

The Church Needs Elders

by John Isaac Edwards

This writing brings before our mind the need for men to serve as elders in the local church today.

1) *Elders In Every Church.*

During Paul’s first preaching trip, lost souls were converted, churches were planted, and elders were appointed. Acts 14:23 records, “And when they had ordained them elders in every church...” Every church needs elders!

2) *Elders In Every City.*

Paul wrote the young evangelist Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete (Paul, why did you leave Titus 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). Thus, the Bible calls for elders in every church, in every city! Where there are no elders, there are things that are wanting or lacking.

3) *Christ Gave Some,*

Pastors. The Lord gave gifts unto men when He ascended on high (Eph. 4:8). These gifts are described in verse 11: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” Would any deny the need for the work done by the apostles and

prophets, or suggest evangelists and teachers are unnecessary? Then, why would any dismiss the need or discount the value and importance of elders in the Lord’s church?

4) *The Flock Needs*

Feeding. Have you ever known of a flock that did not need to be fed? The church is “the flock” and elders are charged, “...to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:17, 28). Peter exhorted elders, “Feed the flock of God which is among you...” (1 Pet. 5:2).

5) *God’s Heritage Needs*

Examples. In his address to elders, Peter commanded, “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3). An ensample is an example to be imitated. The qualifications of elders set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 make elders men worthy of imitation.

6) *There Are Souls To Be*

Watched For. Hebrews 13:17 teaches, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls...” Elders have been given the rule over the local church (1 Tim. 5:17), and this rule involves soul-watching. Do

you know of anything anymore valuable than a soul? Jesus asked, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mt. 16:26).

7) *Grievous Wolves Are On The Prowl.*

In his meeting with the Ephesian elders, Paul uttered, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock... Therefore watch...” (Acts 20:29-31). This reaches back to when the Lord gave warning, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mt. 7:15). Sheep without a shepherd are vulnerable prey! The church needs vigilant men on the lookout for wolves! One big, bad wolf can do a lot of damage in a very short period of time!

8) *Straying Sheep Need To Be Found And Brought Home.*

The church is “the flock of God” (1 Pet. 5:2), remember? Sometimes sheep leave the pen and become lost, right? Luke 15 tells of the lost sheep and the persistence of the shepherd who goes “...after that which is lost, until he find it” (v. 4). If there are none to seek the lost, they may never be found!

9) **Overseers Are Needed.** Elders are Holy Spirit made "... overseers..." (Acts 20:28). Elders are exhorted, "...taking the oversight..." of the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:1-2). Like a curator, guardian or superintendent, overseers see that things done by others are done rightly. This is the work of elders in the local church.

10) **The Church Needs Elders To Help It Grow.**

Ephesians 4 reveals the Lord's formula for church growth. It includes "...pastors..." (v. 11), "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children... But speaking the truth in love

may grow up into him in all things..." (vv. 12-15). These verses express the concept of growth and link pastors or elders with the development and maturity of the church. Would you like to see the church grow?

The church needs elders to be fully organized after the New Testament pattern as the Scriptures mention "...the saints...with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1).

Four Things We Can Do To Help The Church Have Elders

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1) **Be At Peace.** One of the responsibilities of the church toward elders is, "...be at peace among yourselves" (1 Th. 5:13). A peaceful atmosphere creates an environment that encourages men to want to serve. After all, who wants to oversee a bunch of bickering, biting, fussing, fighting folks?

2) **Develop The Abilities And Qualities Necessary.** The work requires qualified men. These qualifications are a "... must..." (1 Tim. 3:2)! Read 1

Timothy 3:1-7, 11 and Titus 1:5-9 and use these as a personal checklist for your life.

3) **Encourage Men.** Some churches may not have elders because no one has been encouraged to serve!

4) **Pray For Elders.** "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16). We ought to ever be praying that the Lord will raise up well-qualified men to serve the church as elders.

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