

SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK

Since the very beginning, God has employed use of those who could assume a role of leadership in directing His people. This principle is most evident in passages from Genesis through nearly the last of the New Testament in which reference is made to sheep and their shepherd. These references draw lovely word pictures of care, concern, provision, and leadership. Two of the most meaningful passages which project this image are found in 1 Peter and illustrate God's care for His people:

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls (1 Peter 2:25).

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:4).

But use of this image is also made with reference to human shepherds and their role among God's people. Of that role soon to be Joshua's, Moses requested, "Let the LORD... set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd" (Num. 27:16-17). Elders were exhorted by Peter to "feed the flock of God which is among you" and to be "ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet 5:2, 4).

The Father Image of Adam

This role became the responsibility of the husband at the forming of the first human family. Soon after this first family had its beginning, it was said by God to the woman, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall RULE over thee" (Gen. 3:16). This same principle has continued through the ages among those who recognize God's sovereignty, and Paul restates it to the Christian,

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (1 Timothy 2:11-15).

Alluding to this continuing principle, the writer of Hebrews wrote, "Furthermore we have had FATHERS of our flesh which corrected us, and WE GAVE THEM REVERENCE" (Heb. 12:9).

The Elder Image of the Tribe or Clan

The leadership role is recognized in passages which refer to Noah and his family (about 2350 B. C.).

"But NOAH found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8).

"And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and ALL THY HOUSE into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Gen. 7:1).

"And God remembered NOAH" (Gen. 8:1).

Abraham (about 1926 B.C.) enjoyed this respect and responsibility. You will perhaps recall that he was termed PATRIARCH in Hebrews 7:4, a word which carries the meaning of the head of a certain lineage.

Patria denotes family or lineage (Strong's 3965), while archa projects the idea of reign or rule over (Strong's 757).

The same term is used in connection with the twelve great-grandsons of Abraham.

"And Jacob [whose name was changed to Israel] begat the twelve PATRIARCHS" (Acts 7:8). Each great-grandson was recognized as the head of his respective tribe, and it was from this family lineage that Israel emerged as God's chosen people (about 1496 B.C.).

Leadership Among the Children of Israel

1. At about the same time God arranged for the tribes of Israel to become a nation and enter into the promised land, He also arranged for them to have a tribe of priests specially distinguished from the other tribes - the Levites.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet" (Ex. 7:1).

"And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the PRIEST'S OFFICE, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons" (Ex. 28:1).

2. God provided for the council of SEVENTY ELDERS of Israel.

"And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and SEVENTY OF THE ELDERS of Israel; and worship ye afar off" (Ex. 24:1).

Numbers 11:10-25

In the New Testament this is referred to as the council, (sunedrion, Strong 4892 [sanhedrin]).

"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the COUNCIL: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Mt. 5:22).

3. Frequent reference to elders of various tribes or cities.

At Aaron's consecration.

"And it came to pass on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the ELDERS of Israel" (Lev. 9:1).

Concerning a murderer.

"But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: then the ELDERS of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die" (Deut. 19:11-12).

Regarding a stubborn and rebellious son.

Deut. 21:18-21

Question of maid's virginity.

Deut. 22:16-18

Brother who did not want to take deceased brother's wife.

Deut. 25:5-11

Actual situation, Ruth 4:9-11

4. God Provided for Judges in Leadership of Israel (Judges 2:7-11, 16-19).

Fourteen in all, from Joshua to Samuel, about 450 years (Acts 13:20).

Judges did not rule in immediate succession.

There was no centralized person or place of power, for God raised up a judge whenever and from wherever there was a need.

5. Elders of cities also referred to as those of leadership and authority.

Jephthah (Judges 11:5)

Elders of the congregation (Judges 21:16)

Elders of Bethlehem approach Samuel for a king (1 Sam 16:4)

6. Appearance of the Kings.

Except for limited times and purposes, God never intended a centralized power.

But Israel was not content with God's arrangement, and the elders demanded a king (1 Samuel 8:4-5, 19-20).

Saul selected as first king (1 Samuel 10:24).

7. After this, ELDERS are referred to in the Old Testament some 51 times.

In Every Instance in the Old Testament

this term was used to refer to men of age, thus implying men of:

Experience

Wisdom

Judgement.

But in the Old Testament there were no specific requirements or qualifications for elders. They were men of age recognized and respected by those of their own city.

IT IS EVIDENT FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT RECORD THAT GOD EMPLOYED USE OF THE SAME GOOD PRINCIPLE IN HIS CHURCH

There are those, however, who feel that such positions as elders and deacons were restricted to the days of inspiration (within the first two centuries).

It would likely be wise to consider this matter before continuing a study of leadership among God's people in this latter day.

Was the Role of Elder and Deacon Restricted to the Days of Inspiration?

There was certainly need for men of inspiration in the formative years of the church, and God wisely provided for this need by bestowing gifts upon certain select disciples. Although their effect continued, these positions ceased when their function was accomplished. Like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and the judges, the New Testament apostles, prophets, and inspired teachers ceased when their purpose had been served.

But what about elders? Since they are mentioned along with gifts and positions of inspiration, can we not expect them to have also been limited?

CONSIDERATION OF GIFTS AND POSITIONS LIMITED TO INSPIRATION

The twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians gives marvelous insight into this question.

Verse 1 introduces the matter by stating, "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."

Then verses 4, 5, and 6 deal with:

4. "Diversities of gifts."
 Gifts, Strong 5486, charisma - gifts.
 Differences in the gifts themselves, but they all come from the same Spirit.
5. "Differences of administrations."
 Administrations, Strong 1248, diakonia - service, ministries.
 Different positions from which these gifts are exercised by those who possess them, but each comes from the same Lord.
6. "Diversities of operations."
 Operations, Strong 1755, energema - workings.
 Differences in effect realized, but each effect has God as its Source.

Companion references:

- Romans 12:4-8, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:
 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.
 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,

whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;
 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on
 teaching;
 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with
 simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with
 cheerfulness."

1 Peter 4:10, "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the
 same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

We are informed that these expressions of the Spirit are given for the purpose of allowing each
 person to gain advantage thereby.

Verse 7, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

Verses 8-10 lists NINE GIFTS which, indeed, did cease when the period of
 inspiration ceased (within the second century).

Word of wisdom	Prophecy
Word of knowledge	Discerning of spirits
Faith	Tongues
Healings	Interpretations
Miracles	

The basis for this understanding of limited use of these gifts is to
 be found in 1 Cor. 13:8-13.

Having listed these various nine gifts in verses 8 - 10, Paul then explains that these all are the
 work of the Spirit as He bestowed them upon each disciple according to His will.

Verse 11, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to
 every man severally as he will."

Thus God's will and intent is accomplished through various MEANS,
 used by disciples who serve in different POSITIONS, and which succeed
 with different EFFECTS to fulfil God's purpose.

Verse 28 also lists eight POSITIONS and GIFTS, some of which were admittedly limited to
 days of inspiration, BUT SOME WHICH WERE NOT.

Apostles	Teachers	Healings	Governments
Prophets	Miracles	Helps	Tongues

Some teachers were inspired, for example, but not all were.

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to FAITHFUL men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

This to be accomplished by effort of the disciples -
 Not by direct operation of the Spirit
 Not by laying on of hands.

A prophet, for example, is a proclaimer of God's message.
 His message might be inspired directly from God, in which case he would be limited to the days of inspiration.

But another's message might well be that which comes from the study of God's revealed will. In this case, his position continues through the Christian era.

1 Cor. 14:31, therefore, would regulate prophets of both natures.

One clear distinction between those positions limited to days of inspiration and those which were not is that:

Those limited were appointed by INSPIRATION of God.
 Two of these were referred to as being "the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2:20).

Those continuing had QUALIFICATIONS given which were to be determined by disciples with whom they served.
 This is true of elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 2:5-9)
 and deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

A Deeper Look Into Verse 28

In this verse Paul names various positions upon which God bestowed various gifts and responsibilities. Perhaps the positions of

Apostles	Miracle workers
Prophets	Those who performed healings
Teachers	Tongue speakers

will be understood with little needed comment. But those listed as:

Helps
Governments

might be better understood with some explanation.

"Helps" is from the Greek an-ti-lep-is (Strong 484). According to Thayer (Page 50c) it refers specifically to deacons. This agrees perfectly with the overall context, for the function of the deacon, as the term implies, is that of one who serves (helps).

"Governments" is from the Greek ku-ber-nes-is (Strong 2941) and is defined as to steer and directorship. Thayer defines the word as:

Wise counsels (Page 364a) and it is so used in Proverbs 1:5, 11:14, and 24:6
Steersman, master (Page 364a) and it is so used in Acts 27:11 as the master of
Paul's ship.

Note this application in view of one characteristic of an elder.

"Elders that RULE well" (1 Timothy 5:17).

"Them that have the RULE over you" (Hebrews 13:7,17).

"Taking OVERSIGHT" (1 Peter 5:1-2).

"He that RULETH, with diligence" (Romans 12:8).

In this list, therefore, deacons and elders were also included under the terms "helps" and "governments."

Another Passage Which Should Be Considered in This Regard

Ephesians 4:8-13 might be outlined as:

8, 11	12	13
Some (gifts to):	For the purpose of:	Till we all come:
Apostles	Perfecting of saints	In unity of faith
Prophets	Work of the ministry	Knowledge of the Son
Evangelists	Edifying of the body	Unto a perfect man
Pastors		Unto fulness of Christ
Teachers		

Also to:

Sons and daughters, young
men, old men (Acts 2:17),
virgin daughters (Acts 21:9)

"Till" in verse 13 suggests a point in time when something is expected come to pass and when prior conditions will be satisfied. This raises several possibilities:

1. If we have NOT arrived at the conditions of verse 13, then all the positions of verse 11 continue to our day.

Our Pentecostal friends maintain that all those who profess Christianity are not united and have not yet reached perfection. It is their view, therefore, that positions requiring inspiration continue in our day. But they misunderstand the intent of verse 13.

"Unity of the faith" is brought about by the fact that we arrive at common insight and understanding from a standard source - the written word.

Example involving Bill, Sam, Otto, and Harry, without prior acquaintance or influence, agreeing - because of reading same book.

"The knowledge of the Son" comes from the same source - the written word. Not because we have SEEN Jesus.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

"Unto a perfect man" does not contemplate one who is without flaw, but rather one who is COMPLETE. This desirable condition also comes from the written word.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be PERFECT, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Others affirm continuing revelation.

"Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" speaks of that which came into its age or fulness in the complete revelation of the will of Christ, the writings which we refer to as the New Testament.

In the original language the word stature meant what is "age" in our English.

We HAVE, therefore, reached the completed, favorable condition intended by verse 13, but misunderstood by our Pentecostal friends.

2. If we HAVE arrived at the condition contemplated in verse 13, then can we expect pastors to have passed away with apostles and prophets?

Apostles, prophets, and inspired teachers were indeed limited to the days of inspiration:

Jesus to the eleven, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

"And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mark 16:20).

But 1 Cor. 13:8-10 clearly speaks of a limited period of inspiration to be followed by a time of direction from the written word.

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, THEN THAT WHICH IS IN PART SHALL BE DONE AWAY."

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

3. But there is another answer which satisfies the problem in perfect accord with Scripture.

While apostles, prophets, and inspired teachers possessed special gifts bestowed by God, and while special gifts were given during the days of inspiration to SOME (but not to all) evangelists, pastors, and teachers, nothing in the:

Requirements
Qualifications
Duties
Responsibilities

of elders is limited in the least to the days of inspiration.

Each qualification can be FULLY met by disciples living in our day! These qualifications are not dependent upon inspiration in order to be filled.

We must of necessity, then, conclude that evangelists, pastors, deacons, and teachers are important roles intended by the Lord for His church in our day.

THE ELDER AS VIEWED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Intended to Complete a Want or Lack in a Congregation.

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are WANTING, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5).

Position of INFLUENCE as Seen at Philippi.

"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).

Note absence of "the minister."

Does Term "Elder" Mean Simply Older Men?

If so, then certain passages lose their meaning.

Eldership is a position of appointment, not simply growth to a certain state of maturity.

"And when they [Paul and Barnabas] had ORDAINED them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23).

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5).

Distinction clearly made in Titus 2:2-6 between the elder as an older man and the elder as an appointed position.

"That the AGED men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The AGED WOMEN likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the YOUNG WOMEN to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. YOUNG MEN likewise exhort to be sober minded."

Stipulated QUALIFICATIONS indicate by their very existence that merely an older person is not under consideration.

1 Timothy 3:1-7

Titus 1:5-9

1 PETER 5:1-4

The positions of elder and deacon become evident upon investigation of rather obscure terms in our English translations. In 1 Cor. 12:28 is found the words "helps" and "governments."

HELPS is from the Greek βοηθητής, and is defined by Strong # 484 as "antilepsis (an-til'-ape-sis); from 482; relief: KJV-- help."

Of this word Thayer (Page 50c) says, "plur., 1 Co. xii.28 the ministrations of the deacons, who have care of the poor and the sick."

Related to the idea of helping is the word from which comes our word DEACON or servant.

GOVERNMENTS is from the Greek κυβερνήτης, defined by Strong # 2941 as "kubernesis (koo-ber'-nay-sis); from kubernao (of Latin origin, to steer); pilotage, i.e. (figuratively) directorship (in the church): KJV-- government."

Thayer (Page 364a) refers to "a governing...wise counsels" and mentions for reference such passages as Prov. 1:5, 11:14, 24:6.

Of a word closely akin, κυβερνήτης, Thayer gives the definition, "Steersman...ship-master...Acts xxvii.11."

TERMS BY WHICH THIS POSITION IS DESIGNATED AND BY WHICH ITS RESPONSIBILITIES ARE PRESCRIBED

There are persons whom you know who might be correctly referred to by some eight different designations:

Granddaughter	Mother	Great-grandmother	Cousin
Daughter	Grandmother	Niece	Aunt

Yet this person remains just ONE person. These designations simply refer to the various roles played under differing circumstances by this same person.

The various terms used in Scripture to speak of the elder, likewise picture his various roles and responsibilities.

ELDER

1 Tim. 5:1-2 speaks of elderly men in general, "Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity,"

while verse 17 speaks of elders in a special sense,

"Let the ELDERS that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

The meaning of the word denotes one mature in years, and it is from the Greek (presbuteros, Strong 4245).

This word as PRESBYTERY is used in 1 Tim. 4:14, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

Here it denotes an assembly or group of elders.

But note also that this verse does NOT imply imparting spiritual gifts.

Rather it is comparable to Gal. 2:9, "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

The word PRESBYTERY is used in Luke 22:66 (regarding Jesus' trial) and in Acts 22:5 (regarding Saul's commission) to refer to the Sanhedrim or council of Jewish elders.

PRESBYTERY is the same word as ELDERS, but it was left in its Greek form and was not translated into English.

Thus, the qualities of:

age experience maturity sound judgment

are qualities which enable the ELDER to RULE and to "RULE well" (1 Tim. 5:17).

BISHOP

The fact that qualifications for bishops in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are the same as for elders in Titus 1:5-9 proves them to refer to the same person and position. These different terms simply refer to different aspects of the work of this position.

BISHOP is the English rendering of the Greek from which also came the word EPISCOPAL.

In 1 Tim. 3:1 (episkope, Strong 1984) is used to denote a POSITION of overseeing or inspecting,

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the OFFICE of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

In three passages (episkopos, Strong 1985) denotes a person engaged in oversight.

1 Tim. 3:2

Titus 1:7

1 Peter 2:25, where reference is to Christ,

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

This effect is also noted in Titus 1:9, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."

OVERSEER is the English rendering of the meaning of the Greek (episkopeo, Strong 1983).

This is used once, in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you OVERSEERS, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The fact that Acts 20:17 refers to elders as the same persons as the OVERSEERS in verse 28 proves that elders are the same as overseers; just different aspects of the same work.

STEWARD is another term by which this office is called in Titus 1:7, "For a bishop must be blameless, as the STEWARD of God."

This term comes from the word similar in meaning; that of one who administers or is manager of a household (, governor, Strong 3622, 23).

The basic meaning of

Bishop (episkopos),
 Overseer
 Steward,

and, therefore, that which explains his authority and responsibility as such, is found in 1 Peter 5:2, "taking the oversight."

But it is essential that we consider verses 1 - 4 for extended insight.

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

He is, therefore, to:

1. Oversee, but not to become a tyrant in doing so.

It is a very foolish man who will not consider the feelings of those over whom he rules. Consider the situation of Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12.

Consider the relationship of the elder and the congregation as discussed in 1 Timothy 5:17-22.

This responsibility is further detailed in:

"Elders that RULE well" (1 Timothy 5:17).
 "Them that have the RULE over you" (Heb. 13:7, 17).
 "He that RULETH with diligence" (Rom. 12:8).

2. Feed the church
3. Be an example
4. Take heed
5. Hold fast the faithful word

PASTOR

This term is used only once, in Ephesians 4:11, where it is listed with God's ministers (apostles, prophets, evangelists, PASTORS, and teachers) who were to serve "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (verse 12).

This term is from the Greek (poimen, Strong 4166), meaning SHEPHERD. As such it is found seventeen times in the New Testament used as in Luke 2:8, "And there were in the same country SHEPHERDS abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night."

It is interesting to note that where the King James Version renders 1 Cor. 9:7, "Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" the literal translation is "Who SHEPHERDS a flock, and of the milk of the flock does not eat?"

The position of SHEPHERD is beautifully pictured in 1 Peter 5:1-4.

TERMS USED IN THE SCRIPTURES

to refer to this position are:

Elder
 Presbytery
 Bishop
 Overseer
 Steward
 Pastor
 Shepherd

But since some of these references are either transliterations (that is, words brought-over into English without really being translated), descriptive terms, or duplicate terms, it appears that three basic designations encompass the scope of this position:

Elder (presbytery)
 Overseer (bishop, episcopal, steward)
 Shepherd (pastor)

Note, too, that these descriptive terms likewise indicate the work expected of those thus appointed.

SELECTION OF THOSE QUALIFIED

Who Is to Do the Selecting?

Both Timothy and Titus were given instructions from Paul as to qualifications. Since Titus was also told to "set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I have appointed thee" (Titus 1:5), it is evident, as well as understandable, that evangelists working with a congregation have part in selection and appointment.

1. But it should NOT be considered a REQUIREMENT that an evangelist be involved.

Consider an old, established congregation, perhaps having had elders in the past. With their experience, age, and acquaintance with those under consideration for elders, what advantage would there be in calling-in one not nearly as familiar with the situation?

Elders were ordained by Barnabas and Paul in every city (Acts 14:23), but this does not imply that WE are required to have apostles ordain elders.

This would, of course, be impossible.

1 Timothy 4:14 refers to the ELDERS laying hands on an EVANGELIST. The evangelist does not possess authority over elders, but he labors together with them. Although he may have notable ability and knowledge, he is under the rule of the elders of the congregations which support him.

2. Selection to be made by the local congregation.

Even with apostles present, selection was made by the local congregations in the incident of the neglected Grecian widows (Acts 6:2-3, 5).

In sending contributions from Corinth to Jerusalem, a messenger was to be selected by the local congregation.

"And when I come, whomsoever YE SHALL APPROVE by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem" (1 Cor. 16:3).

Further reference to the same situation. "And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; And not that only, but who was also CHOSEN OF THE CHURCHES to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind" (2 Cor. 8:18-19).

Difficulties Which Might Arise in Selection

Although it is most desirable that the ideal exists and we would hope to be involved with those who possess a genuine Christian spirit, this is not always the real situation. While it certainly should not be a factor, sometimes partiality and favoritism, jealousy, or desire for prestige and power enter into the consideration. Let us discuss the unpleasant task of handling such matters.

1. Deciding upon who is qualified by a vote of the congregation.

The Lord's church is not a democracy! While everyone should be encouraged to speak-up and have their in-put in matters which concern the congregation, decisions must be made by those with age, experience, and Bible understanding. If a majority was allowed to be the deciding factor, then one clearly not qualified for an elder could be selected simply by popularity or kinship.

The more Scriptural procedure would be to allow those of age, experience, Bible understanding, and respect among the congregation (Acts 15:22) to discuss those under consideration as they associate daily with the disciples. Personal opinions and observations could thus be freely expressed and objections could be voiced without incurring offense. Any misunderstanding could be cleared and needed adjustment could be made. After due time and when all concerned have expressed their feelings, then these findings could be presented to the brethren at an assembly.

2. We do not always see ourselves as someone else might.

If someone feels that we have faults, we should welcome their criticism and attempt to make proper correction. This would be to our own good as well as for the good of the congregation. Having our feelings hurt or becoming offended by such criticism would likely indicate that we INDEED were not qualified and should not be appointed. A person who would thus react could not be effective and would likely not have the support of the congregation.

There are those among us, however, who never contribute but who are always negative and can always find fault. As in matters other than that of selecting elders and deacons, these must be tolerated and ignored or rebuked because of their failure to cooperate. We must be patient and longsuffering, but the progress of the congregation cannot be blocked by those who would drag their feet.

APPOINTMENT AND ORDINATION

Portrays the same meaning and effect as seen in Gal. 2:9, "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the RIGHT HANDS OF FELLOWSHIP."

That of recognition, agreement, and support.

Procedure in Ordination

Seven servants in Acts 6:6.

"Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had PRAYED, they LAID THEIR HANDS on them."

Barnabas and Saul on missionary tour from Antioch.

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had FASTED and PRAYED, and LAID THEIR HANDS on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3).

On the same journey.

"And when they had ORDAINED them ELDERS in every church, and had PRAYED with FASTING, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23).

Timothy's ministry.

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the LAYING ON of the HANDS of the presbytery" (1 Timothy 4:14).

Ordaining involved PRAYER, FASTING, and LAYING on of HANDS.

No imparting of spiritual gifts was involved in such laying on of hands, for that could only be accomplished by an apostle:

James and John in Samaria (Acts 8:14-17)
Acts 19:6 (Paul at Ephesus)

Laying on of hands in ordination rather served to acknowledge an office being bestowed.

Timothy's gift was by prophecy - laying on of hands of the presbytery was simply confirmation of this fact.

Consider

1 Tim. 1:18, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee."

1 Tim. 4:14, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

But especially 2 Tim. 1:6, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of MY hands."

James 5:14-15 has this same understanding.

The elders performed no miracle. Anointing with oil is comparable to and serves as an extension of prayer and fasting. We freely use the next verse - why not this which directly precedes it ?

Suggestions as to Procedure.

Emphasize the need.

Encourage young men to set this as their goal.

Determine who among you is qualified.

But do this carefully, not hastily.

Carefully weigh any hesitancy on brethren as to who may be qualified.

Elders must have support of those over whom he rules.

Select a given day.

Approach matter with prayer.

Encourage brethren to fast this day.

Appropriate Scriptures be read.

Brethren express their approval and support by laying on of their hands.

NUMBER

Except where spoken of with view to individual characteristics, elders are always spoken of as a plurality: Acts 20:7. Phil. 1:1, 1 Tim. 4:14, and Titus 1:5.

This appears desirable, for it would eliminate the tendency for one man to assume absolute control.

For this reason, I would recommend that one man never be appointed alone.

But if a man were genuinely qualified, I cannot find in the Scriptures where he could not serve alone.

Suppose there were three elders who serve well, capably, and wisely. Two eventually either move away or die. The qualifications and past record of the one remaining has not been voided. Why should the congregation not continue to benefit from his experience and leadership?

Plural terms such as this are used to accommodate a general and normal situation. This is to be discussed further when the qualifications are considered.

Every brother who qualifies should serve.

Years ago a brother at Columbus, Georgia maintained that there should be seven elders - based on Acts 6. He failed to understanding that these seven were not elders. No number is specified in Scripture.

DEACONS AND RELATED MATTERS

Because of the close similarity in their qualifications (1 Tim 3:8-13), deacons are no doubt intended to serve a similar purpose as elders.

That deacons are not the same and are limited in their role, however, is seen in the fact that:

Their qualifications do not require that they be:
 As old in age
 "Apt to teach"

Perhaps herein lies their basic difference.

Their title implies that they "serve" rather than "rule."
 (diakoneo, Strong 1247), servant, minister.

Dacons were found serving in the congregation at Philippi along with elders (Phil 1:1).

But the term "deacon" is not always used to denote an appointed office.

"If any man serve me, let him also follow me; and where I am, there shall also my SERVANT be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:26).

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a SERVANT of the church which is at Cenchræa" (Romans 16:1).

Surely Phebe would have found it difficult to be "the husband of one wife."

Due to the close similarity of qualifications, it appears to me that the position of a deacon is an ideal situation in which to develop as an elder.

But deacons must not be appointed where there are no elders.

The deacon would assume the same role and exercise the same authority and responsibilities as an elder. This would negate the distinction between the two positions.

This same problem exists where a congregation appoints "leaders." Trustees for legal purposes are not comparable, for their function under our social system is for the purpose of owning and handling real estate.

Those appointed in Acts 6 were not deacons in the sense that Paul used the term in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

In Acts 6 there were three specified qualifications:

Honest report
Full of the Holy Ghost
Full of wisdom

This is distinctly different from the thirteen qualifications mentioned by Paul in 1 Timothy.

This does not mean that the deacons mentioned by Paul are not expected to be of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, or full of wisdom, but it does prove that the men of Acts 6 were not in the same position nor intended to serve the same function as those in 1 Timothy.

Those in Acts 6 were appointed for a specific need, whereas those of 1 Timothy were permanent and general in nature.

QUALIFICATIONS

(1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5)

	Timothy	Titus	Peter
Blameless	2	6-7	
Husband of one wife	2	6	
Having faithful children	4-5	6	
Vigilant	2		
Sober	2	8	
Of good behaviour	2	2	3
Given to hospitality	2	8	
Apt to teach (to exhort and convince)	2	9	2
Not given to wine	3	7	
Not self-willed		7	
Not soon angry		7	
No striker	3	7	
Not given to filthy lucre	3	7	2
Patient	3		
Not a brawler	3		
Not covetous	3		
Not a novice	6		
Good report of them without	7		
Lover of hospitality		8	
Lover of good men		8	
Just		8	
Holy		8	
Temperate		8	
Holding fast the faithful word		9	
Not lords over God's heritage			3

Acts 6 does authorize us to appoint certain men to attend to specific temporary needs such as to:

- Distribute funds or goods to those in need
- Investigate possibilities about purchasing property
- Speak with someone about his conducting a meeting

Let it be further said, however, that such work as mentioned in Acts 6 is an ideal work to be attended to by deacons such as contemplated by Paul in 1 Timothy. Since the elders are to "rule" and the deacons are to "serve," then there is inherent in these descriptions an understanding that deacons are to act in carrying-out those things upon which decisions have been made.

QUALIFICATIONS

As observed from 1 Timothy 3 and interspersed with additional qualifications mentioned in Titus 1.

Blameless (v. 2, v.6).

Not that he has not made mistakes - or that he will not.

Blameless in regard to discharging responsibility.

Illustrations of such as will cause one to be blamed:

- Those who will teach from the pulpit but who are not present when there is physical work to be done.
- Those who could but do not attend ALL the assemblies.
- He sets a bad example for others, especially his children (1 Timothy 4:12).
- He impairs his influence (Mt 5:16, 1 Cor 10:31).
- He places other matters before the Lord's work (Mt 6:33).
- He is not "ready to every good work" (Titus 3:1).
- His preaching, however eloquent, loses its power and effect (Mt 23:3).

"As the steward of God" (Titus 1:7).

Consider Luke 12:42-46 where Jesus teaches about the "faithful and wise steward."

Husband of one wife (v. 2, v. 6).

1. This stipulation certainly forbids polygamy, which was tolerated under the old law.

Expressing God's intent from creation, ideals which prevail in the Christian age,
Paul wrote in Romans 7:2-3,

But while this prohibits MORE than one wife, it at the same time
REQUIRES a wife.

An elder must be married. Comments by Paul in following verses
show the wise design of having men experienced in the fields with
which he will be concerned.

2. What if his wife died and he married again? He only has one wife! Does this not
mean one wife at a time?

While the Scriptures permit a brother to remarry after his wife has died, is he
permitted to remarry and at the same time CONTINUE as an elder?

Consider:

1 Cor. 7:8-9, 32-34

1 Timothy 5:3-10

What does v. 9b require?

"Widow indeed...HAVING BEEN the wife of ONE HUSBAND."

This passage loses its meaning if one husband at a time is understood.
That which proves too much, proves nothing!

3. What of an elder who, after years of faithful service, loses his faithful and helpful
wife in death. Is he disqualified?

I think not, for nothing has changed to invalidate or distract his own ability
to faithfully serve.

Vigilant (v. 2).

Alert, on guard, watchful.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh
about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Not naive (simple minded).

Sober (v.2, v.8).

Clear thinker, not given to pranks and jesting.

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour" (Eccl. 10:1).

Of Good Behaviour (v. 2).

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers" (1 Timothy 4:12).

Not Selfwilled (Titus 1:7).

We all lose respect for one who does not consider others, but who must have his own way. If he is evidently concerned about what is to his own convenience or best interest, then he will forfeit his ability to lead.

Given to Hospitality (v. 2).

His home should be a haven.
His wife plays a most important role in this regard.
Proverbs 31:10-31

Not Soon Angry (Titus 1:7).

This trait expressed lack of control, results in rash judgments made without sufficient forethought.

Apt to Teach (v. 2, v. 9).

The elder must possess the ability to effectively instruct, as well as to defend the truth.

Consider Titus 1:9-11, 13-14.

An elder cannot accomplish this duty by proxy, i.e. through someone else, any more than he can accomplish his responsibility in prayer through someone else. The elders cannot hire a "minister" to do their work.

Not Given to Wine (v. 3, v. 7).

Of elders:

"Not given to wine" (1 Tim. 3:3).

"Not given to wine" (Titus 1:7).

Of deacons:

"Not given to MUCH wine" (1 Tim. 3:8).

Is there a distinction to be made?

Understanding is made clear through looking at similar usage in other passages.

"Given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

Of "other gentiles" who walked "in the vanity of their mind" (Eph. 4:17), "who being past feeling have GIVEN themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:19).

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly GIVEN to idolatry" (Acts 17:16).

Idolatry in itself is wrong, but "wholly" simply emphasized extent.

This is also true with:

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23).

Consider in regard to elders.

"GIVEN to hospitality" (1 Tim. 3:2).

"Not GIVEN to filthy lucre" (Titus 1:7).

Neither implies degrees, but rather indicates INFLUENCE.

No Striker (v. 3, v. 7).

Not violent.

Not Greedy to Filthy Lucre (v. 3, v. 7).

While money and material goods are useful, and even needful, as instruments to a good end, they must not hold too much allure for those aspiring to be elders..

It is so tempting for THINGS to turn our heads and desires.

Lover of Good Men (Titus 1:8).

"Men" is not in the Greek manuscript. Elders should be lovers of that which is good.

Patient (v. 3).

"In your PATIENCE possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19).

"Knowing that tribulation worketh PATIENCE; and patience, EXPERIENCE; and experience, HOPE: and hope maketh not ashamed" (Romans 5:3-5).

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:3-4).

Just (Titus 1:8).

Being fair and honest.

Holy (Titus 1:8).

A life that is pure. consecrated, and dedicated.

Temperate (Titus 1:8).

Not an extremist, well rounded, perhaps knowledgeable in numerous areas.

Not a Brawler (v. 3).

One constantly engaged in controversy.

Not Covetous (v. 3).

His desires do not exceed proper limits.

One that Ruleth Well His Own House (1 Timothy 3:4 - 5).

The emphasis here is on the elder's example with regard to his own family.

Children - must there be more than one?

Certainly desirable, many benefits in rearing more than one.

But in general writing, words are used which accommodate the general application.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right...
And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring
them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:1, 4).

"But if any widow have CHILDREN or NEPHEWS, let them learn
first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is
good and acceptable before God" (1 Timothy 5:4).

Of the widow Paul continues, "If she have brought up CHILDREN"
(1 Timothy 5:10).

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the ELDERS of the church"
(James 5:14).

Note usage in Genesis 21:7 regarding the birth of Isaac,
"And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah
should have given CHILDREN suck? for I have born him A
SON in his old age."

Sarah had only one child, and he was referred to as CHILDREN.

What about the childrens' behavior after they leave home?

After they leave home is the climax of what this qualification is all
about. The child may be submissive while he is living under your
roof and eating at your table.

But the real test of this yet untested quality can be made only AFTER
the child leaves home. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

Suppose the child is stubborn and rebellious while at home;
then he leaves and no longer resides with his parents.

All other factors being favorable, does the father qualify as soon
as the rebellious son leaves home?

Has his leaving home negated the fact that there was a FAILURE
in the upbringing?

Not a Novice (v. 6).

The elder must be mature and experienced.

Good Report from Without (v. 7).

Not that those without agree with his understanding, but that he is respected by them.

SITUATION WITHOUT ELDERS

It is most desirable and advantageous to have elders.

But if congregations were Scriptural and acceptable to God BEFORE elders were appointed by Barnabas, Saul, and Titus then they may be just as acceptable today if no one meets the qualifications.

Majority rule is not acceptable.

Majority choice in determining color of carpet or time of meeting is understandable, for it does not concern matters determined by Scripture.

In the absence of elders there is no authority whatsoever for appointing LEADERS
Such would tend to become elders in effect.

What about men who are qualified, but for some reason are not appointed?
Such a situation could be the result of no one else being qualified and it be preferred not to appoint only one elder.

Men who are truly qualified otherwise:

Will do what has to be done even though they do not possess the title
or receive recognition.

They will serve under Jesus' beautiful principle taught in
Mt 20:24-27 in contrast to James and John and their mother.

GOD'S PURPOSE

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1).