

The Office of an Elder

1 Tim. 3:1

Introduction:

- A. Need and possibility of selecting and appointing more elders soon.
 - 1. Not an exclusive work of present elders – whole church involved.
 - 2. Making church “officers” is a two fold process – selection and appointment. (Acts 6:3).
- B. Church needs to know the nature of the office, it’s qualifications and its work.
 - 1. Else cannot intelligently participate in the selection process.
 - 2. Hence this series of lessons of the eldership.
- C. Features involved in the office itself that we need to consider in the first of this series:

Discussion:

I. It Is a *Working* Office – Not a Honorary Position.

- A. A work to be desired, not an honor to coveted (“a good work”).
 - 1. Elders should be honored “for their works sake” (1 Thess. 5:12, 13)
 - 2. Yet, they must not desire it for honors sake.
- B. A work is indicated by the terms referring to elders (cf. Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2)
 - 1. Elder/Presbyter indicates the work of guidance by reason of maturity and experience.
 - 2. Bishop/Overseer indicates the work of superintending – has authority.
 - 3. Pastor/Shepherd indicates the work of leading and tending a flock.
- C. The nature of their work so extensive will take another whole lesson to deal with it.

II. It Is a *Divine* Office – Not a Political Office.

- A. Elders are made by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).
 - 1. How? The same way he makes Christians.
 - 2. Holy Spirit gives the terms and conditions – we must follow instructions.
 - 3. When church selects officers they must fit the terms laid down by inspired men. (cf. Acts 6:3)
- B. Elders are not made by a political process.
 - 1. Often men “run for elder” much like one runs for political office – back slapping and all.
 - 2. Often men are appointed because of fleshly considerations.
 - a. Well educated.
 - b. Great personality.
 - c. Social Prestige.
 - d. Business success.
 - e. Family pedigree.

III. It Is a *Local* Office – Not Diocesan.

- A. Elders were only in local churches in the New Testament (Acts 14:23; 20:17; 1 Pet. 5:2).
- B. Elders do not oversee the people for the work of sister congregations.
- C. Elders do not meddle in internal affairs of sister congregations.

IV. It Is an *Administrative* Office – Not Legislative.

- A. They are administrators under the “Chief Shepherd.” (1 Pet. 5:4).
- B. They make no laws, bind no rules – simply carry out Christ’s law.
- C. They rule not as Lords, but as leaders (1 Pet. 5:3).

Conclusion:

- A. Men who desire the office should know what they desire – prepare self for it.
- B. All should know what is involved in the eldership.