

WORDS OF TRUTH

A Weekly Bulletin for the Sunrise Acres church of Christ

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Sunrise Acres CHURCH OF CHRIST

Meeting at:
8625 Robert Drive
El Paso, TX 79904

915-755-8137 (Building)
915-525-5794 (Preacher's Office)

OUR MEETING TIMES:

Sunday Bible Class: 9:45 AM
Sunday Worship: 10:55 AM
Tuesday Bible Study: 7:00 PM
Thursday Bible Study: 7:00 PM

Are You Visiting With Us?

If you are visiting with us, we want to welcome you to the Lord's church (Matthew 16:18 and Colossians 1:18). Our goal is to simply get to Heaven and to help you do the same. We use the Bible as our standard to govern what we do in our work and worship for the Lord (Colossians 3:17, II Timothy 1:13, II Timothy 3:16-17, and I Peter 4:11).

We welcome your questions and would love the opportunity to study further with you. Luke recorded a fascinating statement we all need to consider: *"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able"* (Luke 13:23-24). We invite you to join us in being one of the few that are saved!

The Rush to Appoint Elders in Every Congregation

By: Brian A. Yeager

As we look throughout the New Testament we find clear instructions in regard to the appointing of elders. Paul gave instructions to Titus saying: *"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). In the book of Acts we find this example: *"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). With such clear instructions we see that we need to, as a local congregation, work towards having elders here. However, as is the case in many congregations that I have personally seen, we must assure that we do not rush and make an office of unqualified elders.

A qualified elder must meet what God has set as qualifications. However, many congregations seem to have settled for "mostly" qualified men or the best qualified men to serve. Some preachers just want to appoint men as elders that they can use as puppets to run the church their own way. Some congregations think elders ought to be business men, and thus the congregation begins operating as a business. With the abuses, there must be answers, right?

When Paul wrote Timothy and Titus about the appointment of elders he set forth, by inspiration, each qualification a man **MUST** meet **before** being appointed as an elder (I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9). Thus, if we were to appoint men to the office of an elder we must assure that they meet **all of the qualifications** that God has set forth. I once saw a way that brethren had tried to circumvent these instructions that still amazes me to think about today. A liberal group of folks in Zanesville, OH (Zane Trace Church of Christ) appointed men as the trustees of the congregation. They took the oversight like elders would, but since three of them were divorced and remarried (two to each other's ex-wives), they could not be elders. So, they created an office inspiration speaks nothing of. Folks, that's horrible isn't it? Well,

how is it any worse than a congregation who uses the term elder to describe the work of a man who is not qualified to do that work? The qualifications of elders are written for us because their work requires them to be capable of doing it!

The Work of an Elder Explains the Qualifications

An elder has significant work within the local congregation. The elders must oversee, feed, and protect the local church they labor with (Acts 20:28-31 and I Peter 5:1-3). Thus, they have to desire that work, cannot be a beginner, must be sober, must be without rebuke, must be vigilant, must be able to teach, must not be tempted by money, must have proven he can spiritually educate his children and raise them up right, must be able to convince the gainsayers, etc. Do you want to labor under men who have to watch against the wolves if they've never seen one (Matthew 7:15-20)? Do you want to entrust them to instruct you if they cannot teach (James 3:1)? Sure, anyone can use a sermon outline book, a concordance, etc. and bring a lesson with time to prepare. However, does a watchman who is looking out for the sheep always have week's notice to prepare (Jude 4)? What of the elder who has three children and two of them have fallen away or maybe have never obeyed the Gospel (Proverbs 22:6). Is he to be trusted to do with the local church what he was unable to do with his own children (Ephesians 6:4)? Don't unfaithful children often, not always, speak to what really goes on at home (Proverbs 29:15)?

A congregation is supposed to be able to follow the faith of an elder (Hebrews 13:7). How can that be accomplished if the man has failed as a husband (Ephesians 5:22ff.)? How can he be an advisor on marital situations if he has never been married or if his marriage has fallen apart (Proverbs 12:5)? How can you follow the faith of an elder who has spent all of his time working for wages and little time working for God (I Corinthians 15:58)? How about following the faith of an elder who doesn't know what he believes or why he believes it (Hebrews 11:6)? What about following the faith of an elder who cannot control his anger (Ephesians 4:26)? Just imagine that elder blowing up when someone challenges him and he is frustrated. Who will that help get to Heaven? What about following the faith of an elder who can be bought with money (II Peter 2:1-3) or who plays politics within the body of Christ (Romans 12:9-10)? What about an elder who is not hospitable (Romans 12:13 and I Peter 4:9)? Just imagine having a shepherd who does not open his home to the sheep. Look back at the qualifications Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus and think of why they are written. Furthermore, think of those qualifications and ask why aren't there more men today who are capable to be elders.

Qualifications for Elders or Just Mature Godly Men

After carefully reexamining I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 what do you see that should not explain all mature, faithful, Christian men? The only instructions that every mature brother must not meet are those relative to marriage and of course having children. That is simply so because you do not have to be married to please God (I Corinthians 7:6-8) and children are born through sexual intercourse which is restricted to the lawful marriage relationship (Hebrews 13:4). Brethren, what does that tell us? That tells us that we do not have elders because we do not have enough mature Christian men who lived as though they should have! That is not a good commentary on the church in this world today!

Conclusion

We ought to desire to have elders. However, even worse than having no qualified men to be elders would be having a false eldership in place. To resolve this problem we must start working towards teaching men to be faithful in all areas of their lives so that the congregation here in the future will have plenty of qualified men to appoint. If we fail, we'll continue to be a flock without shepherds.

What must one do to be saved (Acts 2:37)? Hear and believe the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16 & Romans 10:17), repent of their sins (Acts 3:19), confess Christ (Acts 8:37), and be baptized (immersed) for the remission of sins into the church of Christ (Acts 2:38, I Corinthians 12:12-13, and Romans 6:1-6). One must then remain faithful (Rev. 2:10).