



## Editor's Note

Jack Spender's daughter, Bethany, was ushered into the Lord's presence October 30, 2007. Jack as you know is a regular writer for ESN. Bethany struggled for years with Lyme disease and in recent years with Leukemia, which finally claimed her life. Jack and his wife Ruth would like to thank all the ESN readers who have prayed faithfully for Bethany and family. She is survived

by Jeff, her husband of three years.

God often doesn't explain Himself (Deut 29:29) and, as you all know, doesn't always answer our prayers the way we want or expect. Yet, faith struggles to understand. Join us all in praying for the family. If you would like to contact them, Jack & Ruth's address is 112 Doolittle Dr., Bethany, CT 06524 (USA), alan7s@yahoo.com.



### Biblical Principles

## Elders Who Do Well (part 2)

by Chuck Gianotti

### Studies in 1 Timothy 5:17-19-Part 13

Last issue we addressed the subject of those elders who rule and teach well being worthy of double honor. But what about the rest of the elders? The danger in writing an article like the previous one is that some elders might feel diminished, because of the "double honor" given to another. Another concern is that such teaching might somehow lessen the role and authority of the plurality of elders and give rise to a pastor-primacy model of leadership.

It is important to keep in mind that as Paul addresses Timothy, there is a certain level of spiritual maturity implicitly assumed; Timothy was no novice in ministry and leadership. In similar fashion, that is what we in Elders' ShopNotes assume concerning our readership. The whole counsel of God comes into play, even if it is not directly stated in every article—all our teaching through ESN should be understood in the context of the clear New Testament teaching on church leadership, namely, an elder-form of church government, with no one man having authority over all other elders.

Having shown in the previous article that some elders are worthy of "double honor," the question arises, "What about those elders, while not 'worthy' of 'double honor,' are nonetheless working hard and doing well as elders?" If some are to receive "double" honor, are some then to receive "single" honor? Here are a few thoughts on this subject:

#### Elders should be appreciated.

"But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently

labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction" (1 Thess 5:12 NASB). Many elders put in a full day's work in secular employment (as the vast majority of our readers do) and then put in hours of shepherding the flock, preparing for messages, meetings, etc. To be sure, you all (the elders among our readers) should be greatly honored for your sacrificial labor for the body of Christ.

#### Commitment levels vary

Not everyone is at the same place in their life situation and spiritual walk, so not everyone can commit to the same level. Some sacrifice more for the work of eldering than others. There simply is nothing in Scripture that leads us to expect that all elders should receive the same amount of honor, regardless of their level of service. Even apart from the concern of financial support raised in the last issue, honor in any form will not be distributed equally. There is nothing bad about this.

#### Our motivation should be to act honorably.

Regardless of whether we are honored here on earth for our work as elders, we should nonetheless "have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things" (Heb 13:18). Like Aaron the priest, we cannot grab honor to ourselves (Heb 5:4)—that is not befitting a believer-priest of God (as all Christians are), nor is it befitting the character of an elder who is simply a "steward of God" (Titus 1:7 and not to be "fond of sordid gain" (Titus 1:7) of any

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In the last issue we were thinking about the broad spectrum of the elder's home and family life. Now, I'd like to focus in on one particular aspect of that picture: the elder's relationship with his wife. Since Paul makes a correlation between the way a man manages his family and the way he will care for the church, his relationship with that one person with whom he has become "one flesh" will be of great importance.

This union is so special in the eyes of the Lord, that He has chosen it to be a visible picture before all of the relationship between the Lord Jesus, and His bride. While this writer does not share the viewpoint that an elder must be married (see previous issue), it is understandable why some commentators take that position given the magnitude of this truth.

**The Silence of Scripture**

Looking at the most in-depth treatment of the qualifications (or characteristics) of church leaders in I Timothy 3:1 – 13, it is interesting to note that although guidelines for the wife of the deacon are given, there is no mention of the wife of the elder. This may infer that as spiritually mature men, elders have become one with their wives to such a degree that no separate treatment is needed. Whatever the reason, there are plenty of passages on the godly husband-wife relationship to draw from. Let's begin with some foundational insights, and move on to practical implications for the elder.

**Foundation passages: Ephesians 5:22 – 33; I Pet. 3:1 – 7**

Every Christian couple ought to read and ponder these wonderful sections of Scripture throughout their married life. I want to highlight three

truths that are of special relevance to the elder as he shepherds that one special person in the flock – his wife!

1) Christian marriage is a love relationship in which submission is to be both a protection and a delight. By watching the tender love in which the wife finds security and comfort in the headship of her husband, (and honestly would not want to part with it), the believers in the church come to understand how the Lord is constantly using their submission to Him as the means by which He can care for them.

All thought of domineering or harshness is excluded; Paul does not say, "Husbands, see that your wife is in submission to you." Rather, he addresses the wife. This intimate

*The relationship of an elder to his wife models to the church a "real life" example of how the Lord Jesus cares for His bride, the Church.*

love relationship is a gift from the Lord to the church, so that younger Christians can see in the older (and most importantly in elders!) a "real life" example of how the Lord Jesus cares for His bride as she trusts in Him and obeys His word.

2) The above is possible only where each person is both "under" and "in" authority. Being under the authority of Christ and His Word, enables the husband to fulfill his role as "the head of the wife" (vs. 23). The wife is under the headship of her husband, and thereby has great authority in the home. In this connection, it is interesting to note the Greek word used by Paul in I Tim. 5:14 in reference to wives, which is literally "oikos" (household) + "despotes" (sovereign ruler). Robert-

son remarks that this word "rule the household" provides "proper recognition of her influence." (Word Pictures in the NT). Elders must set the example of letting the Word of Christ dwell in them richly (Col. 3:16).

3) Just as the Lord is working tirelessly to bring the church toward full, maturity and purity, so the husband must be doing the same for his wife. In other words, he cannot be effective in discipling young believers in the church if he is not discipling his own wife! Of course this does not mean that in every case he will have been a Christian longer than she, but only that God lays upon him this responsibility as a life work.

**Practical Implications**

How can an ordinary Christian

man hope to have a marriage that would make ordinary Christian people admire the Lord's love and care for His church? In

human strength, this is impossible. But by abiding in Him, ordinary people become extraordinary! Every instruction on the subject given by the Lord is within reach through faith in His promises, coupled with self-discipline and determined effort. Here are several areas to work at:

**Communication:** Peter exhorts husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge (I Pet. 3:7). Accurate knowledge of anything comes by studying it. Learn to really listen to your wife; observe her carefully, and speak as if the Lord Himself were standing beside her. Not only will this bring blessing to your relationship, but it will enhance your work in the church as you become more sensitive to people.

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## The Gift of Listening

by Mary Gianotti

One of my favorite things to hear is a group of women talking. That may sound funny but if you have ever been the MC at a woman's event or even at a small gathering, trying to get everyone's attention can be a major task. In the past this annoyed me, until I realized that all the chatting was women enjoying, sharing, uplifting and encouraging each other. A joyful noise! God has blessed us with the simple ability to communicate with each other. I believe as women who are married to men in leadership we have an added responsibility to use this gift to build up the body of Christ. Having a meaningful conversation has two aspects, talking and listening. For me it is a lot easier to talk than to listen. Learning to listen, however, will open doors to many ministry opportunities.

In my pursuit to be a better listener I have come across two truths in the book of Proverbs. **First**, I need to listen with a goal to understand what the person is saying before I give an answer. "He who answers before listening, that is his folly and shame" (Prov 18:13). Often before the person

has finished talking I have made a judgment, come to a conclusion or interrupted them. In such cases I am not listening with the goal to understand. This kind of response hinders the work of the Holy Spirit. Giving comfort, godly advice and even rejoicing together is short circuited by my uncontrolled desire to talk without understanding the issues at hand. According to the verse, that puts me in the category of a fool.

**Second**, listening helps me to receive a gift from God. "Let the wise listen and add to their knowledge" (Prov 1:5). In conversation, listening with the goal to gain from the other person's knowledge makes me a wiser woman. My pride tells me I don't need input from others and that I need to have the answers when dealing with other women. As I have put this proverb into practice, it has been a joy to learn from a variety of people. New believers, my own children, a single mom, kids in Sunday school, my neighbor, other elders' wives have all added to my own wisdom. When a person realizes I am listening and I value what

they are saying, my relationship becomes closer and trust is built. It's a win/win situation.

So next time you are in a conversation ask yourself, "Am I listening well?"



### From the Q-Files

"To listen well is as powerful a means of influence as to talk well, and is as essential to all true conversation." Chinese proverb

"I like to listen. I have learned a great deal from listening carefully. Most people never listen." Ernest Hemingway

"It is the province of knowledge to speak. It is the privilege of wisdom to listen." Oliver Wendell Holmes

"Listen or thy tongue will keep thee deaf." Indian Proverb.

## The Family Life of Elders (cont.)

**Honor:** Peter also instructs the husband to give honor to his wife. The need for honor (or respect) is one of our most basic needs. Society today is filled with working women, many of whom are simply seeking honor in the world that they have never gotten at home. If you believe that motherhood, homemaking, and co-laboring in the work of the assembly are honorable occupations, then ask yourself who is most responsible to give your wife honor, and in what form it should come.

**Teamwork:** Peter describes a Christian couple as "heirs together" (KJV) of one of God's most coveted graces: "life!" Does she feel like an essential part of the team, or

does she sit on the sidelines while you serve? Praying together, visiting the saints, mentoring younger believers and discussing the Lord's work are all enhanced by harmonious teamwork. This also suggests helping her discover her gifts and special abilities.

**Home:** Every couple can study the so-called "Proverbs 31 woman." She is godly, energetic, creative, and admired, but she also has the full support of her husband and family. This is not a make-believe story, found only in dreams, but a portrait of the sort of diligence, virtue, and cooperation that the Lord is seeking to picture His love relationship with the church.

**Family:** It is common in the world to see a family in which the children fight with their mother, who in turn bucks her husband, who in turn lives in relative ignorance of the Word and ways of Christ. How different is a truly Christian home! Are we praying daily with our wives for wisdom in training the children and managing the home? Are we able to openly share insights from God's word about our relationship, the family, the assembly?

Elders are called "stewards of God" (Titus 1:7). As we think of our nearest and dearest earthly blessing, we are reminded again that "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2).



## Elders Who Do Well (cont.)

sort. We are not to even have a hint of the Diotrephes syndrome (“who loved to be first” 3 John 9) which so easily surfaces when someone else is honored above ourselves. Any honor we seek out for ourselves, which we manipulate or orchestrate for ourselves will be hollow. Honor is something that is ultimately bestowed by God, and He may or may not use humans as His channel for honoring you. Further, envying another’s honor may be evidence of our own liability to the syndrome—certainly not qualify as “conduct(ing) ourselves honorably.”

### **There is a myth that only a limited amount of honor exists to go around.**

Do I feel that when someone else is honored, there will somehow be less honor for me? While most of us will deny that we feel this way, could it be one of the things that keeps us from honoring each other? Again, one of the ways the Diotrephes syndrome manifests itself is found in our resistance when a fellow elder is honored for his sacrificial labors when we are not. Maybe it is when people speak highly of him, or commenting on his sacrifice or the astuteness of his preaching ministry. Can we bring ourselves to join in the honoring of him, and set aside our own desire for honor? This is exacerbated when we feel that our own work is not sufficiently recognized by others. The reality is there is no amount of human praise and honor that sufficiently

compensates a hard working elder here on earth. Yet, most of us probably wish we had just a little more, and it is hard when someone else is honored and we are not.

### **Our true honoring will come from the Chief Shepherd.**

We need to remember what Peter said toward the end of his life to his fellow elders, “When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:1-2). It goes without saying, that our desire is not for earthly glory or honor, but for the glory and honor that comes when our Lord says, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” So we need to set aside judging others for the honor they receive here on earth but rather praise God for their good work and join in the honoring of them. We will get our due reward from the Lord—He will determine if we are worthy of it. May we, therefore, “humble [ourselves] under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt [us] in the proper time” (1 Peter 5:6).

### **Application**

Some think that any honor given or received here on earth takes away from a person’s reward in heaven. If that were the case, then why would the Scripture say to honor others? In fact, it teaches that we should do so.

The irony is that it is rather self-serving for the elders to teach this to the congregation to honor the elders,

just like it is for a teacher to strongly teach on Gal 6:6. So who will teach the congregation to do this?

The answer is found in the elders’ behavior toward each other—do the believers see the elders honoring each other? Here is what one local church did. One elder recognized that two of the other elders were quite adept at teaching the Word. So he rallied the congregation to contribute to a fund to help build up the individual libraries of both elders. As you know, books and resources can be quite expensive. With the money collected they were able to purchase study and reference books along with a bible-software program for the two elders. On a particular Sunday, a presentation was made to publicly express that honor, with a short explanation of relevant biblical teaching and present them with the resources.

Other ways to honor the other elders include: comment to them on something you learned from their teaching, verbalize your appreciation of their gift strengths, show interest in their ministries, pray for them (and then tell them that you are doing so), give them a gift certificate to a favorite restaurant or coffee shop, send a birthday card. When someone criticizes them—defend their character.

Yes, there is enough honor to go around—if we all are willing to give it away freely. God just may be waiting for you and me to be His channel for honoring someone else. 

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