



Editor's Note

Over the past few months, I have become accustomed to seeing fruits and vegetables on a table at the back of our chapel. After the conclusion of the Sunday meetings, it's normal to see a large cart piled with breads and various baked goods placed at the back so that people can help themselves on the way out. Sometimes there's a box of "help yourself" clothes for kids. Recently I was at a Christian conference in the Midwest, and among the many tables of items of interest to believers, Bibles, and books and displays about summer camps and retirement homes, was a table of old Christian books "free for the taking." What a test of self control for a Bible student!

Christians just like to share! We see ourselves as stewards, and enjoy passing on our

'extra blessings' that the Lord provides. Come to think of it, there are countless ways we can share with one another. All that's needed is a willing heart and a place where people come together. It's a part of what Christians call "fellowship."

We try to do a little of this here at ESN, by providing some "helpful links" to websites that may be of interest to our readers. And you've probably noticed the new "Quotes from Young Believers" which, at least, may give you a smile. Not big things of course, but enough to remind us that, as the little boy said to his Mom, "God is the best sharer of all!"



Biblical Teaching

The Portrait of a Godly Man—Part 1 by Warren Henderson

Paul supplies his spiritual son Timothy a portrait of a godly man (1 Tim. 3:1-3) that he might assist others in identifying those the Holy Spirit has called to be elders (Acts 20:28). Apostolic appointment was a reality in the early Church Age (Acts 14:23), but would not be feasible after the canon of Scripture was complete and the apostles had passed into the Lord's presence.

It must be understood that an elder is not a perfect man, but rather that he should be characterized by perfect qualities that indeed should mark all believers. If an elder degrades in character then he is to relinquish the office. The *work* of a shepherd cannot be separated from the *character*, reflective of the Good Shepherd, that is to accompany it.

Many speak of the character qualities in this section of Scripture as "qualifications." However, that concept conveys an idea of proving or disproving something at a particular time. In contrast, the character qualities of the elder are to be evident in an ongoing basis, else he is not fit for the work. The following is an exegesis of 1 Timothy 3:1-3: the portrait of a godly man. Such a man may be recognized as a church elder.

Verse 1

"This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work" (NKJV).

It is noted that the Greek words *a tis*, translated "a man," is in the neuter gender and is better rendered "if any." J. N. Darby translates it "if anyone." The point being that although *a tis* in verse 1 is not gender

specific, it is followed by eight masculine modifiers in verses 1-7. For example, at the conclusion of verse 1 we read, "*he desires*" which is masculine in the original language. Only a man can be "the husband of one wife" and clearly the gender qualities of the Greek language confirm that only men are to be recognized as local church leaders. A reality of Church history is confirmed by the New Testament narrative.

"The office of bishop" (KJV) or *"the position of a bishop"* (NKJV) is derived from one Greek word, *episcopo*, which means "inspection (for relief)" or by implication "superintendence." This word is only found four times in the New Testament and is translated "visitation" twice (e.g., Luke 19:44). J. N. Darby renders it "to exercise oversight" which nicely captures the meaning of the word. The word does not indicate the office itself, but the *outworking of the office* or the activities of the office, such as, to look after, to feed, to protect, to watch,.... It is interesting that the NIV plugs in a verb in an effort to describe this active reality: *"If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer."* The man desiring the active work of shepherding desires a good work; the verse is not speaking of desiring the office itself.

Besides desiring the outworking of the office rather than a title, a man called by God will also be motivated by an internal call (a divine summons) to the work. The Greek word rendered "*desires*" (the first occurrence) is *oregetai*. It is a present tense indicative verb in the middle voice, which means there is an internal and ongoing motivation within the elder to do shepherding

(Continued on page 3)

Leadership Principles

The Elders Who Are Among You

by Jack Spender

Those who handle the “Word of Truth” know the importance of attention to detail in the study of Scripture. To be careless in study can bring one shame (II Tim. 2:15). Small words in the text, or in some cases even a single letter, have significance and may mean the difference between truth and error.

The little preposition “in” (“*en*” in Greek) is an example. It is sometimes properly translated “among.” Both the apostles Peter and Paul use this word to describe the sphere in which elders function in the church. Consider several examples.

In his first epistle, (chapter 5), Peter exhorts the elders to whom he writes, referring to himself as an elder. Note the exact wording. “The elders who are *among* you . . .” (vs. 1); “Feed the flock of God which is *among* you.” (vs. 2).

Paul begins his address to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 by reminding them that the Holy Spirit made them overseers ‘among’ the flock of God (Greek “*en*,” among). In his letter to the new assembly in Thessalonica which probably did not yet have recognized elders, he exhorts the believers to honor those who lead them and are “among” them. (5:12).

This may suggest a question as to whether there is any official sense to the word “elders,” or is it simply a reference to the older men of the congregation who would inevitably be part of (i.e., among) the rest of the congregation.

Importance of Balance

To settle this question, we should note that there is another word used to describe church officers, the word “overseer,” (Greek ‘*episkopos*’) which sets them apart from those who are simply older men. Overseeing implies authority, for the word is meaningless if it only means “watch while things are happening.”

The plain sense of certain passages confirms this. After his exhortation to the believers in Thessalonica to submit to their leaders, he turns to those who lead, and exhorts them to stand for just and right things in the life of the church (I Thes. 5:12-18). Note especially verse 12, “See that none render evil for evil...” This instruction has the sense of, “You must see to it....” This cannot mean simply, “watch it happen,” but “make sure it does not happen, and deal with it if it does!”

When instructions that require spiritual authority are given, the word “overseer” is often used. In another verse referred to above, Acts 20:28, Paul reminds the elders that, “the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” In both I Timothy (3:1,2) and Titus (1:7) Paul lists qualities of church leaders calling them “overseers.” His letter to the church at Philippi is addressed to the saints, “with the overseers (*episkopoi*) and

deacons.” (Phil. 1:1).

Clearly, all this information reinforces the importance of balance in leadership. Elders must live and work “among” the people, but they must also “come together” at certain times, as did the leaders in Acts 15, to decide matters of the church. Leaning too far to one side or the other can be detrimental to the life and health of the church. Some hold that elders are only “examples to the flock” (I Pet. 5:3); and others so emphasize their authority that they become “lords over God’s heritage” (I Pet. 5:3). Wise elders will be sensitive to this balance. As sheep of the flock themselves, they must live and work “among” the saints much of the time. But as “under-shepherds,” they must accept spiritual authority and not be afraid to confront problems, and clear them up.

How then can elders preserve this balance in their work “among” the saints? Here are some practical suggestions.

The Practical Outworking

1. See Yourself as a Sheep

As a general rule, elders should see themselves first as sheep, and second as shepherds. Of course they are both. But an important mark of godly leaders is humility. The Lord Jesus, although “God manifest in the flesh,” could say, “I am among you as he who serves.” (Luke 22:27). Living and moving among the people is a good thing, providing insight into the needs and problems of fellow saints, all the while protecting against self-exalting ideas.

2. Choose to be Among Them

Elders ought to take every possible opportunity to spend time with people on Sunday mornings, at fellowship functions and prayer times. Do not allow the pressing problems of the church to pull you away from the people into a corner to discuss business. Of course there are extenuating situations that arise, but this should be the rare exception.

If the assembly has small groups meeting in homes, “sow” the elders among the groups for maximum exposure to the family units of the church. This can be an excellent way to look in on, and listen in on, the inner working of homes and families, providing insights that might never be known in public gatherings. Elders ought to resist the temptation to isolate themselves from the church, forming their own private groups for fellowship and prayer.

3. Involve the Church in Decision making

Follow the practice of the apostles and elders in Acts 15. Coming together to discuss a serious doctrinal matter, one that could have monumental implications for the future of the church, the text makes it clear that the “multitude,” i.e., the people of the church were present during the deliberations, and involved in the letter sent out. The specific wording is in-

structive. When the decision was reached to send representatives to share the outcome of the convocation, we read that this pleased “the apostles and elders with the whole church.” (vs. 23). The letter they carried begins, “The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting . . .” (vs. 24). The apostles and elders may have led the proceedings, but they were sensitive to the agreement of the congregation as they deliberated.

4. Use the Gifts of the Saints

It is no exaggeration to say that most elder groups have restricted vision when it comes to meeting ministry needs. The thinking is usually, “Which one of us will do that?” or, “When will we do that?” In other words, it’s a given, an unspoken agreement that if it’s going to get done, we must do it. How often has someone in an elder group asked, “Who in the assembly has a gift that might help with this need?” This is a good habit, and once learned will involve the people and relieve the elders.

5. Share the Workload

Certainly there are times when sensitive material must be discussed in private. But it is a healthy thing for elders to ask themselves how much of their work falls in this category. If some part of the routine work load can take place in the presence of the church, either the whole church or selected younger men who are invited, this can be an excellent opportunity for training and for promoting the unity of the church.

Someone will object, saying that it is harder to make decisions with larger numbers. This is true. But it raises the question as to the goals of the leadership. If the goal is discipleship, that is, to train and equip the people, then the amount of time needed to work with them is a good investment.

Conclusion

In a world where political leaders are obsessed with power and position by which they can control others, we need to hear again the words of the Master when speaking about this subject, “It shall not be so among you.” (Matt. 20:26). Taking the humble place, which can even stoop to wash the feet of the saints (John 13), is the key to greatness in the Lord’s kingdom. Let us actively seek it!



Portrait of a Godly Man (continued from page 1)

work, it is not a compulsory activity. *Oregetai* literally means “to stretch one’s self out in order to grasp.” The elder’s drive for the shepherding work is likened to a runner stretching forth with all his or her remaining strength to cross the finish line victorious.

The second Greek word translated “desires” is *epiqumei*, which simply means to “long for.” It is also a present tense indicative verb in the middle voice. The “work” (*kalou*) is literally “a doing.” It is valid to desire to be an overseer of God’s people because it is a valuable and virtuous use of time – a good work! In summary, a man will actively do the important work of being an overseer because he actively aspires to, in fact, he is compelled to by a divine calling within him to shepherd. No active work proves that there is no active desire. No true elder can sit on the sidelines and watch others do the outworking of the office. If an elder ceases to work, the Greek text affirms that he ceases to be an elder.

Verse 2

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach” (NKJV).

The Greek word translated “bishop” (which is better rendered “overseer”) is *episkopos* and speaks of the actual office of a church leader. Both verbs “must” (*dei*) and “be” (*einai*) are present tense verbs and convey the idea of “necessity” and “to exist,” respectively. Thus, the same active persistent tenor of verse 1 continues in verse 2: An overseer is to be actively exhibiting personal self-discipline and moral integrity in order to care for others.

Blameless. The first and the over-encompassing characteristic of an elder is that he is to be “blameless.” *Ane-pilhpton* is used as a negative particle to mean “not accused” and by implication irreproachable. The elder is not a sinless man, but he is to be above reproach in character. For example, an elder may lose his temper and be briefly out of sorts, but he certainly would not be characterized by such behavior. Neither does being blameless mean that an elder will not be falsely accused of wrong doing by those harboring carnal

motives. Rather, the idea is that an elder’s exemplary character should be generally recognized by all. The elder is also to be blameless in his relationship with his wife (especially in context to his conduct with other women), and his children should be respectful and obedient (not necessarily saved children). A godly man is to “think blameless” in what he does. He loathes what is foolish and desires to walk in wisdom.

The husband of one wife. The “one wife” phrase modifies the noun “husband,” hence an elder is literally to be “a one-woman man” or “a one-wife husband.” The requirement clearly prohibits polygamy. Many Bible commentators believe that this requirement prohibits a divorced and remarried man from eldership. Each situation is unique, but certainly remarriage in the case of a previous divorce does not exhibit God’s best pattern for marriage. An elder is to be God’s example in the local church that others can follow after. Since there is disagreement, I believe it wise for such a remarried man not to be recognized as an elder to prevent possible division in the assembly. However, not having a title should not prevent anyone from engaging in shepherding work in the assembly, and indeed many women should be active in such ministries also.

If married, the elder must reflect God’s best design for marriage (i.e., a one man and one woman relationship for life). Right Christian living should be evident in the routine areas of life, especially in home-life. If married, an elder must be blameless in moral conduct in his marriage. If he has children, they should be faithful and respectful (Tit. 1:6). An elder who is not married should observe “a no woman-man” behavior among the sisters. A godly man is blameless in his interaction with women. Whether married or not, an elder is to be morally pure and blameless. No sexual misconduct. No inappropriate touching of either gender or children. No inappropriate meetings or counseling sessions with females alone. No pornography – lusting for what is outside of God’s will. Such behavior sows to the flesh, which in time must result in a harvest

of corruption, not blessing to God’s people.(Gal.6:8).



To be Continued...

Quotes from Young Believers

**“The devil presents the bait
and hides the hook.”**

Helpful Links

www.workerselders.org

**A national conference for elders
and Christian workers**

Elders' wives have needs other women in the body of Christ don't have. There are times when special strength is required for a particular situation. Encouraging words can be few and far between. Sometimes the work we do for the Lord with our husbands seems to be going nowhere.

Pressure and criticism often make my glass seem half full. I find sometimes that the Lord uses the strangest things to teach us. He is often ready to draw us to Himself if we are willing to pay attention.

It was a sunny crisp fall day. I was rushing to knock off some items on my 'to do' list. Jobs had piled up like the leaves at the end of our driveway. Then I saw the little pink bike. I slammed on the brakes. It lay on the grass by the side of the road. Was it really a neighborhood give away? The young Mom at the front door said, "We would love you to have it for your granddaughter. Our six year old has outgrown it."

While putting the pretty princess bike in the SUV I marveled. Then the tears came. God's unnecessary provision. Through my tears the song on the radio caught my ear.

Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free
Rolling as a mighty ocean
In its fullness over me
Underneath me, all around me
Is the current of Your love

Leading onward, leading home
ward
To Your glorious rest above

Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
Spread His praise from shore to shore
How He came to pay our ransom
Through the saving cross He bore
How He watches o'er His loved ones
Those He died to make His own
How for them He's interceding
Pleading now before the throne

Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
Far surpassing all the rest
It's an ocean full of blessing
In the midst of every test
Oh the deep, deep love of Jesus
Mighty Savior, precious Friend
You will bring us home to glory
Where Your love will never end

Slowly it dawned on me that the pink bike was not just an unnecessary provision. God would provide, that is who He is. He knows my need for strength, encouragement and help as I work alongside my husband. As it were, His love is right on the curb ready for me to put into my vehicle.

Dear friend, "His divine power has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received

all of this by coming to know Him" 2 Peter 1:3, and, "how very much the Father loves us, for He has called us His children" 1John 3:1(NLT). Trust Him, rest in the truth, be assured He knows you and deeply, deeply loves you.

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Contact Info: *Elders' ShopNotes*, c/o 112 Doolittle Dr. Bethany, CT. 06524 USA; email: alan7s@yahoo.com Phone: 203-393-0078.

Publisher/Editor: Jack Spender
Editorial assistance: Ruth Rodger

Layout, Technical Asst: Sherri Jason

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Note: All words referring to God have the initial letter capitalized. While the original languages of the Bible do not use capitalization, this is the convention in some translations but not in others. So at times there may be inconsistencies in usage in ESN articles.

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