

ELDERS-BISHOPS IN EVERY CHURCH

I Timothy 3:1-7

Titus 1:5-11

Acts 20:17-38

I Peter 5:1-4

Acts 14:23

SOME OBSERVATIONS:

1. The Greek word translated throughout the New Testament as elder simply means an older, mature man.
2. The word translated bishop means one who oversees, superintends, takes the lead over.
3. So a Bishop is an older man who is mature with good judgment who can and will lead a congregation of God's people in the way God would have them to go.
4. He<sup>s</sup> to be a family man. With one wife, having children who are Christians. The word believers in the New Testament is used almost entirely to mean those who have accepted Christ and have been baptized for remission of their sins.
5. The word for children is a plural noun in the Greek text and the word for believing or faithful is a plural adjective modifying the noun children.

Note: The plural noun in Greek means two or more.

(Never means one or more as far as the text is concerned)

6. An elder-bishop MUST have the respect of the entire congregation he is to lead. If not, how can he expect them to follow his lead?

In addition, he must have the respect of those "outsiders" with whom he lives, works, and associates.

Note: The Apostle Paul makes this plain in his instructions to Timothy who was in the great city of Ephesus and to Titus whom he had left on the island of Crete.

7. Obviously, his family should possess those qualities of a Christian family laid down in the New Testament.
8. A congregation of the Lord's Church is not un-Scriptural when it does not have men qualified to serve as elders. MOST CONGREGATIONS OF CHURCHES DO NOT HAVE ELDERS.
  - A. God expects each congregation to train men to be able to serve as elders.
  - B. There must be two or more elders in each church.
  - C. No provision is made for one man to dictate to the whole congregation. Elders are to lead by example.
  - D. It is better for a congregation not to have elders than to appoint men who are unqualified.
  - E. Women are excluded from being elders.
9. An elder-bishop may preach and teach. In fact, most of his work lies in that field if you will read all the Scriptures. We should hope that every elder-bishop of the Lord's church were able scholars in the Scriptures and able communicators of God's word to the congregation they are to serve.

Note: This is a function of the eldership which is sorely absent in modern-day church of Christ to the detriment of the entire congregation and brotherhood.

10. PRACTICAL PROBLEMS WHICH ARISE WHEN THE PREACHER BECOMES AN ELDER.

- A. Eph. 4:11 Has the work of the evangelist and the work of the pastor (bishop) as two separate works.
- B. The evangelists who spends his time doing the work of and evangelist well will not have time to be doing the work which God gave the elder-bishop to do.

(1) They are not the same work.

NOTE: We know of no Scripture which authorizes the preacher-evangelist to made decisions for the entire congregation.

The preacher-evangelist does not have any more authority to make congregational decisions than any other male member of the congregation.

- C. If the preacher is appointed an elder this puts him into the position of deciding his own salary.
- D. Makes it possible for him to control the mail to the congregation and discard what he does not want them to share.
- E. Makes it possible for him to become a permanent fixture. To "feather his own bed" - so to speak.

Note: When the preacher points to I Peter 5: and to II John and III John to show that Peter and John were elders he needs to know:

1. Peter is dealing with older men, among whom elders are, and that younger men are to give proper respect them them.
2. That the authorship of II and III John is open to opinions. Scholars and the church have not always agreed.
3. And preachers need to know that they are neither the Apostle Peter nor the Apostle John.

11. WHY IS IT THAT THEY CHURCHES LAG BEHIND IN QUALIFIED LEADERS?

- A. A lack of congregational appreciation for elders.
- B. Most men are too busy trying to make a living for their own families to have adequate time to deal with God's family.
- C. A lack of congregation participation and cooperation. This is enough to discourage many good men to take the work.
- D. Elders are the brunt of severe destructive criticism when something does not go exactly like some members want.
- E. Very few elders have had the congregation to constantly encourage them, and urge them on to greater service.

12. IT IS THE WORK OF A BISHOP AND NOT AN OFFICE.

- A. Being a Bishop is a WORK WHICH A MAN DESIRES and not an Office from which he sits and issues instructions and orders. The Greek word translated office in the King James means WORK and is so translated in other translations.