

Scriptural Elders and Deacons

THE WORK OF ELDERS

Lesson Two

Scriptural Names

- Elder - “presbuterion: elder, one who is older; council of aged” (Strongs 4244).
 - Primary meaning is age (relative).
 - Speaks to one’s years and experience in Christ.
 - *1Peter 5:1-2 - “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: 2 Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; 3 nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; 4 and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”*

Scriptural Names

- Bishop - “episcopos: bishop, overseer” (Strong's 1985). A man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done correctly.
 - *Acts 20:28 - “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*
 - *Phil. 1:1; 1Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1Peter 2:25*

Scriptural Names

- Pastor - “poimen: a shepherd” (Strong's 4166)
 - To feed
 - *John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1Cor. 9:7; Jude 12*
 - To rule, to govern
 - *Rev. 2:27, 12:5, 14:15*
 - To shepherd
 - *Matt 9:36, 25:32, 26:31; John 10:2, 12*
 - To pastor
 - *Eph. 4:11; 1Peter 2:25*

The Duties Of Elders

- Take heed to themselves
 - *Acts 20:28 - “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”*
- To be guided by the word of God
 - *Titus 1:9 - “Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”*

The Duties Of Elders

- Be examples to the flock
 - *1Peter 5:3 - “Nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”*
- Take the oversight
 - *1Peter 5:2 - “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.”*

The Duties Of Elders

- Take heed to the flock
 - *Acts 20:28*
- Rule well
 - *1Tim. 5:17 - “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.”*
- Feed the flock
 - *Acts 20:28*
 - *1Peter 5:1-2*

The Duties Of Elders

- Watch for grievous wolves
 - *Acts 20:29-30 - “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”*
- Stop the mouths of vain talkers
 - *Titus 1:11 - “...whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.”*

The Duties Of Elders

- Settle differences in the church
 - *Acts 15:6 - “Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.”*
- Admonish the church
 - *1Thes. 5:12 - “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you.”*
- Support the weak
 - *Acts 20:35 - “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak.”*

The Duties Of Elders

- Pray for the sick and minister to their needs
 - *James 5:14 - “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”*
- Establish churches where needed and to help with such work
 - *Acts 16:4-5 - “And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. 5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.”*
- Watch for the souls of the church
 - *Heb. 13:17 - “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.”*

The Work Of Elders

- No wonder Paul told Timothy: *“If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work,”* for it is WORK indeed (1Tim. 3:1).

Scriptural Elders and Deacons

THE AUTHORITY OF ELDERS

Source Of Authority For Elders

- Is it from themselves? Are elders the final authority answerable to no one?
- Is it from the congregation? Is the church a democracy?
- Is it from the preacher? Must the elders consult with the preacher for his approval on all decisions made?
- It is from Christ. The eldership derives its authority from the Head of the church.

Source Of Authority For Elders

- *Eph. 1:22-23 - “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”*
- *Col. 1:18 - “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.”*

Source Of Authority For Elders

- *Matt. 28:18 - “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”*
- *1Cor. 15:27-28 - “For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. 28 Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”*

Nature Of Authority Of Elders

- It is not one man rule. It is an Eldership.
 - Decisions to be made must be made by the whole. Elders may not act unilaterally.
 - Every New Testament example shows a plurality of elders.
- Two areas in which authority is administered.
 - Divine rule - the making of laws.
 - Human judgment - deciding how to act in agreement in practice of established law.

Nature Of Authority Of Elders

- Do elders function in both areas?
 - Elders cannot make any laws for the church. The making of laws belongs exclusively to Deity.
 - *James 4:12 - "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy."*
 - *James 1:25 - "...the perfect law of liberty..."*
- Can the elders make new laws for church work, discipline, or organization?
 - No! The elders guide the flock by helping the members to keep laws already given by Christ, not by making new laws.

Nature Of Authority Of Elders

- In matters of human judgment and decisions concerning the church and its local work, elders are to exercise authority in the local church.
- Individual members submit their personal judgments on collective matters to the oversight of the elders.
- Examples:
 - Meeting times for worship
 - Who will preach?
 - Who will teach Bible classes?
 - What Bible subjects will be studied?
 - When and who to have for a gospel meeting?

Nature Of Authority Of Elders

- Members may disagree with the judgment calls, but there should be no murmuring unless the elders clearly violate the scriptures.
 - If a member disagrees, it is most likely that he is mistaken.
 - If elders are unreasonable or unapproachable, then they were improperly appointed. However, one still must follow the NT pattern in correcting them.
 - *1Tim. 5:1, 19*

Some Misconceptions About The Authority Of Elders:

- “An elder can rule by example only.”
 - False - *Heb. 13:7* - “*egoumenon*” (*the ones having the rule* - *Strongs 2232*) has to do with following the words and faith spoken by **those who have a rule.** This extends beyond example.
- “Elders have no authority outside of the church assemblies.”
 - False - Elders must “watch in behalf of your souls” - *Heb. 13:17.*

The Scope Of Authority Of Elders

- Members of a local church must submit to the eldership in order to obey God.
 - *Heb. 13:17; 1Tim. 5:17*
- However, the eldership must rule according to truth.
 - *Titus 1:9; Heb. 13:7*

The Scope Of Authority Of Elders

- What are the areas of elders' responsibilities?
 - Arranging orderly worship and all its essentials.
 - Directing the teaching program: classes, teachers, materials, etc.
 - *Phil. 4:16-17*
 - Initiating discipline.
 - *Heb. 13:17*
 - Directing deacons in the work of benevolence for sick and needy saints.

The Limit Of Elders' Authority:

- *“Tend the flock of God which is among you” - 1Peter 5:2.*
 - The autonomy of the local church must be respected.
 - Autonomy - “right of self-government; a self governing state; an independent body.” (*Leroy Brownlow*)
 - No local eldership has the right to oversee or rule over the affairs of any other local church under any circumstances.

Authority Of Elders

- There is wisdom in doing this God's way. There will always be strife and failure if we attempt to alter it. Let us simply say amen to God's plan for the church and fully comply without wavering or murmuring.