

Appointing Elders (2)

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Although it is difficult to appoint elders it is very simple to disappoint them. Elders watch for the souls of the members. When Christians carelessly disregard their God and their souls it causes these spiritually minded men great grief. Heb 13:17 says, *"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."*

The members of the congregation have the responsibility to obey and submit to the elders. The elders' responsibility is to watch out for the souls of the members and to eventually give account for their efforts. We should be aware of these requirements before appointing elders. If I am not willing to submit to them I should not appoint them. If they are not the kind of men who care for my soul I should not appoint them.

Some people believe the duty of the elders is to manage the money. They should hold the checkbook for the church and watch how every dollar is spent. Others think the elders' job is to micromanage the worship service. They schedule who can pray, teach, or song lead. They tell the leaders how much time they have to perform their function. Others see the only responsibility of the elders is to hire and fire the preacher. Elders are overseers. They will keep an eye on the treasury, the assembly, and the evangelist. However, the primary function of the elder is to look out for the souls of the members individually and collectively. In 1 Peter 5:2-3 the Apostle instructs the elders to *"**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.**"*

Since these leaders are to be examples to the flock they must watch out for themselves as well. Acts 20:28 ***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.***

Although it is difficult to appoint qualified elders it is even more complicated to remove unqualified ones. Once a man is put into the office he starts to feel the power (like King Saul). If the man is selfwilled (Titus 1:7) he will do what he wants and run over anyone who gets in his way. He will fight to stay in the eldership and split the congregation in order to get his way. He violates Peter's command as he becomes a lord over the flock.

I have known elderships that consisted of one Diotrephes and a couple of "yes men". The chief made the choices and the underlings rubber stamped them. Their position was primarily to hide the fact that the dictator was solely in charge. The church had the appearance of being scripturally organized with a multiple of elders when in fact they were controlled by one selfish tyrant. Any attempt to remove this man would result in the member being put out of the congregation (3 John 9-10).

Paul warned the elders that wolves would emerge from their own number (Acts 20:29-30). Those in the leadership position must continue to examine themselves. Are they actually "serving" Christ and the congregation? Are they basking in the glory of a title and doing no work? Have they become bosses who bully employees or are they shepherds who are protecting their sheep? The elders of Ephesus were warned to *"take heed therefore unto yourselves."*

Paul instructs Timothy about elders in 1 Tim 5:17-22.

17 *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.* 18 *For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.* Good elders need to be honored and appreciated. Paul admonishes us in 1 Thess 5:12-13. *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour 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. And be at peace among yourselves.*

Some members will oppose the appointment of qualified elders and continue to stand against them when they are selected. Paul goes on in 1 Tim. 5:19 to say, *Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.* Members will make flippant accusations against godly men. The evangelist must not believe everything he hears. However, elders are not flawless. If there is substance to an accusation Timothy must react impartially against all who sin. 20 *Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.* 21 *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality.*

22 *Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.* The laying on of hands was a gesture of approval, endorsement, and appointment. Timothy was to be careful in getting behind any one. It would be much easier to stop a selfish member before he was placed in the eldership.

We pray for God's guidance as we go forward in seeking a qualified eldership. We do not want to hurt the church with an improper selection nor do we want to oppose God by refusing to place men in office who are capable and willing to serve. This is a serious step for the congregation that requires all of the members cooperation. Turn in the names you feel are qualified to Dusty and Didi. They will talk to the men about their interest.