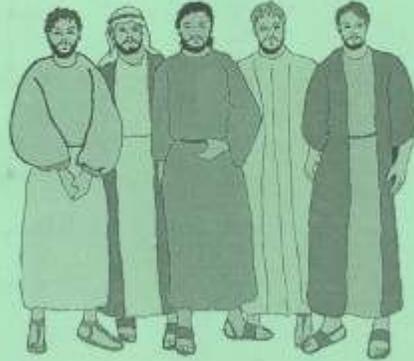


HAVING APPOINTED  
ELDERS  
IN  
EVERY CHURCH



Guy V. Caskey

**Front Cover**

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# HAVING APPOINTED ELDERS IN EVERY CHURCH

## INTRODUCTION

This tract does not purport to be an exhaustive study on the subject of leadership in the Lord's church. It does, however, in a very brief way, attempt an analysis of the terms applied in The New Testament to the leadership of the local congregation. Further, it endeavors to accurately define the qualities and qualifications of the men God seeks to fill that responsible place of service.

In this way, it is hoped that it will serve as a sound discussion of the Biblical principles of leadership which may solve problems where they exist and encourage brethren where the church is young or weak to train men toward this noble task.

The problem I have encountered in the mission field is that the national preacher, or the missionary, becomes a pastor to the flock. He often jealously guards that position and power and thus prevents men from preparing to take the oversight of God's congregation.

If men can be trained within a few years to become gospel preachers, why cannot faithful Christian men, who already possess some of the basic requirements, be trained to lead God's people as elders?

It is also hoped that by the careful study of the points and passages introduced in this tract, elders will be induced to take the spiritual oversight and leadership of the congregation, leaving the mechanics of the physical undertakings of the congregation to capable deacons.

If this tract can awaken in us the need of establishing churches and organizing them after the same fashion they were under the direction of the apostles in the first century, it will have served its purpose, and I shall be very thankful.

Guy Caskey

## **HAVING APPOINTED ELDERS IN EVERY CHURCH**

“So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23).

“If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work” (I Timothy 3:1). “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5).

“From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. ... Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:17, 28).

It is likely there is no more important subject that concerns us in the church of the Lord today than that of leadership. “Continue to obey [be persuaded by] and be submissive to your leaders, for they are ever watching in defense of your souls as men who will give an answer of their trust” (Hebrews 13:17; Williams).

The life and power of God's church are dependent upon its leadership. It must be known, therefore, that the character, continuance, and the direction of the local congregation will be determined, very largely, by those men who lead it.

Paul warned the elders of the church at Ephesus: “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves” (Acts 20:29–30). And he admonished them: “Therefore watch and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (v. 31).

The church without leadership would be like a family without a father, a business without a manager, an army without a general, a ship without a captain or a clinic without a doctor. So, the church without proper leadership cannot perform the function that God intended in his scheme of human redemption.

## **The Cause of Apostasy**

With the wrong kind of leadership, the early church was led into apostasy, departed from its pristine purity, lost the vigor and power of its message, and sank into a coma of moral spiritual destitution known as the Dark Ages. The World was thus drawn into the enslavement of religious oppression and spiritual darkness where it remained shackled for centuries. With reference to this apostasy, Paul said to Timothy: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith ..." (I Timothy 4:1).

He mentions it again in these words: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ..." (II Timothy 4:3). Peter also discusses this abandoning of the faith: "But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you ..." (II Peter 2:1). Paul spoke specifically of a falling away to the Thessalonian Christians: "Let no one deceive you by any means, for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first ..." (II Thessalonians 2:3).

Loss of respect for the word of God and its authority led to this apostasy and to the development of the present divided, chaotic condition in the religious world. Disregard for God's plan will inevitably led to corruption and confusion.

## **God-Selected Men**

Let us consider the men God wants to use in the leadership of His church. There are five words in the New Testament which describes the office of service and leadership. The first on is our word, "elders." It comes from the Greek word presbuterol. This is plural and means "senior or older, more advanced in years, men of age, experience, wisdom and dignity." Thayer, in defining the term says: "Those who presided over the assemblies or churches."

Let us read several passages of scripture which can enlarge our understanding of this Bible subject. "This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:30). When the question of circumcising the Gentile Christians arose in the church at

Antioch, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles and elders of the church

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(Acts 15:2). "So the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter" (v. 6). "Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas ..." (v. 22).

Kittle, the German scholar and lexicographer of New Testament words, spent thirty pages of his work on the subject of the eldership. He says that the Holy Spirit appointed them to be overseers or bishops and shepherds over the congregations. Further, he states that "the title bishop is used to describe the work of the presbyters." In regard to the discussion of the eldership in the epistles, he says: "It is thus natural to suppose that the offices are one and the same." That is, the office of elder and the office of bishop are one and the same in the New Testament. This same scholar further comments: "Only thus can one explain the fact that just after Titus is told to appoint elders, the portrait of a bishop is given." Thayer also says that "the elders did not differ at all from the bishops or overseers."

### **Another Leadership Word**

The second word is bishops, and the term in the language of the New Testament is episkopoi. The term means overseers, superintendents, inspectors, watchers. It comes from two words: epi and skopos, meaning to look upon or to oversee, to inspect. In the New Testament, Bishops were the guardians of souls. Thayer puts it in these words: "One who watches over the welfare." So, bishop, overseer, is another term for elder, referring to the same work, the same office, and giving us a more expanded view and a comprehensive understanding of God's leadership arrangement for His church through the ages (Acts 20:17, 28). The term elder speaks of the mature spiritual experience of the man as a fundamental qualification for serving in this capacity. The term bishop indicates the character of the work undertaken. "According to the divine will and appointment of God, expressed in His word, there were to be bishops in every local church (Acts 14:23; 20:7; Philippians 1:1; James 5:14)." The above statement was taken from W.E. Vine in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

The singular form of the word was used to tell what a bishop should be.

In the local congregation, there was always a plurality of bishops or elders. And that is tremendously important!

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### **Not A Dictator**

In consideration of the office of a bishop and the work to be done, he is not an officer, as a policeman, but one who performs an office, or a service. For instance, my eye is not an officer of my body, but it performs an office—the office of seeing. My ear, or my nose, is not an officer over my body, but each of those members of my body perform a service for the whole body. So, a bishop, rather than being a policeman, or a dictator, or a lord, is one who carries out and executes a service to God's people. You will likely recall that he said, "a man who desires the position [office] of a bishop, he desires a good work."

### **Who Is A Pastor?**

The third word in our study of leadership in the church is pastors. These are the men who tend flocks and herds. They are shepherds who feed and pasture the sheep. The term has a number of different applications. For instance, it applies to Christ several times in the scriptures: "I am the good shepherd ..." (John 10:11). "But have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (I Peter 2:25). He is said to be the great Shepherd of the Sheep (Hebrews 13:20). The term pastors, *poimenes*, applies to the elders or overseers in the local congregation (Acts 20:28). Addressing the elders from Ephesus, Paul says: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God." Thayer says that "it is used of the overseers of Christian assemblies." The word pastors has a very old history. Liddell & Scott, in their classical lexicon, tells us that the verb form of the term means, "to tend, to cherish, to guide, to govern."

### **Duties And Functions Of Pastors**

The New Testament clearly delineates and describes the duties of these men who lead the local congregation. As shepherds they are to:

(1) lead the flock, (2) feed the flock, (3) tend the flock, (4) protect the flock, and (5) watch for dangers and diseases within the flock and without the flock. When this arrangement is kept, these duties are executed, and these requirements met, the spiritual health and strength of Christ's church will be assured, and all our efforts will be blessed.

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### **The Fourth Term**

There is still another word which applies to these servants of the the Lord's church. This time it is an expression with an added concept. Each of these designations helps to enlarge our view and increase our understanding of this important role of leadership. This time the word is stewards. The word in the New Testament language is oikonomoi, and it means the manager of a household, a trustee, or one who manages the estate of another. "For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God..." (Titus 1:7). This passage says that the elders of the church manage and oversee the affairs of the Lord's house. This must not be construed to mean that the latitude of their authority is unrestricted, that they possess a freedom to legislate and execute what their human wisdom dictates. They have no authority to impose instructions or give orders arbitrarily. This prerogative belongs exclusively to Jesus. The elders simply manage, as stewards, the matters of His household in keeping with His exact and explicit direction found in His word.

### **God's Elders Are Leaders**

The fifth and last word that applies to these men who lead in the work of the local congregation is a common noun leaders, hegoumenoi, "the ones leading you, or the ones going ahead." The verb form of the word means "to take the lead, or to preside," One translation renders Hebrews 13:17: "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls. ..." A more literal and accurate translation is: "Let yourself be persuaded by the one's leading you. ..."

This word persuade is the root term from which we get faith, belief. So the idea is that we believe in those who lead us. Having faith in them, trusting them. We are persuaded by them as they lead us in keeping with the revealed will of God. The action of the leader is "to go before,

to be a leader by going out ahead." This sounds very much as though the elders should show the congregation the way by setting the proper example. They do not ask their people to do what they are unwilling to do. They show them the way.

There are some qualifications seen in this passage. These men govern. They teach you the word of God. They serve as an

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example. Consider how they close their lives. Let yourself be persuaded by them. Submit to them. They give an account. Salute them, which means to greet them. Also, we are to honor and respect them.

### **QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALITIES OF THESE MEN**

What God requires of these men who serve in the leadership of His church are not mere qualifications but qualities of character which have been developed from years of Christian living and service in His kingdom. To appreciate this truth, you are requested to read I Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–11. That which precedes any qualification is his desire to thus serve God in the local church. This is certainly an important prerequisite because it means to aspire, to reach or stretch one's self out, to desire earnestly or long after. It is excellent work. It calls for all of a man's energies. Not merely an honor to be enjoyed, it is rather a task to be performed.

First of all, this man must be blameless, or irreproachable—that is "not taken hold of with a charge of unfitness; unaccused, irreprehensible." Thayer's definition is: "not open to censure."

He must be the husband of one wife. This means that he is once married. More literally, it says: "one wife's husband." It suggests three considerations: (1) he must be a married man, (2) he must have but one wife—he cannot be a polygamist. He is pure and faithful in his relationship to this one wife. And (3) not only must he not be a polygamist, he cannot have had wives in succession, as was rather common in the Greek and Roman societies.

He must also be a man of vigilance, that is, watchful in respect to danger or hazard. He must be a man of caution. The word means "to

be sober, not intoxicated, abstinent in respect to wine.” The language of the New Testament is almost always colorful and descriptive. This word that tells of the quality of an elder in the local congregation simply says that he must be temperate so that he can be awake to the needs and dangers of the Christians under his care. Self-control is a quality and a requirement for a man to serve as one of the bishops in a local congregation. It is indispensable to the kind of leadership God requires. The word is found again in Titus 2:2: “That the older

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men be sober, reverent, temperate [vigilant], sound in faith, in love, in patience.” In this context of I Timothy 3, the New Testament commentators tell us that it means to be calm and collected in spirit, dispassionate and circumspect. The lesson, then, that we learn is that an overseer of God's church must be awake and watchful—that which one could not be under the effects of wine.

These stewards of God's house must be sober-minded. Not that he is suspected of bordering on insanity, but the requirement is that he be of a sound and sane mind. He is to be discreet. He is a wise man and exercises self-control, curbs his passions.

Perhaps there is no more important lesson in Christianity than this. It does not apply alone to elders, or men who seek that office, but self-control is the very essence of the religion of Christ in the lives of His followers. Controlling, with the help of God, our thoughts, words, and actions is paramount. Restraining self-gratification, denying ungodliness, steering clear of fleshly indulgences must be practiced by all Christians, but must be exemplary in the life of elders because they serve as a pattern deserving of imitation. To curb one's own feelings, to exercise self-discipline, and to hold one's self to duty and the proper standard of conduct is getting at the very heart of the qualities that characterize God's elders (Titus 2:12). These men who lead the local congregation must be “prudent, thoughtful and self-controlled” (Ardnt & Gingrich).

The record also says that each man who desires this office must be of good behavior. That is, his life must be well-ordered and decorous. It must be well-arranged, seemly, modest—“spoken of a man living with decorum, a well-ordered life” (Thayer). This means more than being refined, courteous, and polite, that is, a gentleman of good breeding.

It denotes a quality of both mind and character. While he is a man of good manners, this says that he is a person who is orderly and spiritual in his habits.

He must be hospitable to be qualified to serve in God's church. This word has a nice history. It means to be kind to strangers. It derives from a compound word which means friend plus stranger or guest. Generous to guests, then, is the thought. Peter puts it into this very forceful and persuasive

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language: "Be hospitable to one another without grumbling" (I Peter 4:9). This characteristic of unselfishness is present and prominent.

For this man to qualify for leadership in the Lord's church, he must be apt to teach. Apt means qualified to teach. Such language authorities as Harper and Thayer tell us he must be skillful in teaching. Other New Testament language scholars tell us that "skillful" means "well-versed, knowing and ready." It does not mean willing to teach, for we have many people willing to teach, but able to teach. Some were more likely to be able than others, for they labored in the word, and evidently, were remunerated for their services (I Timothy 5:17). One may not be eloquent, but he is required to be able.

He must not be given to wine. This is an interesting word. It comes from two words: para which means beside and oinos which means wine. So, literally, it means "beside the wine." That is "intemperate, one who sits long at his wine or drunken," and the secondary sense, Thayer says, is "quarrelsome over wine, brawling, or abusive."

In the next place, he must not be a fighter. He cannot be a violent person, and this comes from a word which means "to strike or smite or blast, a bruiser, ready with a blow, pugnacious, contentious, a quarrelsome person" as Thayer defines the word. He is rather gentle, is yielding, considerate of the wishes, feelings, and needs of others. This does not mean that he yields truth for error; right for wrong, virtue for vice; or good for evil, but it does mean that he is kind and gentle and considerate.

He must not be "greedy of filthy lucre." It would be better to translate this "not silver-loving." That is, he must not be stingy or mercenary. It

literally means "love or affection for silver." He cannot be avaricious because the church of our Lord has a great mission of preaching the gospel to the whole world, in every nook and cranny. A man cannot be stingy with the Lord's money and accomplish this great task (Hebrews 3:5). Another word that is closely allied means that he cannot be covetous; he must not be fond of money. He must also superintend his house well, and this word means "to be first or the head of his own house," Lenski says. "Be over, to superintend, to preside over," Thayer suggests.

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The word says that on the part of the father, there is authority and on the part of the family, there is respect, subjection, and submission. He must have believing children, Paul told Titus, and the term is *ekna ekon pista*. From the leading reputable lexicon, the Analytical Greek Lexicon by Harper, the term *pista*, means "faithful, believing, yielding, belief in, confidence, a Christian believer." This is very essential.

We need to understand today that for a man to serve in the church of our Lord as an elder or a bishop or a pastor he must have believing children. Thayer says, of this term, "easily, persuaded, believing, confiding, trusting." Then, he says "in the New Testament, one who trusts God's promises, is convinced that Jesus has been raised from the dead, one who has become convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and the author of salvation, a believer." On the root word, he says, "to be persuaded, to suffer oneself to be persuaded, to be induced, to believe, to listen to, to obey, and to comply with." Bullinger says, "to obey, to be faithful." Arndt and Gingrich tells us that it speaks "of one who confesses the Christian faith, believing, or a believer in the Lord, in Christ, in God, believing in Christ—a Christian believer" (Titus 1:6).

Abbot Smith defines the term, "believing, trusting the law." Liddell & Scott explain that the word means "believing, relying on, obedient, loyal, faithful." Then, the critical commentators such as Lenski make this remark: "these children will be grown up and even if they are professing to be Christians, Paul wants only the father of children not in accusation or dissoluteness."

Thus, they are required not only to be Christians, but to be faithful Christians. McKnight says, "the apostle required the children of him to

be ordained a bishop that they should be Christians and of sober behavior.

The Expositors Greek New Testament says, "It must be supposed that a Christian father who has unbelieving children is himself a recent convert." The fact that Paul did not think it necessary to warn Timothy that such men were not eligible for the eldership was proof that Christianity at this time was more firmly established in Ephesus than in Crete. Adam Clarke said "whose family is converted to God." Robertson's Word Pictures define the term "children that believe."

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The Pulpit Commentary explains "children that believe and children that are required to under rule, in subjection."

I think the deduction that can be drawn from this information is this:

1. An elder must be married.
2. An elder must have children.
3. An elder must have children who are Christian.
4. An elder must have Christian children who are faithful.

Someone says: "Does not the term mean children in the plural?" And, indeed, it is found in the plural, but I think the implication of the plural is often singular. That is, the plural is used to include the singular and plural, and there are many examples of this in the New Testament.

"Husbands, love your wives ..." (Ephesians 5:25); but of course, one husband must love his wife. "Children, obey your parents ..." (Ephesians 6:1); but of course, a single child in the family is obligated to obey his parents. "Know how to give good gifts to your children ..." (Matthew 7:11); but a father, of course, knows how to give good gifts even to one child. "Be followers of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1), but even in the singular, we are required to be followers of God.

We must look at the purpose of this qualification. The home is a training and testing ground for the development of those qualities and attributes which God counts necessary in the oversight of the church. God wants this man to be equipped with the knowledge and experience of having trained, guided, and disciplined his own children

into faithful Christians. This is necessary to adapt him, to fit him, and to temper him for the overseership and rule of the church.

He cannot be a novice, that is, a newly planted or a new convert or, as Thayer says, "one who has recently become a Christian." Literally, it means "a new," plus "to bring forth or to spring forth," and, so, one who is new in the faith or young or youthful cannot serve as an elder in the church. He lacks knowledge and wisdom and experience. It is dangerous to himself lest he be "puffed up" with pride. It is dangerous to others lest he lead them astray.

Then he must discipline his children (I Timothy

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3:4). The word discipline means "range under or to subordinate". The act of subjecting or obedience (Galatians 2:5; I Timothy 2:11). It also carries the idea to nourish up to majority (Ephesians 3:4).

He must be a man of good reputation. This word is very interesting. It is *maturia*. It is the word from which we get martyr. It really means "testimony" here, an excellent testimony from outsiders, "Praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47).

His influence is a tremendous force for the spread of the gospel and for maintaining the purity of the church. Notice the attitude that Christians are required to have toward the elders. First of all, they must not rebuke or sharply rebuke an older man or an elder (I Timothy 5:1). Rebuke comes from a word which means "to strike upon, to beat upon, to chastise with words, to chide." But he must treat him as a father. A Christian must not assault with words or any other way an elder. He is not to inflict blows upon him or reprove him sharply. He should be very careful in his language. Loose talk and criticisms of the elders is a very dangerous thing and, in so doing, we may be found fighting against God.

A Christian is not to receive an accusation against an elder except on the testimony of two or three witnesses (I Timothy 5:19). This means a charge or a complaint, an indictment or a denunciation. He is to recognize that they are the overseers and that they feed the flock (I Peter 5:2).

They are not lords, but examples to lead the flock. As one of the words means, they to go ahead; they are to lead. They cannot oversee, of course, unless Christians under their charge are willing to be overseen; they cannot lead unless Christians will be led.

A Christian is to submit, to place, or range under, to yield, or to give place to (I Peter 5:5). This is an imperative, and he must, therefore, be clothed upon or bind on humility. We must obey as Christians, and that means we must be persuaded to listen to, to obey, and to follow (Hebrews 13:17).

We can call upon them in time of need (James 5:14). We may count them worthy of double honor (I Timothy 5:17). They

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deserve honor because of the dignity of the office and the work and the service that they render. This likely refers to financial support because they labor in word and teaching; that is, they give full time to the service of the Lord's church in the teaching and guiding of others in the word of truth. We must love them for their work's sake, for their exemplary lives, and because they watch over our souls. Let us keep constantly in mind that this is God's arrangement and this is a part of God's divinely appointed organization of His church. We may not be excused for existing as a church over any extended period of time without qualifying men to serve in this office.

Let us return to our title suggested in the passage of the text, Having Appointed Elders In Every Church. There are three words in the original language of the New Testament which are translated by our single English word, ordain.

One of those words is krino. It means to decide or judge. This had to do with a decision of the apostles and elders about the decrees of the Lord (Acts 16:4). The word in our passage is keirotno and it meant "to elect by stretching out the hand." It carried the idea of "the putting forth of the finger." The common meaning of the verb for a time was "to vote by stretching out the hand," and hence to elect by a show of hands (II Corinthians 8:19). "Finally it came to mean to appoint by the approval of the assembly" (H. Leo Boles).

From reading the New Testament carefully on this subject, it was the selection and setting men apart who had been previously elected or chosen by the members of the congregation. F.F. Bruce, in his commentary on Acts, says: "It came to mean to designate or appoint."

Adam Clarke makes this comment: "I believe the simple truth to be this, that in ancient times the people chose by the cheirotonia (lifting up of hands) their spiritual pastor(s) ... apostles or others appointed that person to his office." Ordain means to appoint, or to make, to set down, to constitute. Thus, Titus was commanded to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5).

The point I wish to make is that the New Testament instructed the early Christians to select those godly, qualified leaders to serve the local congregation. It was the whole congregation

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which made this choice (Acts 15:22). In the appointment of deacons, the choice was by the people of the congregation (Acts 6:2-5). It should not be different now.

Christians should be well taught as to the qualities and qualifications the Bible requires for men to serve in this capacity. Once this is done, it should be the decision and choice of the members to select those trusted and reliable men to lead them. May we do our utmost to follow that divine guidance and example which is left us in His word.

It is my conviction that to follow the course will result in spiritual and numerical growth for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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