

# With the Bishops and Deacons

Philippians 1:1

## PART 1 THE ELDERS

### Introduction:

1. Matters of organization in the local church are of vital importance.
2. For a congregation to function as God intended (both internally and in the world) it must be organized according to God's pattern.
3. Early departures from the truth were in respect to organization (Acts 20:28-30).
4. Furthermore, good leadership is essential for any congregation.
5. The New Testament is our only guide for church organization.

### I. The Organization of the Church

- A. The organization of the church is just as important as its worship and doctrine.
  1. A congregation may be SCRIPTURALLY UNORGANIZED.
  2. A congregation may be UNSCRIPTURALLY UNORGANIZED.
  3. A congregation may be UNSCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED.
  4. A congregation may be SCRIPTURALLY ORGANIZED.
- B. Christ is the head of the church – every congregation.
  1. This is the kingdom of God on earth (Eph. 1:22-23; 3:10; 5:24; Col. 1:18).
  2. This is the only worldwide organization of the church.
    - a. No diocese
    - b. No human hierarchy
- C. The local congregation is the only organization of the church revealed in Scripture.
  1. There is no “first,” “superior” or “mother” church – all congregations are equal before God.
  2. Each local congregation is separate and autonomous from all others.
  3. Yet, they are united in belief and purpose and may work together.
- D. Man has sought to alter God's simple plan for church organization.
  1. Episcopal
    - a. Deacons, Priests, Bishops (Pope or King)
    - b. Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Anglican
  2. Presbyterian
    - a. Teaching elders (pastor)
    - b. Ruling elders (bishop)
  3. Congregational
    - a. Local matters solved by a vote of members
    - b. Independent, but organized into conventions, associations
- E. God's plan is unlike any of these.

1. A plurality of qualified elders oversee the local congregation (Acts 11:29-30; 14:23; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1ff; 4:14; 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5ff; Heb. 13:24; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1ff)
  2. They have authority over the local congregation (1 Thes. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17).
  3. They are members of the local congregation.
  4. Their authority is limited to the local congregation.
  5. They all have the same authority (rank) (1 Peter 5:1-3).
- F. All congregations are to have elders.
1. Jerusalem (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 6, 22; 16:4; cf. 8:1)
  2. Ephesus (Acts 20:17, 28)
  3. Philippi (Philippians 1:1)
  4. All churches (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23)

## II. The Titles of Elders

- A. Elders – *presbuteros* – of age, advanced in life, older
- B. Presbytery – *presbuterion* – body of elders (1 Tim. 4:14)
- C. Bishop – *episkopos* – overseer, superintendent (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Peter 2:25)
- D. Overseer – *episkopos* – same as above (Acts 20:28)
- E. Shepherd – *poimen* – herdsman, shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4)
- F. Pastor – *poimen* – same as above (Eph. 4:11)

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## PART 2

### THE QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK OF ELDERS

#### Introduction:

1. Matters of organization in the local church are of vital importance.
2. God's pattern is for a local congregation to be overseen by a plurality of elders and served by a plurality of deacons.
3. Our last lesson gave an overview of the eldership.
4. Today, we will consider the qualifications and work of elders.

- I. The Qualifications of Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11)
  - A. An elder must be a man of age and experience.
  - B. A man must desire to serve as an elder.
    1. "To stretch one's self out in order to touch or grasp something"
    2. Compare Hebrews 11:16 with 1 Timothy 6:10
    3. Second "desireth" = "to set one's heart upon"
    4. This emphasizes the importance of preparation for serving as an elder – long before the opportunity arises
  - C. An elder must be willing to work.
  - D. BLAMELESS – cannot be reprehended, without reproach (ASV)
    1. Does not mean sinless perfection (Rom. 3:23)
    2. Indicates unimpeachable character, pure life, integrity
    3. 1 Timothy 5:7; 6:14
  - E. HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE – a one-woman man, married to only one woman
    1. Only men can serve as elders
    2. Only married men can serve as elders
    3. No polygamist; no unscriptural divorce and remarriage
  - F. VIGILANT – temperate (ASV); sober; literally, holding no wine
    1. Able to think and reason clearly
    2. Aware, watchful
      - a. In their own lives (Acts 20:28)
      - b. Over the flock (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17)
  - G. SOBER – of sound mind, self-controlled
    1. Not impulsive, gullible or unreasonable
    2. Not excitable, passionate or flippant
  - H. OF GOOD BEHAVIOR – orderly, modest, well arranged
    1. He should be a gentleman – mannerly, respectable
    2. Possessing a well ordered life (cf. 1 Cor. 14:40)
  - I. GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY – hospitable, fond of (and generous to) guests
    1. Literally, one who loves strangers (cf. Heb. 13:1-2; Rom. 12:13)
    2. 1 Peter 4:9-10 – use what God gives to help others
  - J. APT TO TEACH – instructive, skillful in teaching (cf. Titus 1:9-11)
    1. Must know the Bible!
    2. Must have demonstrated himself as a teacher
  - K. NOT GIVEN TO WINE – not staying by wine; no brawler (ASV)

1. Lack of discipline, self-control
  2. Poor example to others
  3. Contentions and quarrels are out of place
- L. NOT A STRIKER, A BRAWLER OR SOON ANGRY – contentious, ready with a blow; abstaining from fighting; prone to anger
1. No temperamental outbursts; no lover of quarrels
  2. 1 Peter 2:23; James 1:19
- M. NOT GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE OR COVETOUS – not eager for base gain; not a lover of money
1. Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 6:10
  2. Hebrews 13:5 – it is a matter of faith in God
- N. PATIENT AND TEMPERATE – gentle (ASV), appropriate, suitable, fair, mild; self-controlled; mastering, controlling, curbing, restraining
- O. RULETH WELL HIS OWN HOUSE – stands before, presides over, maintains, rules, cares for, protects, guards
1. An elder must have children (at least one child [cf. Matt. 22:24; Deut. 25:5; Gen. 21:7])
  2. An elder must have faithful children - Christians
- P. NOT A NOVICE – newly planted, new convert
1. Danger of pride, conceit and insolence
  2. Age, maturity and experience are factors for consideration
- Q. HAVE A GOOD REPORT – good evidence or testimony from the world
1. He must be respected even by those who are not Christians
  2. Reputation is an important consideration
- R. NOT SELF-WILLED – self-pleasing, arrogant, selfish
1. Inconsiderate of others; arrogantly asserts his own will
  2. The wisdom of a plurality of elders (3 John 9-10)
- S. A LOVER OF GOOD MEN – (The ASV leaves out the word “men”) fond of good, promoter of virtue; loving goodness
1. Suggests that which is inherently and intrinsically good
  2. No matter who gets the credit as long as God is glorified
- T. JUST – equitable, fair, righteous; just in dealing with others
- U. HOLY – pure, undefiled by sin, pious; one who properly discharges his duty toward God

## II. The Work of Elders

- A. Lead the flock (Hebrews 13:7)
  - 1. Rule = "to go before; to be a leader"
  - 2. Example (1 Peter 5:2-3)
- B. Feed the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2)
  - 1. Proper diet
  - 2. Also means, "to tend" or "to shepherd"
  - 3. John 10:1-14
    - a. Lead the sheep
    - b. Know them by name
    - c. Protect from wolves (Matt. 7:15)
    - d. Primary work – guidance and protection
    - e. Sacrifice for the sheep
  - 4. Acts 20:29-31
  - 5. Psalm 23
    - a. Personal Relationship – *my shepherd*
    - b. Satisfy Basic Needs – *green pastures, still waters*
    - c. Encouragement – *restores my soul*
    - d. Positive Direction – *leads me*
    - e. Alleviates Fear – *I will fear no evil* (cf. James 5:14)
    - f. Victory – *verse 6*
  - 6. Jeremiah 23:1-6; 50:6-7
  - 7. Ezekiel 34:1-16
- C. Plead for the flock (Hebrews 13:17)
  - 1. Luke 15:3-7 – Sheep who have gone astray
  - 2. Romans 10:13-17; Acts 16:4-5 – Evangelize the lost
  - 3. 2 Thes. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:11-13 – Discipline the disorderly
- D. Guard the flock (Acts 15:22-24; Titus 1:9)

### Conclusion:

- 1. We can all learn much by studying the qualifications and work of elders.
- 2. How do we measure up to God's standard?

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## PART 3

### THE APPOINTING OF ELDERS

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH TO THE ELDERS

##### Introduction:

1. We have studied an overview of the eldership.
  2. We have studied the qualifications of elders.
  3. Now, we come to the conclusion of this series and to the appointing of elders.
  4. Today, we will consider two important aspects in the study of elders.
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- I. The Process of Appointing Elders
    - A. The word “ordain” has been misused by many (Titus 1:5).
      1. It means, “to designate, appoint; to place or to set.”
      2. It is the idea of placing one in a position – to set down.
    - B. The process of ordination has also been abused.
      1. In the OT, there was much ritual and ceremony.
      2. In the NT, this is not the case – simplicity is the pattern in the spiritual kingdom of Christ.
    - C. Though there is no specific pattern given for the appointing of elders in the church, there are three things that seem to be involved.
    - D. First, there is teaching (Acts 6:1-4).
      1. The congregation needs to understand what is being done.
      2. They need to know the qualifications and expectations.
      3. Those selected need to know their work.
    - E. Second, there is prayer (Acts 6:5-6).
      1. Prayer is always appropriate, but also essential.
        - a. It is the Lord’s work; so, we must involve Him!
        - b. We will not be successful without the Lord.
      2. Often, it was joined with fasting (Acts 13:2-3).
    - F. Finally, there is the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6).
      1. Sometimes this refers to the imparting of miraculous abilities by the Apostles (cf. Acts 8:15-19).
      2. But, it also referred to a means of endorsement, approval and fellowship (1 Timothy 5:17-22).
      3. This need not be some elaborate ritual – shaking of hands will do.
    - G. We will follow this example and participate in all three things today.
  - II. The Responsibility of the Church to the Elders
    - A. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 – *We must know the elders.*
      1. Obviously, we should know who they are.
      2. More than that, we should be acquainted with them – enough to be able to go to them for advice or instruction.
      3. This word also means “to recognize,” “to observe,” or “to have regard for.”
    - B. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 – *We must esteem them highly.*

1. The word *esteem* means “to consider, deem, or account.”
  2. The phrase *very highly* means “above that which is superabundant” (cf. John 10:10).
  3. We view them this way because we love them for the work they do on our behalf.
- C. 1 Thessalonians 5:13 – *We must be at peace.*
- D. Hebrews 13:7 – *We must remember and imitate the elders.*
1. The word *remember* means “to exercise the memory, recall, recollect.”
  2. Here, it means to be mindful of their teaching and example for the purpose of following and imitating them.
- E. Hebrews 13:17 – *We must obey and submit to the elders.*
1. The word *obey* means “to be persuaded to yield to or comply with”
  2. The word *submit* means “to yield, surrender, resist no longer.”
  3. We submit to them because we recognize the responsibility they have taken upon themselves for our souls.
- F. 1 Timothy 5:17 – *We must honor the elders.*
1. They are to be seen as deserving of double (two-fold) honor.
  2. Literally, this refers to being paid for their work (cf. vs. 18).
  3. Even when elders are not paid, they should be honored by the congregation.
  4. This is done because of their faithfulness and dedication, not merely because of their office.
- G. 1 Timothy 5:19 – *We must not receive a baseless accusation against an elder.*
1. Because of the nature of their work, there are often those who would seek to harm or undermine the eldership.
  2. See John 18:29; 1 Timothy 5:1
- H. James 5:14 – *We must call upon the elders.*
- I. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 – *We must pray for the elders.*

Conclusion:

1. The office of an Elder is essential to the organization and work of the church.
2. It presents many challenges, but also many rewards.
3. May we all be encouraged to serve the Lord faithfully in every part of our lives.

# Service to Appoint Elders

1. Opening Songs / Prayer / Song
2. First part of Sermon – *The Process of Appointing Elders*
  - a. Teaching – Acts 6:1-4
  - b. Prayer – Acts 6:5-6
  - c. Laying on of Hands – 1 Timothy 5:17-22
3. Prayer
4. Have those to be appointed stand

*After consideration from the eldership and the congregation, you are to be set apart this day to serve this congregation as an Elder. You are known by the congregation and your fellowman to be a man of integrity and faithfulness to the Lord. Your character and example have demonstrated you to be a man of devotion and diligence. You have proven to have a love for the church and the heart of a servant by many years of labor in the congregation. Our prayer is that as you have in the past, you will continue to serve the Lord and His church well.*

*This responsibility is serious and comes with many challenges. Yet, it also carries with it great rewards.*

*We charge you before Almighty God to approach this work with gravity and sobriety. We charge you to conduct this work prayerfully and faithfully. And, in all things, strive to honor God with your service.*

*As you shake hands with the elders of this congregation, we recognize and appoint you as an Elder of the Whitehouse Church of Christ.*

5. Shake hands with each elder
6. Second part of Sermon
7. Invitation Song