

The Need for Elders in Every Church

I. Introduction

- A. Most of us have **heard** many lessons relating to “elders and deacons,” but the preachers may not have put enough emphasis on “**The Need for Elders and Deacons.**”
- B. **Whether this is true or not**, we should all know that the “**elders and deacons**” arrangement is God’s divinely appointed government for local churches.
- C. We should also agree that **no other arrangement** is as good.
- D. It goes without saying that a church **that is not organized as God prescribes** is not fully pleasing to God because it cannot reach its full potential.
 - 1. Thus, when it is possible to do so (there being men qualified who desire the office) a church should get on with it.
 - 2. Why be content with an inferior arrangement?
 - a. Why not take the plunge and get it done?
 - b. The church can then enjoy the benefits of a far better arrangement.

II. Body

- A. Why should there be elders in every church – why is there this great need?
- B. It is not enough to just say “Well, it is just **better** to have elders”; let’s look at some reasons **why** it is better and **why** churches of Christ need elders.

- 1. The need for elders is seen in the command to have them.

Titus 1:5 **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:**

Acts 14:23 **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.**

- 2. The need...is seen in the **danger of not having them.**

Matt 9:36 **But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.**

- a. Elders have many responsibilities, and if elders do not exist in a church, much of the work they are responsible for is not as likely to happen.
- b. We will have more to say on this as we continue with the list of reasons why a church needs elders.

3. Elders are needed to **protect the future** of the church.
 - a. They assure that the church is **edified** and that it **grows**.
 - b. To accomplish this they set goals that serve to provide vision, inspiration, and direction.
4. The need for elders is seen in the **duties** they perform:
 - a. Feeding the Flock

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.**

1 Pet. 5:2 **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.**
 - b. Elders guard the flock by watching for false teachers from without and within.

Acts 20:29 **For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.**

Acts 20:30 **Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.**
 - c. Indeed, an eldership provides for a stronger defense against error and helps prevent souls from straying.
5. The need for elders is seen in the need for members to submit to them.

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.

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. If there are no elders, this command cannot be obeyed.

b. When there are no elders (to submit to) people have a tendency to submit to the *preacher*, which is not God's plan and which often leads to problems.

6. The need for elders is seen in the dangers of **deciding by *majority vote***.

a. **Voting** on doctrinal matters is not scriptural.

Matt. 28:18 – Christ has all authority.

Col 1:18 **And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.**

b. **Voting** makes the church subject to unqualified men.

c. **Voting** fails to distinguish between experience and inexperience – the vote of a *novice*, or possibly some who infiltrate the church to wreak havoc, will count the same as a **veteran** teacher or preacher.

- d. **Voting** encourages preachers to cater to the wishes of the majority.
 - 1) The Lord does not want *preachers* to be *men pleasers*.
 - 2) Gal. 1:10 **For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.**
- e. **Voting** provides occasion for politics and electioneering, which often results in division.
- f. **Voting** can breed anarchy and bitterness in a church.

7. Having elders expands pastoral care.

- a. Sheep are **much less likely** to leave the flock, go astray, and be lost forever **where there are** responsible shepherds.
- b. Without a doubt, **three** men of God can do a better job of handling things than one, or a group composed of many who do not meet the qualifications for being an elder.

8. Having multiple elders makes up for the weaknesses of each elder individually.

- a. Everyone has a weakness, even elders who are fully qualified.
- b. But if there are three elders (for example) no two are likely to have all the same weaknesses.

9. Having a plurality of elders takes the pressure off just one man when major decisions and judgments must be made, and helps in developing strategic vision and setting goals.

10. Having qualified elders protects against men like **Diotrephes** who acted like a dictator, casting out of the church people he did not like.
 - a. All too often, it is impossible to set in elders because certain men, who are not qualified, don't want them.
 - b. They use politics (backdoor tactics) to get their way and are content with this arrangement.

11. Where there are elders there will be an **increase in the confidence** of the church members in the leadership, provided the elders meet the qualifications.

12. An eldership protects against "*pastor worship*."
 - a. Churches that have a *pastor* often look upon him too highly.
 - 1) These "pastors" contend that God *called them to preach* and then use that as a reason their teachings and actions should not be questioned or challenged – as if they are *inspired* in some way.
 - 2) By the way, these *pastors* in denominational churches rarely have the qualifications to be a pastor/elder, and certainly should not be substituted for an eldership.
 - b. Paul addressed this problem (pastor worship).

1 Cor. 4:6 **And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.**

- c. Indeed, many contend that it is terrible to even question the “pastor,” **who is not really a pastor but merely the paid preacher.**
 - 1) This, of course, is contrary to the teaching of God.
 - 2) Acts 17:11 **These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**
- 13. An eldership promotes continuity of leadership; if an elder steps down, leaves, or dies, the church is not left unattended.
- 14. An eldership provides an example to the church of **love, cooperation, and unity.**

III. Conclusion

A. Denominational groups have a wide variety of organizational structures at the local level.

- 1. These include having one person in charge, such as a “priest,” “pastor,” “bishop,” “reverend” and “preacher,” or even some individual that means well but is not really qualified for the task.
- 2. But we know better, for we know what the Bible says and we know God’s way is best and that we must not question it.

B. Is your church ready to get serious about setting in elders?

- 1. If not, why not?
- 2. Are some being too picky regarding qualifications?
 - a. It is better to do something imperfectly than to do nothing perfectly.

- b. To reject God's established form of local church government may be considered by Him as being rebellious – a sin that may not be covered by the blood of Christ.
- c. How can brethren even THINK they are walking in the light when boldly proclaiming that that “we don't want elders and are not going to pursue it”?
- d. Some who are content with an unscriptural arrangement are heard to say, “If it is not broken don't fix” but if it is not the arrangement that God has commanded then it is broke and needs to be fixed.

Acknowledgments: A comprehensive study of elders (PowerPoint Presentation) on [Tomlinson Run Church of Christ's Website](#).

Recommended Reading: <https://radicallychristian.com/why-every-church-needs-elders/>

<http://truthmagazine.com/archives/volume19/TMO19223.html>

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