Appointing Elders

&

Shepherds

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Appointing Elders/Shepherds

If the congregation does not have elders, the defacto leaders or the preacher will ask the congregation to suggest men they consider qualified to be their elders. The men who desire to assume this spiritual work are then presented to the church as a whole for their approval.

For churches with elders, the following are some methods used by various churches. There may be other methods not identified.

1. The current elders choose a man or men and ask the church for their approval.
2. The elders notify the church that any man who desires to be an elder and considers himself qualified should let the congregation know. If the congregation agrees that he is qualified he becomes an elder.
3. The church is requested to submit names of men to be elders. These men are contacted to see if they desire to perform the work of an elder, if they are considered qualified they become elders.
4. The elders request the congregation to submit the names of men they consider qualified to serve. The elders then select men from this list and ask the congregation to approve giving them two weeks to resolve any qualifications issues.
5. A brother desiring to serve as an elder asks the current elders if he can become an elder.
    a. They agree and he becomes an elder or
    b. They agree and seek the approval of the church.
6. The elders select non-elders to be selection facilitators for the selection process and identify them to the congregation. Members are requested to submit names of men they consider qualified to be elders to a facilitator. The facilitators will meet with each man to determine if he considers himself biblically qualified and if he desires to do the work of an elder. If they desire they are given a copy of The Role of a Shepherd to study (some churches consider a sermon on shepherds and their work sufficient). If after a week's study, those men who agree with the work identified in the Role of a Shepherd, the facilitators will present them to the congregation and seek their approval. Members will have two weeks to resolve any qualifications issues. Members having issues should go to the person being considered to resolve issues. If issues are not resolved they are to contact the facilitator for assistance. Men having no unresolved issues will be appointed as Elders.

Compiler's Comment: The above are a few examples of methods used in selecting elders. The compiler's preferred method is a method that involves the entire congregation without the involvement of the current elders. One similar to method six.

The Role Of A Shepherd

"He gave some [as] apostles, and (Greek dé)1 some [as] prophets and (dé) some [as] prophets, and (dé) some [as] proclaimers of good news, and (dé) some [as] shepherds and (Greek kai)1 teachers unto the perfecting of the saints, for a work of ministration, for a building up of the body of the Christ, till we may all come to the unity of the faith and of the recognition of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to a measure of stature of the fulness of the Christ, that we may no more be babes, tossed and borne about by every wind of the teaching, in the sleight of men, in craftiness, unto the artifice of leading astray, and, being true in love, we may increase to Him [in] all things, who is the head — the Christ; from whom the whole body, being fitly joined together and united, through the supply of every joint, according to the working in the measure of each single part, the increase of the body doth make for the building up of itself in love." YLT Ephesians 4:11-16.

1 The Greek word (dé) translated as "and" means to separate the two words or phrases whereas the Greek word (kai) translated as "and" means to connect the two words or phrases. Therefore, a better translation would have been teaching shepherds (or teaching pastors in some Bible translations).

At the time Paul wrote to the Ephesians, they probably understood that a) the work of the apostles was to be eyewitnesses of Christ while He was in Earth;

b) the work of prophets was to proclaim the message they received from God,

c) the work of evangelists (Greek evangelista heralds, proclaimers of salvation) was to proclaim the Good News of forgiveness through Christ atoning sacrifice.

d) The work or function of the shepherds/pastors is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into

Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love. (RSV

Ephesians 4:11-16)

h ol d b e fa ithful to Chr to know Christ and His apostles' teachings

A summary of the work of shepherds:

a. Teach, feed, equip, and bring to maturity.

b. Exhort, admonish, edify and strengthen.

c. Promote unity and harmony.

d. Comfort the physically but primarily spiritually weak and sick.

e. Seek and restore those who have drifted away or are drifting away.

f. Pray for self, brethren under their care, and those not in Christ.

g. Warn the brethren of dangers lurking in the pathway of life.

h. Prepare God's saints for work of service, (show & tell).

i. Convict false teachers and their false teachings; such as:

1) One who denies Christ was God in a human body.

2) One is saved without being cleansed by Christ's blood.

3) Salvation is earned by what a person accomplishes.

(1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-11; 1 Peter 5:2-4; Acts: 20:28-30; Ephesians 4:11-15; Ezekiel 34:2-5; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14; James 5:14 and Luke 15:3) _____

Paul wrote in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1 that for men to perform the shepherding function they needed to have certain characteristics. "Here is a trustworthy saying: if anyone sets his heart on being an overseer2, he desires a noble task3.

"Overseer"2 – some Bibles have mistranslated the Greek word episkopeés as"office of bishop." Bishop was a title for various government officials, later used for positions in the Catholic and Angelicin organizations (etymonline.com). The word"office" is not in the Greek text. The Greek word episkopeés means watchman, sentinel, and guardian (thus an overseer). In biblical Greek episkopeés is the act by which God looks into and searches out the ways, deeds, and character, of men, in order to adjudge their lot accordingly, whether joyous or sad; inspection, investigation, visitation when he shall search the souls of men; i.e., in the time of divine judgment. (Thayer's)

Noble task3 – a task is a work, or function, not an office. It is from the Greek word érgou meaning an act, deed, or a thing done.

If what is commonly referred to as qualifications" were viewed as "character traits" or

tools to accomplish the work of instructing, training, and guarding, then in some cases they take on a different meaning.

1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Author's understanding

above reproach	not open to censure
good reputation, blameless	good reputation with outsiders
the husband of one wife	
temperate, sober-minded	uses good judgment
self-controlled	disciplined, not a loose cannon
respectable	orderly, good behavior
hospitable	takes care of the needs of others
able to teach 4	powerful in communicating
not given to drunkenness	not drink excessively, no brawler
not a striker (violent)	not combative or quick-tempered
gentle	kind and considerate of others
not quarrelsome	
not greedy	does not put material things first
manage his own family	family lives within income not a spendthrift
not be a recent convert	needs to face trials as Christian

Able to Teach 4 – translated from the Greek word didakitkos meaning instructive, skillful

in teaching. The King James Bible translated this as apt which meant then as possessing the necessary qualities to teach.

The shepherding work is identified by three Greek words.

Elders (Greek presbuteros) – an adjective to denote seniority, an older man.

Overseer/watchman/guardian/sentinel (Greek eepiskopeés) - one who alerts others

of pending danger, watches over, guards, inspects, takes care of their needs, and teaches. (Thayer)

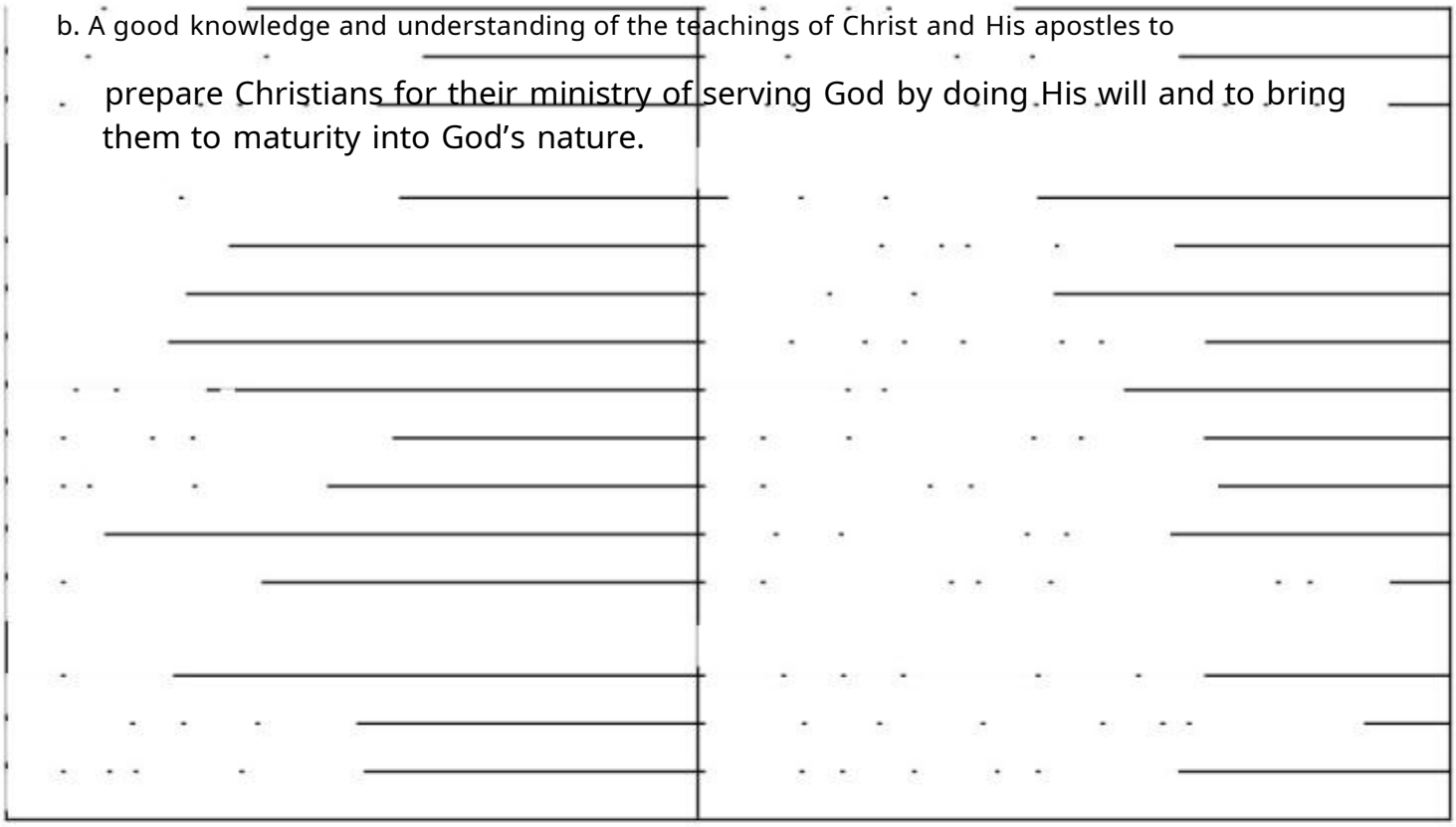
Shepherds (Greek poimen– a provider of nourishment and a protector against dangers.

Since elders are to be mature men, having a good knowledge of God's will for His church, and are willing to put the welfare of His people before his own welfare, it should be evident that it is a work of love, not an office to be filled or a position of prestige.

Biblical elder/shepherd/overseer/watchman/guardian need to have:

a. A close relationship with God and Christians in his congregation.

b. A good knowledge and understanding of the teachings of Christ and His apostles to prepare Christians for their ministry of serving God by doing His will and to bring them to maturity into God's nature.



c. The ability to recognize false teachings and provide opportunities for those under their care to learn, recognize, and acquire the ability to refute such teachings. For example, in their time a prevalent teaching was all flesh is evil. Jesus could not have been in an evil human flesh; therefore, He was just a phantom – Gnosticism.

d. The Knowledge of the difference between an understanding/opinion and a false teaching.

e. The ability to lead without forcing their opinions on others. Personnel or private opinions should - be discussed openly for discussion, but never a test of fellowship for by doing so a creed is established.

f. A clear understanding of the spiritual tools needed for performing the shepherding functions and proficiency in their use to defend those under his care, to lead fellow Christians to spiritual food, to mature them into the likeness of Christ, and to defend them from spiritual predators.

g. They are not the decision making body as that is reserved for the whole church.

Paul wrote during the persecution of Christians by the Jews and Romans.

Therefore, those desiring the work of shepherding were willing to put their lives on the line to protect their fellow brethren. The spiritual well-being of the brethren was more important than his physical body. It was not a position of honor, power, or prestige but a dangerous work that required:

1. The desire to protect your brethren even if it costs his life.
2. Able to teach means, to communicate their teaching and concerns effectively (from the Greek word didaktikos meaning skillful in teaching -Thayer).
3. Patience - not to fly off the handle or to be quick to judge.
4. Compassion, loving and forgiving.
5. Intimate relationship with God's people'spain, sorrows, and struggles.
6. Righteous men, not pretenders.

God's warning to Ezekiel applies to the shepherds in His spiritual Kingdom.

"The word of the LORD came to me: (Ezekiel) "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel (their leaders); prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with

the wool, and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not

a. strengthened the weak

b. healed the sick

c. bound up the injured.
d. brought back the strays
e. searched for the lost.”

Isn’t this the work or function New Testament shepherds should be performing?