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Lakeland Hills Leader

Lakeland Hills Blvd Church of Christ - 2510 Lakeland Hills Blvd, Lakeland Florida 33805

“The Leadership Of The Church” Pt.2

By Chuck Richardson

When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. [Acts 14:23]

The title, “elder” denotes age and carries with it the general and (in this case) specific understanding of maturity and ability to apply wisdom. It was the title of the Sanhedrin council that judged in the civic and religious laws of the Jewish people. Too often their judgment wasn’t wise because it was clouded by selfish and conceited ambitions. They elevated their traditions above the law of God [Matthew 15:1,2]. Their malicious hatred was seen by even the Governor of the Jews, Pontius Pilate [Mark 15:6-11]. Jesus knew this [Matthew 16:21], though His disciples were not fully convinced [Matthew 16:22]. The council did indeed kill Jesus with the consent of the people [Luke 23:18-21].

So, we conclude that not all elders will exercise the wisdom of age. But the Lord did design to have men called elders to exercise wisdom in good council for the spiritual health of the church [Acts 20:17,28]. This office of men were present at the Jerusalem council [Acts 15:4], and contributed to the discussion of the Holy Spirit’s instruction on Gentile converts [Acts 15:6], and with wisdom of their age and experience in giving council to the church, they concurred with the apostles that God did not give Gentile converts the Jewish law in order to be a Christian [Acts 16:4]. Therefore, elders are to be wise in their understanding of the word of the Lord [1Timothy 3:6; Proverbs 1:1-7].

Through practice of faith and the joining with a wife in the rearing of children to a mature faith they are especially equipped to teach [1Timothy 3:2]. Teaching requires a patient humility of spirit in order to guide children of God in safety through the shoals of the spiritual walk [1Peter 5:4-5; Hebrews 6:19], because there is a danger of falling completely away [Hebrews 6:4-6].

An elder who is equipped to be a teacher will be a servant, always ready to protect the flock [1Peter 5:1-3] as Jesus our Chief Shepherd did [John 10].

Paul stressed the dangers these men would face even among themselves [Acts 20:28-30; Titus 1:9-11], these elders were to be on the alert [Acts 20:31].

As teachers they need be evangelistic by nature [1Timothy 5:17], turning back the brother [James 5:13-16,19-20], and kindly entreating the lost [Galatians 6:1; 1Thessalonians 5:12-23; Acts 26:27-29], and a burden bearer to the child of God [Galatians 6:2-5]. I hope we see the need of elders.

Consider the spiritual aid the elders provide when you think about their council [Revelation 4:4]

There once was a lady who wanted to hire a driver. When three applied, she had them in one by one. "Well," said she to the first, "How near can you drive to danger?" "Madam," said he, "I believe I could drive within a foot without fear." "You will not do for me," said she. To the second she said, "How near could you drive to danger?" "Within a hair's breadth, Madam," said he, "and yet, you would be perfectly safe." "You will not suit me," said she. The third came in, and when asked the same question, "How near could you drive to danger?" he said, "Madam, I never tried; I always drive as far off as I can." Such should the Christian act. Some, through the deceitfulness of sin, are always trying to see how near they can go to the edge, so as not to fall over — how near they can sail to the rock and not dash upon it; how much sin they can indulge in and yet remain respected church members.

Shame on us that any of us should be guilty of tampering with that accursed thing that slew the Lord of glory.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892)