

Elders and Deacons

9.13.09

Foundational Principles:

1. Jesus Christ is the ULTIMATE leader of any church (Eph. 1:22-23)
2. Church leadership is an important issue.
 - a. The Bible gives careful attention to leadership in the church.
 - b. As leadership goes, so goes the church.

What are Elders?

"Pastors responsible for leading, feeding, guarding and shepherding the church."

1. Elders must meet biblical qualifications (Ac. 20:28, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9)

- a. Relation to God:
 - i. A man – masculine leader.
 - ii. Above reproach – not perfect, but without any obvious character defect.
 - iii. Able to teach – a student & effective teacher of God's Word.
 - iv. Not a new convert – a mature Christian, growing in his faith.
- b. Relation to Family:
 - i. Husband of one wife – one-woman man, sexually pure.
 - ii. Has obedient children – children 'under control.'
 - iii. Manages family well – provides for, leads, organizes, loves his wife and children. **It is not a necessity for elders to be married or have children to serve (Paul, Jesus), though this would have obvious benefits.*
- c. Relation to Self:
 - i. Temperate – mentally and emotionally stable.
 - ii. Self-controlled – disciplined life, not a slave to his passions.
 - iii. Not given to drunkenness – doesn't misuse alcohol, free from addictions.
 - iv. Not a lover of money – financially content and upright.
- d. Relation to Others:
 - i. Respectable – worth following and imitating.
 - ii. Hospitable – welcomes strangers, especially non-Christians.
 - iii. Not violent – even-tempered, not a 'hot-head.'
 - iv. Gentle – kind, gracious, loving.
 - v. Not contentious – peaceable, not quarrelsome/divisive.
 - vi. Good reputation with outsiders – respected by those outside the church.

2. Elders must fulfil certain biblical duties.

- a. Prayer and Scripture study (Acts 6:4)
- b. Preaching & Teaching the Bible correctly (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17)
This can be from the platform or in other environments such as in counselling, etc.
- c. Refuting false teachings and protecting the church from false teachers (Titus 1:9, Acts 20:17-31)
- d. Teaching sound doctrine, refuting false teachings and protecting the church from false teachers (Titus 1:9, Acts 20:17-31)
- e. Living exemplary lives (Heb. 13:7)
- f. Ruling/leading the church (1 Timothy 5:17)
- g. Managing the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
- h. Rightly using money and power (1 Peter 5:1-3)
- i. Working hard (1 Thessalonians 5:12)

- j. Caring for people in the church (1 Peter 5:2-5)
- k. Praying for the sick (James 5:13-15)
- l. Disciplining unrepentant Christians (Matthew 18:15-17)
- m. Giving account to God for the church (Hebrews 13:17)

3. As a general rule, there should always be more than one elder (plurality).

- a. Ac. 14:23, Ti. 1:5, 1 Tim. 4:14 "...elders..."
- b. There are many practical benefits of a plurality as well.
- c. The "Lead Pastor" serves as a "first among equals" or "point guard."

4. Elders and the congregation function together in a healthy partnership.

- a. Like a "Healthy Husband/Wife Relationship"

What Are Deacons?

"Lead servants responsible for meeting specific needs and leading in ministry."

1. Deacons must meet specific qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8-13)

- a. Essentially the same as Elders with the exception of teaching.
 - i. Women may serve as deacons in our church (*article posted at the blog*).
 1. Rom. 16:1, debate over 1 Tim. "wives," history, etc.
 2. *If deacons are functioning like Elders in a church, they should not.

2. Deacons must fulfil certain biblical duties (function like Acts 6:1-7):

- a. Meet specific designated needs. Lead ministry teams. Provide support.

Practical Application:

1. Pray for and encourage your leaders.
 - a. Please don't take this for granted.
Am I in the habit of praying for and encouraging my pastors, group leaders, deacons?
2. Imitate their faith.
"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." Hebrews 13:7 ESV
 - a. These are qualities that every Christian should aspire to.
Where am I in regard to these qualities? What needs to change?
3. Submit to their leadership.
"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17 ESV
 - a. Don't grumble or complain. Pray about your concerns and respectfully bring them up.