

THE ELDERSHIP
(Relationships Within the Local Church)
Lesson 16

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. The Local Congregation Is a "Teamwork".
1. All the members, not just the eldership, must work hard to keep the right relationships among members that God wants within a local church. A local church will succeed or fail based upon how they keep these relationships.
 2. If a Christian does not want to work within these relationships, he should not choose to be a member of that local church.
- B. What are These Relationships? What Does the Local Church Owe the Eldership? And What Does the Eldership Owe the Local Church?

II. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE LOCAL CHURCH.

- A. Eldership - Member Relationship.
1. The members' duties toward the eldership.
 - a) 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.
 - (1) "*Know them*" — Members must "know" (Gr. *oida*) their elders in the sense of having "full knowledge" of them or paying close attention to them, not just a passing acquaintance. Members should fully know the righteous lives and teaching of their elders.
 - (2) "*Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*" — Members must "esteem" (Gr. *hegeomai*) their elders by always keeping them at the forefront of their mind, not just casually thinking about them. One way to "esteem" elders is to pray for them and compliment them for their good work. Members must look "very highly" (Gr. *huperekperissos*) upon their elders, motivated by "love" (Gr. *agape*) for them. Members should realize how important the work of elders really is and show their appreciation to them for their work.
 - (3) "*Be at peace among yourselves*" — Members must never compromise the truth, but in matters of opinion they must always work to live in "peace" (Gr. *eireneuo*) with the elders.
 - b) 1 Timothy 5:17-25.
 - (1) "*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor*" — Members must honor their elders. When elders "rule well" in teaching the "word and doctrine", they should receive "double honor" (Gr. *diplees timees*) from the members. There is a natural honor (valued, prized) that should come from

members and a special, "double honor" that should come from them when elders labor full-time in teaching. This "double honor" is a reference to wages or financial support (v. 18; 1 Cor. 9:9, 14). An elder may be supported financially when he spends time teaching and preaching in the local church.

- (2) "*Against an elder receive not an accusation but before two or three witnesses*" — Members must protect their elders from evil reports against them. Members should consider as gossip any unfounded accusation against an elder that cannot be verified by witnesses and the Bible. Members should ignore it, silence it, and not repeat it. Members must not give or receive unjust criticism toward the elders.
- (3) "*Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear*" — Members must also protect the church and the rest of the eldership from unqualified, sinful leadership. In a case where it can be verified that an elder is guilty of sin, and that elder will not repent, members must "rebuke" (Gr. *elencho*, "convict, refute, reprove") that elder "before all, that others also may fear".

c) Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24.

- (1) "*Remember them*" - Members must "remember" (Gr. *mneemoneuo*) their elders in the sense of calling to mind their actions and contemplating those actions.
- (2) "*Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*" - Members must "follow" or "imitate" (Gr. *mimemomai*) the godly example of their elders just like a mime would imitate the actions of others.
- (3) "*Obey them*" - Members must "obey" (Gr. *peitho*) the decisions, oversight, and teaching that the elders give because they are persuaded that the elders are practicing the truth.
- (4) "*Submit yourselves*" - Members must "submit" (Gr. *hupheiko*) to the elders, yielding to their authority and not resisting them. Members must trust, cooperate with, and not resent the elders. Take note of why it is important for members to "obey" and "submit" to the elders. It will bring "grief" and it will be "unprofitable" if members do not obey (v. 17). Of course, members are not to "obey" and "submit" to elders if it will lead them into error.
- (5) "*Salute them*" - Members must "salute" (Gr. *aspazomai*) their elders, which includes greeting, welcoming, and embracing them with warm courtesy.

d) James 5:13-15.

- (1) "*Call for the elders*" - Members must use the elders if they need help and they must let them know if they need help. Instead of calling the preacher, it would be better at times to "call for the elders" to get help. This is not an attempt to get the preacher out of work. It is a way of showing the importance of the faithful eldership. Elders are not simply "church board

members" who are out of touch with the needs of the people (Ezek. 34:4). They are caring and compassionate shepherds who are intimately involved with the sheep and they know the needs of the sheep and want to help with those needs.

2. The eldership's duties toward the members.

a) There are three general functions that the eldership must fulfill within the local church (review Lesson 10). There are also many specific duties that the eldership must fulfill toward God, themselves, and the local church (review Lesson 11). Here is a summary of the elders' duties toward the members: love them, serve them, oversee them, feed (teach) them, protect them, support them, train them, work hard for them, admonish them, care for them, exhort and convict them (when in sin), lead them, watch over them, pray for them, involve them, listen to them, deal gently with them, have confidence in them, and take time for them.

b) 1 Peter 5:2-3.

(1) *"Not by constraint, but willingly"* - God is not only concerned with what elders do, but also with how elders do their work. Elders must volunteer for their duty. God knows that an elder who is forced to serve will be unhappy and will not do his work properly.

(2) *"Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind"* - Elders must also serve enthusiastically and avoid serving merely for financial gain.

(3) *"Neither as being lord over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock"* - Lastly, elders must lead by example, never as tyrants or dominating others with their authority. Faithful elders who perform their duties toward the members with the right attitudes will one day be rewarded by Christ, "the chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4).

B. Eldership - Preacher Relationship **

C. Eldership - Deacon Relationship **

D. Elder - Elder Relationship **

** Note: For those interested in a good discussion of these last three relationships, see *Bigger Men for Better Churches* by Cleon Lyles. Except for some of the material in Part 5 ("Elder-Brotherhood Relations"), this is an otherwise good book.

III. CONCLUSION. When All the Members Cooperate Together, the Eldership Can Be a Success. The Lord Wants Strong Leaders and Strong Followers in the Local Church.

Lesson Sixteen Discussion

1. If a local church is to be a successful, what relationship must exist between the elders and the members?
2. What three responsibilities do members have toward the elders in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13?
3. Can an elder receive financial support for his work? If so, under what circumstances?
4. What must members do with accusations that are raised against elders?
5. What must members do with elders who sin?
6. What five responsibilities do members have toward the elders in Hebrews 13:7,17,24?
7. James encourages members who are sick to call for the _____ (Jas. 5:13-15). Why? What can they do?
8. How would you summarize the duty of elders toward the members?
9. How would you summarize the proper attitude elders are to have toward the members?
10. Though not covered in this lesson, can you think of some responsibilities that exist in the elder-preacher relationship, the elder-deacon relationship, and the elder-elder relationship?

11. A local church can progress spiritually only with strong _____ and strong _____.