

THE ELDERSHIP
(Selecting and Ordaining Elders)
Lesson 17

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Care Must Be Taken in Selecting and Ordaining Elders.

1. We don't want man-made elders. We want "Holy-Spirit-made" elders (Acts 20:28). The Holy Spirit "makes" men elders by revealing the actions (work) and character (qualifications) of an elder in the word of God.
2. Remember, the actions described in Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 are given by generic authority. Elders must be "ordained" in every church. The details of this generic authority, however, are not spelled out. Any expedient method to ordain elders that does not violate Scripture would be acceptable. Much of this lesson, therefore, is in the realm of expediency and some of the details below could be modified by a consensus within the local church.

B. Selecting (Acts 14:23) and Ordaining (Titus 1:5) Elders.

1. "Ordained them elders in every church" — Acts 14:23.
Gr. cheirotoneo, "to stretch out the hand"; hence, "to choose", "to elect", "to appoint", see Acts 14:23; 2 Cor. 8:19.
2. "Ordain elders in every city" — Titus 1:5.
Gr. kathistami, "to set down", "to place", "to put"; hence, "to appoint one to administer an office or position", Tit. 1:5; see a Bible concordance for its many passages.
3. The emphasis in the Greek word *cheirotoneo* is on "selecting". The emphasis in the Greek word *kathistami* is on "ordaining". There is nothing, however, in these two Greek verbs that point to a specific method used in "selecting" and "ordaining".

C. Some Expedient Steps in the Process of Selecting and Ordaining Elders.

1. Evaluation — Does this church have a reasonable opportunity to select and ordain elders?
2. Preparation — Has a thorough and careful study been made of the work and qualifications of elders? This step is a good opportunity to see if there are any men that "seek" and "desire" the eldership (1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2). If there is not a plurality of men currently "seeking" and "desiring" the eldership, there may not be any need at this time to go any farther past this step.
3. Coordination — Who will be in charge of carrying out the details that lead to the selection and ordination of the elders?
4. Participation — How can the whole church participate in the selection process?

5. Tabulation — What men have been selected by the whole church?
6. Consultation — Are there any of the men selected who cannot serve as elders, either because they do not want to serve, or because they are not qualified to serve?
7. Presentation / Installation — How can the church install the men qualified to be elders in a meaningful and uplifting way?
8. Remember, some methods of selecting and ordaining elders violate Scripture: a) majority election; b) selection and appointment by the preacher only; c) elders are self-appointed; and, d) elders of one church appointing elders in another church. See also Lesson 12 II. G.

II. SELECTING QUALIFIED MEN.

A. Men Must Be Selected.

1. Selection is not the appointment; selection precedes the appointment.
2. Men that meet the divine qualifications are selected (nominated). A selection sheet could be provided for each member. This sheet could have a place for your name, the name of the nominee, and a list of all the qualifications to check off ("yes", "no", or "I don't know"). A formal selection sheet has two advantages: a) it adds an element of seriousness, accountability, and feedback to the process; and, b) it provides an opportunity for the nominee to engage in self-examination.
3. The church does the selecting (Acts 6:1-6; the same Greek word *kathistami*, used in Titus 1:5, is used in Acts 6:3. This would give us some background as to the method of "ordaining" elders. See also Acts 1:15-26.

B. Objections Must Be Considered.

1. All Christians must be careful to select a man who is truly qualified (1 Tim. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:22). Hasty selection and appointment can cause serious problems for the local church.
2. Valid, scriptural objections should be voiced and reasonable time for these objections should be given for a study of God's word. If a scriptural objection is raised and sustained against a nominee, that nominee should be removed from the list of appointees. Care should be taken with those who have been nominated but will not be appointed. These men should be exhorted not to be discouraged.
3. Invalid objections based upon personal likes or dislikes should not be voiced, nor should they be allowed to hold up the process. "I just feel that he is not qualified to serve," and "I just feel that we do not need elders," are not a valid objections.
4. All objections, scriptural or otherwise, should be signed and thoroughly investigated with total discretion. Be careful in your objections. It is a serious thing to misjudge another man's character.

III. ORDAINING ELDERS.

- A. There Is Apostolic Example for the Preacher to Ordain the Elders After the Appointees Have Been Selected by the Church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).
- B. Things That May Accompany the Ordaining "Ceremony".
 - 1. Commendation to the Lord, prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 14:23; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22).
 - 2. The "laying on of the hands" does not involve the miraculous. It is simply a way to identify these men publically in front of the congregation.

IV. GOD'S WISDOM IN SELECTING AND ORDAINING ELDERS.

- A. God Does Not Want the Local Church to be Lacking (Tit. 1:5).
 - 1. A local church without elders should not be content with its present condition. First, God wants every local church to be "set in order" (Tit. 1:5). The Greek word *epidiorthoo* translated "order" means "to set straight again". Second, God wants every local church not to be "lacking" or "wanting" (Tit. 1:5). The Greek word *leipo* used here means "to be left behind, to lack, destitute". See Luke 18:22, James 1:4-5, 2:15, Titus 1:5, and 3:13 for its uses. Let us do all that we can to see that God's wisdom governs the local church.
 - 2. Review Lesson 8.

V. CONCLUSION.

- A. The Selecting and Ordaining of Elders is One of the Most Important Decisions a Local Church Will Make.
- B. This Decision Should Be Made in a Way That Involves the Whole Church and It Should Be Made in a Way That Unites the Local Church, Not in a Way That Divides It.

Lesson Seventeen Discussion

1. Why must great care be taken in the selecting and ordaining of elders?
2. T or F — The NT gives a detailed outline of the process of selecting and ordaining elders.
3. The two different Greek words translated "ordain" in the KJV are _____ (Acts 14:23) and _____ (Titus 1:5). How are they different in meaning?
4. What important steps must be taken before selecting and ordaining elders?
5. T or F — Each man that is selected (nominated) is automatically appointed.
6. What guidelines should and should not be used to select a man for the eldership?
7. If there are any objections to a man's nomination, how should those objections be handled?
8. There are a few facts in the NT about ordaining elders. List them.
9. What is God's wisdom concerning ordaining elders in every church?
10. What attitudes should the local church have toward the decision to select and ordain elders?