

Setting the Church in Order # 4

Responsibilities of Congregation to the Elders

Int.

1. Aim: To show that the members of the church have special responsibilities to the men who serve as elders.
2. The elders have responsibilities that they bear for the congregation.
3. But the people of the congregation, the members of this church, have responsibilities to those men whom we appoint as elders.
4. "When the Holy Spirit teaches elders to rule over the congregation, it at the same time teaches the congregation to submit to the government of the elders." H. Leo Boles, *The Eldership of the Churches of Christ*, p. 29
5. Notice these verses and the application for each of us.

Discussion

I. "KNOW THEM THAT LABOR AMONG YOU, OVER YOU IN THE LORD"

I Thess.5:12-13 "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13. And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."

A. "Beseech"

1. Word means to request, desire, intreat, pray
2. He is calling them brethren
3. Appealing to their heart

B. "Know them"

1. Word Know Means - "Recognize," "value," "appreciate." "understand"
2. To Know means more than just recognizing who they are when you come in contact with them. It means we have respect for them!!
3. We are to honor, love and respect them
 - a. Antonym for the word Know is = Forget = disregard, ignore
 - b. Know - not ignore
 - c. "Know" includes acquaintance so that such may better fulfill responsibility as shepherd. What is implied when one shows a "distant" attitude?

C. "Labour among you"

1. If they are doing their work as commanded by Christ, then they work hard in behalf of the souls committed to their care and keeping.
2. It is a labour of love

D. "Over you in the Lord"

1. Reference to the elders and bishops
2. They are called "overseers"
3. They bear the spiritual rule in the local congregation
4. The flock or congregation is to be under them.

E. "Admonish you"

1. The elders are to instruct and teach the church
2. They are to teach us in the way that is right.

3. Concern which causes elder to **admonish** should be appreciated; concern for soul, not just "picking on" certain subjects. Concern given serious consideration, not cause to become angry.
4. As the congregation we are not to rebel against exhortations of the elders when they are instructing us in the way that is right.

F. **"Esteem them very Highly"** [appreciate, honor]

1. Hold them in the highest regard
2. Worthy of esteem because of character. Christian is to be one who esteems good men, as does God (see Tit. 1:8. K.J.V.). If elder is to be "lover of good men," so must other Christians.
3. "For work's sake": Greatest work, greater than "great doctor," "educator," etc.
4. "Love" is basis of esteem: Essential if work is to be done.
5. We should not speak disrespectfully to the elders or about the elders.
 - a. Some people want to constantly criticize and find fault with every thing that the elders try to do.
 - b. That is wrong!!! That is not right.
 - c. We are to esteem them highly for the work they are doing and do our very best to co-operate with them.
6. Esteem them highly for their work's sake

G. "Be at Peace Among yourselves"

1. When elders and congregations are what they ought to be there will be harmony and serenity in the congregation.
2. Heb. 12:14 Paul says: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:"
3. God's design produces peace: When elders do their work, each member responds as should, peace will result. (Consider: God's plan **NEVER produces confusion**. I Cor. 14:33; Principle true **in any situation**.)
4. Elders will be concerned with decisions which "make for peace" among members.
5. Can not have peace if there are those who determine that things must go "their way" regardless of decisions of those appointed to lead.
6. Must not "give in" just to have "peace." If so, **then not ruling, but permitting others to rule by default**. (Like parents who yield to spoiled child).

II. "OBEY THEM...SUBMIT YOURSELVES"

Heb. 13:17 "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

A. "Obey Them"

1. Have authority delegated: To resist is to resist God's order (see Rom. 13:2).
2. Involves attitude in following rule: "obedience" is that which is done **willingly**. (Can force one to comply, but not from heart. "Can make me do it, but can't make me like it.")

3. They cannot lead if we will not follow.
4. Though we may not agree with all the decisions of the elders we should, as citizens of God's government, submit to them.
5. Most elders want to do right, and they usually do, as far as they are able.
6. If we feel that they have erred in judgment:
 - a. Then we should go to them in a kind way and discuss it with them.
 - b. Most times we will learn that they did what they had to do and when we understand more about it we will agree with them.
 - c. Elders are not exempt from rebuke - but it is to be done properly
 - d. 1 Tim. 5:19-20 "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

B. **"Submit Yourselves"**

1. Easy to submit when realize that what is required is for our good, prompted by love.
 - a. Wife has no difficulty in submission if loves husband and sees that he loves her.
 - b. This is what makes submission to Christ possible (see I Jn. 5:3).
2. Obedience is limited to that which is in harmony with God's word.
3. We are not to be in rebellion to the elders, for in so doing we are in rebellion to God !!!
4. To give account. If not in submission, a cause of grief, unprofitable.

III. "REMEMBER...IMITATE"

Heb. 13:7 "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

A. "Remember Them which have the rule over you"

1. Be mindful of them - recognize them
2. Elders do have authority to make decisions
3. These decisions are in the realm of judgment - expediency.

B. "Who Have spoken unto you the word of God"

1. They are to carry out the message or word of God.
2. Elders want all of us to be obedient to God's word

C. "Whose faith follow, considering end of their faith."

1. They try to show us the way to live !!!
2. Highest compliment is **imitation**.
3. Imitate them in: love, faith, liberality, attendance, teaching lost souls
 - a. We learn to do by watching others.
 - b. We can follow an example much easier than we can take a rule and apply it to our lives.
4. Jesus is the perfect example for all of us
 - a. We observe the elders bringing their lives into harmony with his example.
 - b. This should help us to pattern our lives also after the perfect example.
5. To follow their godly example is to show great appreciation.
6. We should copy and imitate them only to the extent that they imitate Christ. 1

Cor. 11:1 "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."

IV. PARTICIPATE IN WORK THAT IS PLANNED BY ELDERS.**A. ENCOURAGE, HOLD UP HANDS IN THEIR WORK.**

1. Human beings: Subject to discouragement as others. Perhaps feel a greater weight than others.
 - a. Knowing that others are concerned, willing to do their part is source of encouragement
 - b. One of the reasons that we sometimes have a shortage of church leaders is because they are not appreciated and encouraged by the congregation.
2. Men who are encouraged in their work will do a better work.
3. Treat them by the Golden rule
 - a. Don't expect sinless perfection, or infallibility!!
 - b. But treat them the way you would want to be treated if you were in their position.

B. CALL FOR THEM WHEN IN NEED

1. Jas. 5:14 "Is any sick among you? 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:"
2. The elders today do not have the miraculous element that they had in the 1st century. But they have the power of prayer.
3. Call them when you need them. When you have a sickness or a spiritual problem.
4. When you must be absent let the elders know. When things are changing in your life or home, talk to the elders about these things.

V. DO'S AND DON'TS IN REGARD TO ELDERS:A. Don't:

1. Be a murmurer and complainer
2. Gossip about the elders or anyone else
3. Receive accusations against the elders, except upon certain proof
4. Try to undermine the plans which they put before the church [One pessimist can do a great deal of harm!!!]

B. Do:

1. Honor, love, and respect the elders for:
 - a. Their works' sake
 - b. The sacrifice they make
2. Look for their good points
3. Praise and be thankful for those good points
4. Cooperate with them in every possible way
5. Be enthusiastic about the plans which they have for spreading the cause of Christ
6. Pray for the elders.

CONCLUSION

1. Elders must be men who have the qualifications set forth in the Scriptures.
2. As selected by the congregation they are to take the oversight of the church of which they are elders.
3. They have certain duties and responsibilities to perform in carrying out their work.
4. The members then have their responsibilities to the elders.
5. When this is done properly God's plan will work beautifully.
6. We should have the attitude of trying to do our best to make God's plan work for the Church here at Evans.

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