are to teach, shepherd, oversee, and hold responsibility for the church).

"Feed the church of the Lord which He purchased with His own blood." Elders hold the life of the church in their hands as a trust.

1. "Take heed...to feed." (προσεξηετε...ποιμαινειν) Acts 20:28b.
2. "Therefore watch ye" (διδραγορευετε), Acts 20:31a.
3. "Obey...for they watch on behalf of your souls..." (πειθησθητε...αυτοιγαρ

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αγρυκνουσιν υπερ των ψυχων οσ λογον αποδοσονεσ) Heb. 13:17.

### B. Indications of the extent of their work.

They may have to watch the flock by night--a young man or woman in public dances, a man covetous in his business, a person young or old being led into the snare of gambling or idleness, exposed to the soul disease of getting something for nothing. 1 Peter 5:2-5: "Tend the flock of God which is among you (poimante to en umin poimnion tou theou) exercising the oversight not of constraint but willingly, according to the will of God, nor yet for filthy lucre but of a ready mind, neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

1 Thess. 5:12: "But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you: (vs 13) and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their works sake. Be at peace among yourselves. (14). And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all." "Fainthearted" is literally feeble-minded--weak in will or understanding, wanting firmness or constancy, irresolute, wanting in courage, depressed by fear, easily discouraged. "Longsuffering" is to be of a long enduring spirit, not to lose heart, slow to anger, slow to punish, patient in bearing injuries and offence.

2 Tim. 2:23-26: "...Must not strive, but be gentle towards all, apt to teach, forbearing, in meekness correcting them that oppose themselves."

The flock, the whole flock, everyone in the flock is to be tended, fed, guided, watched over and guarded. If a shepherd would tend his sheep as many elders tend the flock of God, his sheep would certainly be sick, weak and lean, and often lost even as the flock of God is. Supervision of the teaching in the Sunday School. Supervision of teaching in the home.

If a member absents himself from the Lord's table, the work should be so well in hand that the elders take knowledge of this fact and act accordingly.

Note: We can see why elders must be carefully selected: why we are given such strict divine qualifications. The Christian Way of life is a "strait (strict) and narrow way" for everyone entering into the Kingdom, but the elders must be such men that they keep the others in the narrow way without being a farce, without falling themselves, and without inviting rebellion.

Note: An erroneous popular obsession and the blame for it.

The obsession has widely obtained that we elect elders primarily to preside at the Lord's table on the Lord's Day and to share in the discussion of finances at the monthly board meeting...The high and noble calling of the elder, his glorious opportunities and tremendous responsibilities, his heaven ordained work is all but lost sight of in the maze of departures from the divine pattern...The placing of the blame for this state of affairs



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has largely been a matter of "passing the buck". Most of us are somewhat to blame, but allow me to place it in large measure on the shoulders of the preacher, the evangelist who should set things in order (Titus 1:5). Condoning of sin, flirting with worldliness in heavenly places, flattery--those we frequently substitute for the declaration of the full counsel of God. If any preacher preach, let him preach as the oracles of God--he may lose his job, or even if he doesn't, he may incur the displeasure of a great host; but he will save his own soul and the souls of some who hear (Ezek. 9:6)". Geo. M. Elliot.

Corrective discipline is one of their great responsibilities as shepherds. 1Tim. 5:20-21: "Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear, I charge thee in the sight of God, and Christ Jesus, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality." This was directed to Timothy but falls to the shepherds of the flock. Gal. 6:1: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself lest thou also be tempted by Wilson

Summary: Take charge of the babes in Christ.

1. Guard their progress (See that they do progress) Heb. 10:23-25; 12:112-13.
2. Restore the falling. 1Tim. 5:21; 1Thess. 5:14.
3. Preserve correct teaching. Titus 1:13.
4. Eject those incorrigible corrupted in life or teaching. 1Cor. 5; 1 Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10.
5. Receive the penitent after ejection. 2 Cor. 2:6-8.

C. Manner and attitudes to be used in such work.

Titus 2:15: "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let not man despise thee."

"Firmness does not exclude love, and vice versa, love does not exclude firmness...We must love the erring brother; but in loving the sinner, we must take care not to whitewash the sin...On the one hand, there must be no 'get even', 'I told you so', cold shoulder spirit in dealing with the transgressor...On the other hand, any sentiment which we have toward the erring brother which will entice us to tamper with the New Testament teaching is not 'love uncorruptible.'" When the cold tide is carrying a brother to his death, we should not give him the icy end of the board; neither should we refuse him the means of salvation for fear of offending...So, 'Let all that you do be done in love'...'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.' (Eph. 4:31-32)" Geo. M. Elliott.

2 Tim. 2:23-26: "...must not strive...be gentle...patient...in meekness..."

1 Peter 5:2-4: "...not be constraint, but willingly...a ready mind...Neither as

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being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples...

Gal. 6:1: "...in the spirit of meekness."

2 Cor. 4:1,2: "...not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully...but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

### D. The ruling authority of the elders.

#### 1. They are to rule.

a. "Remember them that have the rule over you." Heb. 13:7

b. "Obey...submit" Heb. 13:7

c. "Salute all them that have the rule over you," Heb. 13:24

Note: These passages are translated in the Emphatic Diaglott "leader", in Rotherham "those who are guiding you."

d. "that are over you" 1 Thess. 5:1

e. "...the elders that rule well..." 1 Tim. 5:17.

f. "one that ruleth well his own house...(but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house how shall he take care of the church of God? 1 Tim. 3:4,5

#### 2. There are limits to their ruling power.

##### a. They are under Christ

They serve as bondservants of Jesus Christ. God "gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body." (Eph. 1:22,23 and Matt. 28:18). They are not to usurp any authority--cannot alter the divine law of admission, or the divine law of regulation, or the divine law of ejection.

##### b. They, under Christ, are servants of the congregation. 2 Cor. 4:5; 12:15

This office is a function. It offers no place for ecclesiastical ascendancy but for service. 1 Peter 5:3: "Not lording it over the charge allotted to you." In 3 John 9-12, the example of Diotrophes, who loved the pre-eminence, is condemned. They are not to subject people to themselves but to the Lord Jesus. Elders are not given any power to force submission to their will. All that they do must be done by means of teaching and persuasion and example. Inasmuch as they teach the word of Christ, all the authority of Christ constrains the hearers to submit.

(not the 'authority' of the elders) dlc

##### c. They are to be subject to one another, doing their work in harmony and co-operation.

An elder is "not self-willed" (Titus 1:7). No one man is to dominate. We can see the reason for a plurality of elders in every place. "...and appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5. No one man should exercise the authority and bear the burden of the eldership. It is evident that there is no justification in the New Testament for calling one, who is the preacher, "the Pastor." With the other bishops (if he is a bishop) he may be

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designated a pastor. But he must be otherwise qualified, chose and devoted to the responsible work of a bishop. It is more scriptural to call him "the minister." To take all the shepherding, pastoral work and responsibility from the elders and put it on one man who happens to be preaching for the church is a very grievous error, fatal to the highest and sanest leadership in a church.

### II. They have submission and respect due them.

The eldership has almost all duties and no rights, but:

1. If they are to teach, the congregation must receive their teaching as long as it is scriptural.
2. If they are to rule, it is the duty of the members to submit to all their acts of discipline which are not in violation of the law of Christ.
3. If they are to correct the worldly they will be expected to be likely to make enemies and to be slandered, so the church should not be prejudiced by gossip or rumor against them.

1 Tim. 5:19: "Against an elder receive not an accusation except at the mouth of two or three witnesses."

1 Tim. 5:1 "Rebuke not an elder but exhort him as a father ." This instruction is given even to a proven preacher having the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

1 Tim. 5:17,18: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and teaching; for the scripture saith thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn; and, the laborer is worthy of his hire."

Gal. 6:6: But let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

1 Peter 5:5: "Likewise ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

III. The congregations have responsibility to God and to man to select elders who are both worthy and capable of doing the work God wants them to do. We should always strive to uphold the standards divinely set for the church and its workers.

## THE WORK OF ELDERS

by

Woodrow Phillips

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### SOME PRELIMINARY SCRIPTURES AND QUESTIONS WHICH WE NEED TO CONSIDER:

Read these passages carefully in their context: Gen. 24:2; 50:7; Num. 11:16,17; Matt. 15:2; Acts 4:8; 6:12; 11:30; 13:1; 14:23; 15:2,4,6,22,23; 16:4; 20:17, 28-32; 21:18; 24:1; 1 Cor. 12:28; Phil. 1:1; Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Thess. 5:12-14; 1 Tim. 3:1-6; 5:17-19; Titus 1:5-11; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; James 5:14,15; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; 1 John 1.

1. What does the term "elder" mean?
2. What does the term "bishop" denote in the New Testament?
3. What did the term "pastor" refer to in the days of the apostles? Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-4
4. Who directed the teaching of the local congregations in the first century?
5. When was the term "elder" first used to describe an office or official?
6. What term carries the thought of rulership?
7. What word means "shepherd"?
8. What is the marital state of the eldership?
9. To what is "ruling his own household well" applicable?
10. Does this completely exclude single men from the office of elder? Defend your answer.
11. Explain the qualification, "not given to much wine."
12. Why do you feel as you do on this question of drinking wine?
13. Are the qualifications set forth in the N.T. for the eldership impossible to meet?
14. Explain your answer to #13.

### THE WORK OF THE ELDERS AS INDIVIDUALS

This primarily refers to the elder as a Christian, the experience shared by all those who would follow Christ. Yet in some actions the elder sets himself apart from his fellow believers. These actions are quickly seen in his home establishment and in his ability to propagate the faith.

Are these qualifications actually different from the responsibilities of all Christians?

How valuable is the elder's Christian example?

Responsible Christian action ought to be a prime consideration in selection of elders.

How Christian must an elder be? Are there degrees of Christianity?

How can we improve our Christian witness in our home community as individuals?

What would be the total impact of a consecrated eldership in all of our churches?

Attempt to define consecration

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Do we tend to turn from grace to law in such definitions?

What scriptural principle can provide unlimited advance? Consider Rom. 8:3-14; 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 10:31, 32; Gal. 2:20,21. Christ living in me to the glory of God.

### THE WORK OF THE ELDERS AS CHURCH REPRESENTATIVES

Here we use the term "elder" in its official New Testament sense denoting an office.

The word "elder" is of Hebrew origin. In the O. T. it was used extensively as a title for rulers of tribes and nations. Gen. 24:2, 50:7; Num. 11:16,17.

The same title is used often in the N.T. 1 Pet. 5:1; 1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Jn. 1.

We are interested in this word mainly as it denotes an office in the church.

Even in the N.T. the same word, "elder", sometimes refers to the office of a ruler of the Jews. See Acts 4:5,8; 6:12; 24:1.

The Greek word is "presbyteros", which literally means one who is older. But not every older man can be an elder in the official sense. Attainment and growth in the Christian life is more important than years. No age is specified in the Scriptures.

In 1 Tim. 4:14, the word "presbytery" appears. It is simply the Greek "presbyteriou" anglicized. If translated, it would read "the body of elders."

"Elders, among the Jews, were the rulers of the people, prominent men who took the lead in directing and controlling affairs. The elders of a city correspond to councilmen, just as we now call them "city fathers". The elders of the people were their representatives and rulers in government and management of affairs pertaining to the public welfare. As an official term, therefore, this word expresses the idea of government by men of age, prominence, experience and wisdom. It indicates that this office is one that imposes important duties and grave responsibilities, and that it should be filled by men who are competent to perform the work devolving upon them efficiently and successfully. It indicates that an incompetent eldership is a great misfortune, and disastrous in its consequences." W.L. Hayden, p. 51, Church Polity

It is the work of the elders to conduct the business affairs of the church, with the delegated authority of the congregation behind their decisions. This eliminates the impossible task of convening the entire Christian community every time some minor matter must be decided.

The elders also guide the church in the larger decisions where congregational voice is deemed necessary, (action deemed correct by man, not the Word--dlc), by their carefully and prayerfully made recommendations.

It would follow that the elders also control the activities of the deacons as servants of the

## THE WORK OF THE ELDERS by Woodrow Phillips

church, since the elders regulate the church's action by their decisions. (I would greatly reword, or eliminate this paragraph--but I did not write it --dlc)

This is not a unilateral action, for the N.T. teaches the plurality of elders.

It might be good to suggest that they exercise the executive power of the church alone, since the Scriptures provide both the legislation and authority for judicial action.

Benevolence, education, evangelism, worship, and community life all come under the responsibility of the eldership.

### THE WORK OF THE ELDERS AS BISHOPS

"Bishop" is a term not commonly used in our churches. We have some inherent prejudice against this title because of its hierarchical connotations in modern church usage. Yet it is used in the N.T. in describing the work of elders, and in reference to the office. Read 1 Tim. 3:1,2; Titus 1:7; Phil. 1:1.

"Bishop" is from the Greek word "episcopos" which literally means an overseer or superintendent.

In 1 Peter 2:25 this word is used in reference to Christ as the guardian of our souls.

There is no record of its use to indicate an official over more than one congregation. Historically you must come into the third century to find the title of bishop applied to a church officer ruling over a group of churches. There is some indication that one elder became the presiding officer for a set period of time over the eldership of a local congregation. In the second century these were called "monarchical" bishops. Presumably we have hit upon the notion of the "chairman of the board" in much the same fashion. This selection of leadership is certainly not hierarchical.

Notice that the words elder and bishop are used interchangeably in the N.T. Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5,7

Since then, the word bishop itself indicates an overseer or superintendent, we can quickly grasp the work this must involve in relation to the congregation.

The church is the Christian community in any locality. It must have community life to be energetic and expanding, as well as to care for the needs of its members.

The community life is under the direction of the elders. What, in your mind, must the community life of the church include?

Without faithful participation himself, how can a bishop be qualified to superintend?

## THE WORK OF THE ELDERS by Woodrow Phillips

COMMUNITY LIFE MUST INCLUDE THE ENTIRE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES WHICH ARE NECESSARY for the well-being of each individual member of the church.

Here is where our churches have fallen short of the New Testament ideal.

**BENEVOLENCE** caring for widow, orphans, handicapped, those temporarily destitute by disaster, and emergency needs is benevolence. This need not be charity. Self-help is the New Testament action indicated.

**SOCIAL LIFE** We are a leisure-minded people. The church cannot provide every avenue of pleasure that may be legitimate for Christian usage, but it can provide far more than is generally recognized. That particularly of youth and advanced age.

**OUTREACH** Consciousness of the need of others is an American virtue. It needs to be a church responsibility in relationship to our total global mission. Missions can revitalize any church program when properly introduced and maintained.

### THE WORK OF THE ELDERS AS PASTORS

Again, "pastor" is not a term commonly used for our elders. We often refer to the preaching minister as the pastor, and he many times fills the position of a teacher and shepherd. However, this word is used in the N.T. only in Eph. 4:11, and refers to the elders. It definitely describes a most important part of their work. Read these Scriptures: Eph. 4:11-16; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Pet. 5:1-5

The Greek word is often in the verb form, meaning to shepherd, frequently translated "tend" or "feed". It is evident that this title describes the work of pastoring. Since Christ in 1 Peter 5:1-4, is called the Chief Shepherd, it clearly suggests that the elders are undershepherds.

The responsibility of tending the flock of God is all too lightly regarded.

It is certainly permissible for the congregation and the elders to hire a pastor to lead in this work but this does not eliminate the work of all the other elders in pastoring.

This is closely related to the work of the elder as a teacher, but here the elder is serving as overseer as well as laboring in the propagation of the faith.

Under the position as pastor comes the work of directing the worship, home visitation, and at teaching program of the church.

To "feed the flock is to impart spiritual nurture to each member.

Worship is a means of feeding. The feasting at the Lord's table, properly understood, is the highlight of the Christians' week.

## THE WORK OF THE ELDERS by Woodrow Phillips

The preaching of the Word is feeding the flock upon the Bread of Life. Here again the pastor must be certain that his flock is being properly fed. If he does not preach himself, he is the guardian of the pulpit so that heresy, digressive doctrine or anything other than the Word of God will not be preached to the flock.

To divide the membership under the direction of the elders and to rotate the divisions to allow the pastors better opportunity for home visitation is a good plan. A general rule might be to place twelve families under each elder and have him visit them once each quarter inquiring as to their spiritual, material and social welfare and needs.

Thus a congregation of 50 families (about 200 members), could be cared for by four elders and with only one call each week for each elder. The entire congregation would be called upon by all the elders under a rotation system in one year's time.

Home visitation of this kind is not necessarily evangelistic, but it is good practice for complete shepherding.

It is in this matter of being shepherds that I fear our elders fall the farthest short of the N.T. instructions. Yet this is not an impossible task nor one that is burdensome. What a real blessing it is when faithfully performed with evident joy of serving.

It is a good suggestion to take one deacon with you as you make your pastoral calls, in order to help him grow toward proficiency in the work which one day be his.

How many churches do you know that have tried this rotation pastoring by the elders? Is this a workable program? (Yes, I've served at least two churches that have implemented this rotation. dlc).

Do you think the one man pastor system is adequate, no matter how hard your preacher works at the job?

Would this eliminate the need for a paid preacher? Why not?

Would this program increase his efficiency and outreach? How?

Do your elders actually look out for the flock by attention to them at worship?

What has the failure of this practice produced in our churches in this generation?

Would not a return to pastoring by the eldership remove this grave danger to the practice of New Testament Christianity?

### THE WORK OF THE ELDERS AS TEACHERS

Shepherding and teaching are closely interrelated in the work of the church.



## THE WORK OF THE ELDERS by Woodrow Phillips

Naturally this indicates a personal qualification to teach. Many have argued that an elder does not need to teach, but that he is to supervise the teaching. That may be true, but nothing so hampers a school as to have supervisor who know nothing of teaching.

Pastoring requires teaching. I may agree that this does not require standing before a class as a teacher, but I cannot agree that the elder can be properly qualified who does not know the content of, or how to impart, the Christian message.

Read these Scripture: Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:28; Acts 13:1; 2 Tim. 2:2 Note especially: 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 19

It does not follow that all the teachers must be elder, or that all the teaching must be done by elders. See Titus 23,4. A strong indication is made that the elders are to supervise all the teaching.

Every Christian has responsibility to teach the Word of God to others. See Matt. 5:13,14, 19; Col. 3:16; Titus 2:3; Heb. 5:12, 3:12,13; 10:24,25.

It is imperative that the elders know the thing to be taught, the Word of God. They must constantly give a strong voice in upholding New Testament principles.

As teachers, they are to deliver the faith, not only to their own generation, but to future generations. They must reverence the Bible as the complete revelation of God. They are commanded to commit the same to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

As a teacher the elder is constantly before the congregation and under observation. He must be on guard not to dominate, and not to retreat in the face of any error in teaching that may be introduced into the studies or the lives of members.

CONCLUSION: The apostles seemed to consider themselves to be elders. At least, Peter and John so referred to themselves. 1 Peter 5:1; 2John 1; 3 John 1.

The churches of the N.T. day, soon after their beginning, had elders to lead them. See Acts 14:23; 15:2-6; 20:17, 28; 21:17-24; Phil. 1:1.

Here are the specific duties listed:

- Acts 11:29,30-representing the Jerusalem church in receiving an offering
- Acts 15:1-29; 16:4-conferring with apostles and others about a matter of dispute
- Acts 20:28-feeding (shepherding) the flock
- Acts 20:29-31-watching and protecting the flock from "wolves"
- Acts 20:35-helping the weak
- Acts 21:17-24-giving advice on how to allay false opposition
- Eph. 4:11-16-equipping the saints for their full ministry and maturity .

SECTION V. PAUL WARNS OF FALSE TEACHERS AND TEACHING. 4:1-16.

I. Paul warns of specific false teaching to warn Timothy of coming sins. vs 1-5.

A. This is not the first warning of coming sin.

1. Matt. 24:11 and Mark 13:22

2. 2 Thess. 2:3

3. Acts 20:29,30

B. Paul takes great care to let those who read this letter know that this is not just his thoughts. He very clearly states in verse one that the Spirit has stated these facts to him and he is recording the same. This is another clear indication of the inspiration of the Bible. vs.1

SEE EXCURSUS ON INSPIRATION BY GARETH REESE, used by permission, Central Christian College of the Bible, Moberly, Mo., starting on the following page.