

THE ELDERSHIP
(The Duties of Elders)
Lesson 11

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Often the Qualifications of the Eldership Are Studied, But Eldership Duties Are Neglected.
- B. What Are the Duties of the Eldership?
 1. An elder is often appointed to fill a "position", but he does not know what work he is to do. What is the "good work" that he seeks (1 Tim. 3:1)? What are "their work's sake" for which he is esteemed (1 Thess. 5:13)?
 2. The duties (works, functions) of the eldership are found in the NT, not in the minds of men.
 3. No man who does not understand and accept the work of elders should be placed into the eldership.

II. GENERAL DUTIES OF THE ELDERSHIP.

- A. Elder — a Decision-Making Duty.
- B. Bishop — an Administrating / Superintending Duty.
- C. Pastor — a Counseling / Teaching Duty.

III. SPECIFIC DUTIES OF THE ELDERSHIP.

Note: The scripture quotations listed below are taken from the King James Version. Other versions should be compared for different wording.

- A. Duties Toward God.
 1. *"as the steward of God"* (Tit.1:7; see also "church of God", 1 Tim. 3:5; and *"flock of God"* and *"God's heritage"*, 1 Pet. 5:2-3).
 2. *"they that must give account"*, (Heb. 13:17).
 3. Summary: Elders have been entrusted by God with the care of God's house and one day they will have to give an account to God for how they have managed God's house (1 Cor. 4:2).
- B. Duties Toward Self.
 1. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves... "*, (Acts 20:28).
 2. *"I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace which is able to build you up..."*, (Acts 20:32).
 3. *"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught..."*, (Tit. 1:9).

4. *"not by constraint, but willingly..."*, (1 Pet. 5:2).
5. *"not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind..."*, (1 Pet. 5:2).
6. *"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock..."*, (1 Pet. 5:3).
7. Summary: The elders' first duty is to pay attention to what God wants and then to pay attention to themselves. With humility, they should examine themselves to see if they are faithful (2 Cor. 13:5). They cannot help others get their lives right until they first straighten out their own lives (Mt. 7:1-5; Gal. 6:1-2). The elders have a personal duty to strengthen and build themselves up by a regular study of God's word. They cannot build others up if they themselves are not strong. Elders must always hold on to God's word and never let it go. Elders also have the personal duty to watch their own attitude and actions while they serve. They must never serve by compulsion, personal gain, or tyranny. They should serve voluntarily, eagerly, and by example. They must always set the right example for the flock in word and deed because the local church will be following their example (Heb. 13:7, 17).

C. Duties Toward the Local Church.

1. *"and sent it to the elders..."*, (Acts 11:30); *"And the apostles and elders came together for to consider this matter"*, (Acts 15:6); *"that were ordained of the apostles and elders..."* (Acts 16:4); *"and all the elders were present"*, (Acts 21:18).
2. *"Take heed therefore ... to all the flock..."*, (Acts 20:28).
3. *"over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers..."*, (Acts 20:28; see also *"taking the oversight"*, 1 Pet. 5:2; and *"bishops"*, Phil. 1:1).
4. *"to feed the church of God..."*, (Acts 20:28; see also *"feed the flock of God"*, 1 Pet. 1:2).
5. *"Therefore watch, and remember..."*, (Acts 20:31).
6. *"how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak..."*, (Acts 20:35).
7. *"Pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints..."*, (Eph. 4:11-12).
8. *"them which labor among you..."*, (1 Thess. 5:12; see also *"they who labor in the word and doctrine"*, 1 Tim. 5:17).
9. *"over you in the Lord..."*, (1 Thess. 5:12; see also *"elders that rule well"*, 1 Tim. 5:17).
10. *"admonish you"*, (1 Thess. 5:12).
11. *"take care of the church of God"*, (1 Tim. 3:5).
12. *"the laying on of the hands of the presbytery"*, (1 Tim. 4:14).
13. *"to exhort and to convince the gainsayers"*, (Tit. 1:9).
14. *"Whose mouths must be stopped..."*, (Tit. 1:11).
15. *"Rebuke them sharply..."*, (Tit. 1:13).

16. *"them which have the rule over you..."*, (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).

17. *"they watch for your souls..."*, (Heb. 13:17).

18. *"let them pray over him..."*, (Jas. 5:14).

19. Summary.

- a) Elders as elders - elders, who are older men with wisdom and experience, have the duty of making decisions in the area of expediencies (the details of the work and worship of the local church), or solving problems among members.
- b) Elders as bishops - elders have the duty to oversee, superintend, or administer the affairs of a local church to see that its work gets done properly. Elders have a duty to work hard within the local church, be it spiritual or physical work. Elders have a duty to "rule over" the local church through leadership. The question of the elders' authority will be discussed in the next lesson.
- c) Elders as pastors - elders have a duty to watch over the flock and tend to their needs. Elders have the duty of feeding the local church (public and private teaching, 1 Tim. 3:2). By feeding, elders will equip (train) the saints to do the work of service. Elders should seek all members that they can, train all that they seek, and use all that they train. Elders have a duty to individual members who need support (1 Thess. 5:14-15), admonition (encouragement or warning), care, initiation (that is, "laying on of hands"), prayers, or discipline (2 Thess. 3:6). Elders also have the duty of guarding the local church against sin and error. They must be vigilant and alert to any danger that would hurt the flock and they must stop all false teaching entering into or inside the local church. Elders should look to the shepherding examples in the Bible to learn what is (Psa. 23; Jn. 10) and is not (Jer. 23; Ezek. 34) the right way to shepherd.

IV. CONCLUSION.

- A. The Eldership is Not Just an Office, Title, or Position. The Elders Have Serious Duties Toward God, Toward Themselves, and Toward the Local Church.
- B. The Eldership is an Awesome Responsibility Not to Be Taken Lightly. The Eldership Will Be Greatly Rewarded for Its Great Work (1 Pet. 5:4).

Lesson Eleven Discussion

1. Which is more important, understanding the qualifications for elders, or understanding the duties of elders?
2. What duty does the eldership have toward God?
3. What duty does the eldership have toward themselves, toward the word of God, and toward their attitudes?
4. The example of the Jerusalem church elders (Acts 11, 15, 21) is an example of elders performing what duty?
5. List the five duties of elders found in Acts 20:28-35.
6. Pastors are _____, according to Ephesians 4:11.
7. List the three duties of elders found in 1 Thessalonians 5:12.
8. What are some ways in which an eldership can "*take care of the church of God*" (1 Tim. 3:5)?
9. Using Genesis 48:13-14, Deuteronomy 34:9, Numbers 8:10, Leviticus 16:21, and Acts 13:3 as background references, what does this phrase mean: "*the laying on of the hands of the presbytery*" (1 Tim. 4:14)?
10. According to Titus 1:9-16, what duty does the eldership have toward false teachers?
11. Elders who have the _____ over _____ watch for your _____ (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).
12. If a member of the local church is sick, he or she should call for the _____ so that they can _____.