

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF ELDERS TO THE CONGREGATION

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Introduction

The churches of Christ need leaders.

God has ordained those leaders to be the elders, bishops, shepherds, presbyters, overseers, and pastors.

Building the local church begins with these men and their ability to lead

The health of the congregation spiritually and the quality of its work rests solely upon the leadership.

As a result we, the members of the congregation, must know what to expect from our elders and the elders need to know how they can lead us to heaven

I. Elders are leaders (Acts 20:28)

- a. Begins with Desire and Enthusiasm
 - i. There must be want to do.
 - ii. The leader begins early in his life to prepare himself to lead
 - iii. Making leaders is difficult but desire and enthusiasm creates the need to persevere
- b. Founded upon a humble self-confidence
 - i. Confidence is the opposite of doubt, fear, and apprehension
 - ii. *For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. (2 Tim. 1:12)*
 - iii. A mark of Christian maturity
 - iv. Allows for communication rather than conflict
 - v. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Phil 2:3-4)

- c. Observes the needs of the future
 - i. *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. (Prov 29:18)*
 - ii. We cannot allow ourselves to be satisfied with a mediocre vision of the church
 - iii. Vision creates the means for growth
- d. Builds through decisiveness and planning
 - i. Elder prepares himself before he can prepare others.
 - ii. Encourages because he knows that he needs workers.
 - iii. He makes decisions properly and openly for the benefit of the church rather than himself

II. Elders are planners (1 Pet 5:1-3)

- a. Oversight means responsibility
 - i. *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. (Heb 13:17)*
 - ii. Taking the oversight" shows that elders need to supervise and plan for the church
 - iii. The care and health of the church depend upon the responsibility the elders have upon them.
- b. Oversight means watching on behalf of the souls of the congregation
 - i. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Pet 5:8)*
 - ii. The souls of the members of a congregation depend upon the elderships watchfulness and ability to defend.
 - iii. *Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 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: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. 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 (Ezek 33:1-6)*
- c. Oversight means having a plan
 - i. *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? (Luke 14:28)*
 - ii. The congregation cannot be overseen without a plan of how to do it.
 1. Teaching and Preaching cannot be done without a plan
 2. Evangelism cannot go forth without a plan
 3. Worship is unsuccessful without a plan
 4. Congregation needs to know what to do, when to do, where to do, how to do, and who is doing.

- iii. Remember God planned for our salvation
 1. *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established. (Prov. 16:3)*
 2. From the beginning of the world God had intended to send his son to die for us.
 3. God has shown patience in getting his plan to work
 4. Elders need to have a plan and the patience to see it come to fruition.

III. Elders are shepherds (1 Pet 5:1-3)

- a. Feed the flock of God
 - i. Tending to the flock of God is an aspect of feeding.
 1. During the time of feeding the shepherd evaluates his sheep (Ps. 23)
 - a. Since the term pastor does not apply to a preacher then it is reasonable to infer that the responsibility of a pastor does not belong to the preacher.
 - b. A pastor is a shepherding elder
 2. In order to tend the elder must know his members
 - a. John 10:3-5
 - b. He must know them outside of church assemblies
 - c. He must spend time with members so he may know their hopes and dreams.
 - d. He must check up on the sick and elderly
 - e. The elder needs to be with the grieving bedside rather than the preacher.
 - f. The elder needs to do the visiting in the hospitals
 - ii. Teaching the flock
 1. Apt to teach is a qualification
 - a. Remember that Paul came not with excellence of speech
 - b. You don't have to be a polished speaker; only your words have to be scriptural
 - c. Yet it means that you have to study and know the truth.
 - d. Bro in Jacksonville who quoted the scripture when I could not remember it was an elder who knew the scriptures.
 2. Maintaining spiritual purity
 - a. Teaching means that the flock of God will observe the character of the speaker.
 - b. It is imperative that one remember that the shepherd of the congregation maintains his spiritual purity.
- b. Discipline the flock (Acts 20:29-30)
 - i. Grievous Wolves entering in
 1. The elders are responsible for knowing the thoughts of the members of the congregation.
 2. The elders have a right to ask their members what they think about a subject or question what someone has taught if they believe it is unscriptural.
 3. Their responsibility is to protect the Church of God.
 4. *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. (1 Tim 5:17)*
 - a. Elders must know abilities of members
 - b. Need to know what is lacking with members
 - c. Elders must know what sin is in the camp.
 - ii. Drawing away disciples of Christ
 1. These wolves what to entice members away from the truth.
 2. If some have been enticed away then the elders have a duty to discipline its erring member.
 - iii. Example of Paul teaching daily
 1. Discipline begins before trouble raises its head.
 2. The wise elders will teach like Paul, daily so that souls will not be lost.

Conclusion

1. Leading congregations is a difficult task.
2. So many different personalities and needs of every member
3. Through leadership, planning and shepherding the congregation can grow.
4. Because our elders are worthy of a double honor we must know what to expect and help them accomplish the tasks they plan to accomplish through their leadership and shepherding.
5. Let us remember the role these men have chosen and submit ourselves to them as God desires for us to do.
6. By doing so we are obeying the Gospel of Christ. There is another aspect to obeying the Gospel, having ones sins remitted.
7. Plan of salvation