

Ac 14:23; Tit. 1:5 - God's Plan

But – God's plan is for QUALIFIED men. Appointing men "elders" when they not qualified—just so we will have some— is NOT God's plan!

WORK qualifications

1 Tim 3:1 – "a fine WORK"

1 Tim 3:2..."must BE..." – character qual.

Ac. 20:35..."by WORKING HARD IN THIS MANNER, you MUST..."

A study of the *work* of elders serves to

- encourage those who are elders to FULFILL THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES - **Ac 20:28**, "be on guard **for yourselves...**"
- encourage other men (and their families, *wives*) to PREPARE THEMSELVES to so serve - **Rom 12:5...6...8**
- prepare congregation for responsible SELECTION of elders – **1 Tim 3:10**

I. O.T. BACKGROUND - REPRESENTATIVES AND LEADERS OF THE PEOPLE

Ac 11:30, "elders" - OT Background

- 1st time of reference to elders in churches. Jewish church – root or term → Jewish history, background of usage...
1 Pt 2:9 – Cmpr terms here – letter to *Gentile* Christians but terms with rich *Jewish* heritage and connotation
- Nine passages mention work of elders¹. *The ONLY one that mentions jurisdiction over funds!*

Men today who think the work of "elders" is primarily concerned with treasury and how it is spent do not understand the work of elders!

A. Representatives (= stand in the place of others)

- **Ex. 3:16²...18** – before Pharaoh
- **Ex 20:19 ... Dt 5:23-24** – before Moses
- **Lev 4:13...15** – before God

Cmpr. **Ac 11:29...30; 15:22...23** (NASB, ASV, NIV, NRSV)³

As "representatives, they "represent"—NOT arbitrary dictators!

¹ Act 11:30; 20:17-35; 1Th 5:12-13ff; 1Ti 3; 1Ti 5:17-18; Tit 1; Heb 13:17; Jas 5:14-15; 1Pt 5:1-4.

² 1st time as body of men in connec.. with Israel as a nation

³ In NT times, this word (*presbuteros*) and its cognates was used in sense of representatives, "ambassadors": 2 Co 5:20; Eph 6:20, "ambassador" = *presbeuO*, verb > *presbuteros*, adj. ("elders").
presbeuO = 1. to be older 2. to be an ambassador (VN, TH). Lk 14:32; 19:14, "delegation" (14:32, "ambassage" KJV, ASV) = *presbeia*, noun > *presbeuO*.

B. Leaders – through WORD and DEED⁴

**** Note the impact the elders had on the people's faith**

Ex. 3:16-18 ... 4:29-31

Requisite: Elders *faith* – “words...signs”

Cmpr. today: **Rom 10:17; Ac 20:28,29...32**

What if “elders” today cannot clearly state the foundation for our faith or they themselves waver in it?! *Requires study, training through experience. If a man does not study, has not studied, and is not willing to devote himself to being prepared and building others up in faith, regardless of his “good” character, he is not qualified to do the work of an “elder”!*

Ex. 12:3...21...28 - Worship

Teachers

“Speak to cong.” **v. 3**... “elders...said to them” **v. 21** ...“then the sons of I. went and did...” **v. 28**

Examples

“for yourselves” **v. 21** – include elders?!

What if not “faithful”??

Accor. to the pattern

“just as the L. had comm....so they did” **v. 28**

Cmpr. **1 Pt. 5:3b; Tit. 1:9**

Though “good” men in moral character, must not “elders” be examples in worship and capable of teaching God’s plan for worship?

Ex. 17:2-3 (people grumbling against Moses)...**5-6**

Why God have Moses do this before the elders...?

See **Jer. 26:17** and contrast **1 Ki 21:8,11**

See **2 Tim 4:2-4** – what “elders” to do...?

“Elders” must be willing to stand for truth “in season and out of season,” and support those who teach it. Not their job to “fire the preacher” when preaching the truth is not popular.

⁴ Other leadership contexts: Dt. 27:1; Josh. 7:6; 8:10,33; 23:2 (note vv. 6-8,11-12,16-urge to keep the covenant); Jud. 21:16; Ezk. 7:26 (counselors); 14:1-3 (hypocrites)

Dt. 31:28-30...→ 32:44-47

Apostasy warned – “Assemble the elders...speak these words in their hearing...” – *What should have been their role (work)?*

Note **Josh 24:1...15...31!**

1 Sam 8:4 (see **vv. 7,19**, “the people”)

What should the elders have done?

Cmpr. **Ac 20:20,27-31**

*“Elders” must not only be “good” men because they do no evil, they must have the **courage, faith, and knowledge** to admonish, warn, actively stand against departures, though the majority may wish otherwise.*

C. Judges between the People

- **Dt 19:11-13** - Killing (murder...?)
- **Dt. 21:18-21** - Rebellious son
- **Dt. 22:13-21** - Immoral daughter
- **Dt. 25:5-10** - Brotherly duties

Dt. 16:18-20 (note the warnings about just judgment)

Cmpr. **1 Co. 6:5; 1 Th 5:14-15**

Like it or not, “elders” will likely be thrust into positions of having to render judgments about and between brethren. Requires not only impartiality and honesty, but willingness to “get involved”!

II. N.T. – RELEVANT PASSAGES

A. AC. 11:30

Nine passages mention work of elders⁵. *The ONLY one that mentions jurisdiction over funds!*

Men today who think the work of "elders" is primarily concerned with treasury and how it is spent do not understand the work of elders!

B. Ac. 20:17-35

v 35 - Elders must "WORK HARD" and "help the weak ... give ..." - ? (KJV, "so laboring"; NKJV, "laboring like this")

→ Work hard to have income to "give" to those who are poor?

- **Weak ? "poor"**
(86 times - counting related nouns and adj.) Note
e.g. **1 Co 9:22; 11:30; 1 Th 5:14**
- **He "showed" (by example, asv, TH) them - what?**
vv 17ff
"you know how I was with you..."
NOT work hard for wages to help poor
- **vv 28f - Shepherds - spiritual resp.**
Have resp. in physical ben., but grow out of 1st, "neighbor," and 2nd, "Christian," NOT "elder"
- **vv 33-34 – Motivatedcdc**
NOT to RECEIVE – "coveted no one's silver..."
He "ministered MY OWN NEEDS AND TO THE MEN THAT WERE WITH ME" ... not in it to get their silver
→ NOTE: NOT provide for ALL NEEDY IN EPHESUS
I was not in it to "receive" for myself or those with me. He "worked hard" to "GIVE," vv 18ff. **Here the joy and incentive of being an elder - for what one can GIVE (his knowledge, example, influence...)**
- **What DID Jesus teach? Mt 20:25-28; 26:28; 2 Co. 8:9**

⁵ Act 11:30; 20:17-35; 1Th 5:12-13ff; 1Ti 3; 1Ti 5:17-18; Tit 1; Heb 13:17; Jas 5:14-15; 1Pt 5:1-4.

vv 18-27 - What DID he "show" them by way of example?

- **vv. 18,19** - Perseverance
- **v. 19** - Humility
- **v. 20** - Courage
- **vv. 20,24,25,27** - Teaching
- **v. 21** - Impartiality
- **vv. 22-24** - Commitment to duty
- **vv. 26,27** - Fulfillment of responsibility

v 28-31 – "Shepherd the flock" ("wolves...")

v 28...31 "Be on guard...be on the alert"

Alertness. Listen discernibly to sermons, classes, comments. Not wait to be told of need, danger. Self-initiative.

v 28...30, "from among your own selves"

Begins with SELF and FELLOW-ELDERS.
Honesty, impartiality, truth over friendship.

v 28, "which he purchased with His own blood"

Responsibility. Care, concern – precious sheep!

v 29, "savage wolves"

Courage, selflessness, Jn 10:11-13

** Say more about the work of "shepherds" when study 1 Pt. 5.

v. 32 – "commend you to God and the word of His grace"

Study, knowledge, faith in God's Word *essential* to carrying out the WORK of elders!

*** If men do not have the faith, the love for people, the impartiality, perseverance, the commitment, the humility, the courage, or the time to do this work, how can they serve as elders??*

C. 1 Thess. 5:12-13 & ff

“diligently **labor** among you” – *WORK* of elders (“work hard” NIV)

Any one who labor diligently? No – “and have charge...” As 2nd phrase serves to further elucidate the 1st, so 3rd phrase serves to further elucidate the 2nd. **their diligent labor was in overseeing through instruction!**

“dil. labor” = *kopiaO* “Old word for **toil, even if weary**” RWP

v. 12 - “Give you instruction”

“admonish you” KJV, NKJV, ASV, NIV, RSV

nouthetO – from *nous* (mind) + *tithmi*, to put. “**putting sense in to the heads of people**. A thankless, but a necessary, task” RWP

“1 a : to indicate duties or obligations to b: to express warning or disapproval to especially in a gentle, earnest, or solicitous manner

2: to give friendly earnest advice or encouragement to” M-W Online, 2004

Instead of getting upset because these men admonish you, “esteem them highly”!

*If men do not **study diligently**, do not have time to study, do not **teach**, have not taught, are they qualified to “give instruction” in God’s Word??*

*If men do not **interact**, do not **care** enough to “warn” and “encourage,” can they serve as “elders”?*

*If get **discouraged** — or **afraid to try** — bec. people might not respond as should...qualified??*

vv 14ff – Various exhortations

Cannot prove this to elders primarily, but the nature of the exhortations accord well with men who have knowledge, experience, and are in a position of leadership. Whether esp. to them or not, it certainly includes them.

vv 14-15 - Social

- “unruly” – cmpr 2 Th 3:6
- “fainthearted” - despondent, discouraged
 Num 21:4 “²people became impatient because of the journey” “²Lit., soul of the people was short”
Note result, v 5 - murmur against God & Moses
 Jonah 4:8 - “he became faint and begged with all his soul to die”
 Ex 6:9 - “on account of their ¹despondency” (Adj. (?) form, *oligopsuchia*) “¹Lit., shortness of spirit”
Note: did not listen to Moses - turn deaf ear to words of hope

- “weak” - Cmpr **Ac 20:35** (adj. here; verb there)
- “Be patient with all men”!
- Brotherly relations - **v 15**

*How do these things if not **know** the people? A shepherd must know his sheep. Talk to, be interested in, visit, hospitality...?*

*Will he take the **initiative**? Does he care enough to **observe & act**?*

*And does he have a **working** knowledge of God's Word to be able to use it to help the different classes of people here mentioned?*

vv 16-18 – Personal

***Despondent? Easily discouraged? Depressed? Pessimistic?** If so, does he have the disposition to lead others?*

vv 19-22 - Doctrinal

*Is he **willing and able to discern truth** by examination and testing, or does he view his role as issuing church dogma?*

D. 1 TIM. 3:1-2,5,15

v 1 - “office of overseer, it is a fine WORK”

No separate word for “office”—does not refer to a “position” apart from idea of **WORK**. “Office of overseer” refers to the “WORK” of an “overseer,” like “the office of a priest.”⁶

*The man—or church—who views being an “elder” as a **position (“office”) apart from the WORK** does not understand the qualifications for service in this capacity!*

⁶ Any idea of authority derived from the translation must be derived from the word “overseer.” Together they translate one word - the Gk word *episkopē*. - “an overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian, or superintendent; Sept. for ...Judg 9:28; Neh 11:9,14,22; 2 Ki 11:15, etc.; 1 Macc 1:51. The word has the same comprehensive sense in Grk. writ. fr. Homer Odys....down; hence in the N.T... guardian of souls, one who watches over their welfare ...” TH (bold mine)

v. 5 - "manage household...take care of church"**Forethought & provision⁷**

Just as managing a household requires *forethought* and *provision*, so "taking care of the church"!

SERVICE

Just as the man who views his role as head of the family as a "position" of personal honor and authority, rather than of *service*, fails in his responsibility, so with elders ...!

"Test" (v. 10)

A good "test" as to whether a man is qualified is to consider what he DID as moral and spiritual leader of his family! (NOT just financial provided who did nothing evil.)

Combining vv 1,5,15 ...

Elders' WORK is to "**oversee**" the church, "**taking care**" that it is indeed a "**pillar and support of the truth.**"

E. 1 TIM 5:17-18

"especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching"

NOT that some elders are not expected to teach i.e. RULING versus TEACHING elders.

- "apt to teach" **3:2**
- "that he may be able both to exhort...and refute" **Tit 1:9**
- "I showed you..." **Ac 20:35 → vv. 18-27**

Wrong contrast:

"Ruling eldrs" (rule only)	vs.	"Teaching eldrs" (rule AND teach)
("E. who rule well")	vs.	("E. who rule well & work hard at p & t")

Right Contrast - between vv. 17 & 20:

E. who rule well by wk. hard at p & t (**v. 17**) vs. E. who sin (**v. 20**)!

"Let elders who rule well by working hard in t. & p. be esp. (**adv.**) considered worthy of double honor." (Note idea of "honor" in context, **vv. 3,9**)

"work hard"! ["labor," KJV, NKJV, ASV]⁸

Elders who "rule well" "**work hard**" at **teaching and preaching!**
Study, preparation ... prayer ... actual teaching!

⁷ *epimelomia* ("take care of") - "signifies to take care of, involving forethought and provision (*epi* indicating the direction of the mind toward the object cared for)." VN

⁸ *kopiaO* - "... to labor with wearisome effort, to toil.....1 Tim 5:17...1 Th 5:12..." TH

F. TIT 1:9

Demands:

Student of the Word

Time, dedication to study, meditation, prayer

Working knowledge

"exhort"; "refute" ("convict" ASV, NKJV; "convince" KJV)

- Show where wrong; expose error; involves *facts*.

Lk 3:19...Mk 6:18; Jn 8:46; Mt 18:15

- *NOT* arbitrary, authoritarian decree of orthodoxy!

Care, courage, WORK

If not, NOT QUALIFIED, regardless of character or knowledge!

G. HEB 13:17

"Keep watch" – WORK! "Watchmen" - See Eze 33:1-9

"will give an account"!

H. JAM 5:14-15

NOT physical illness and literal oil (see notes below)

- Anointing with oil may have found use for wounds, **Lk. 10:34**, but not going to help with flu, heart trouble, or cancer!
- Anointing with oil not suggested or alluded to by Paul in later letters when writing about dear brethren with physical illnesses in churches where there were elders
 - Timothy – **1 Tim 5:23 (5:17; Ac 20:17)**
 - Epaphroditus – **Php 2:27-30 (1:1)**.
- This "sickness" associated with temptation ("if he has committed sins") and sins ("confess your sins"). Not all sickness is (**Job; John 9:2-3**). In fact, it would be a mistake to assume if there is physical sickness it is due to spiritual weakness and sin (**Php 2:25-30; 1 Tim 5:23; 1 Co. 12:7-9**).

NOT miraculous healing

- Would not need the oil
- More power than apostles, for they could not heal just to heal – **1 Tim. 1:3...5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20**. Miracles to confirm word.

- Why elders? Miraculous powers not unique to them.
- If so, temporary hope for the sick – miracles ceased.

Suggestion:

One is weak ("sick" *astheneO* v. 14) and weary ("sick" *kamnO* v. 15) and needs his spirits lifted ("oil of gladness"). The concern and prayer of his spiritual leaders (elders) will "restore" his spirit, and if he has committed sins in his weakened state, he needs to confess them to the elders ("one" – the one who sinned – to "another" – the elders who came to pray with and for him) that he might be forgiven. Supporting this idea ...

- the **incongruity** of interpreting of physical sickness or miracles (see above)
- "sick" (*astheneO* v. 14) can and is used of *spiritual* weakness, and that in contexts discussing elders' work, **Ac 20:35** (*astheneO*). See also **1 Th 5:14** (*asthenEs*, adj.).
 - **Rom 8:26**, "weakness" (*astheneia*, n.), is that which causes us not to know how to pray as we ought...maybe such "weakness" good reason for calling elders to pray for you?!
 - **Heb. 4:15**, "weaknesses" (*astheneia*, n.), is associated with temptation...This man in James may need to confess sins!
- "sick" (*kamnO*, v. 15) can and does in its other two occurrences in the NT (**Heb 12:3; Rev 2:3**) refer to *spiritual* weariness
 - Weariness of spirit needs the "oil of gladness and favor"!
- the sickness is associated with **sin**
- "anointing him with oil" is **appositional** to "the elders ... pray over him" – this concern and prayer by his leaders is *how* he is spiritually refreshed ("anointed with oil")
- **Elders, due to their age, spiritual maturity, and character qualifications**, should be the ones qualified to deal with *spiritual* weakness

Application to work of elders

- Ought to be ready & willing to go when called (and people *ought* to call them)

Note: People often will NOT call. thus, elders ("shepherds") need to be *alert*!

- Keep confidentiality ("confess sins") **Pro 11:13; 17:9**
11:13, He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter"
17:9, He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends."
- Positive work & influence – encourage (cmpr. **1 Th 5:12,14**) – not just reproof
- Men of prayer & joyful spirit (cmpr. **1 Th 5:14...16,17**)

I. 1 PT 5:1-4

"Shepherd" ("Tend" ASV; "Feed" KJV) - See **Eze 34:1-6**

- **Voluntarily** - "not under compulsion, but voluntarily"

No one should have to "browbeat" to do job - self-initiative

- **Devotedly** - "not for sordid gain, but with eagerness"

- **Exemplary** - "nor yet as lording...but proving to be exam."

A shepherd *leads* sheep; they *follow* him...

- Exhort to **Bible study**? - be a diligent student.
- Encourage right **priorities**? - demonstrate sacrifice for the Kingdom.
- Commend **hospitality**? - open his home
- Advocate men develop themselves as **teachers**? - active in teaching.
- Support **indiv. evang.** activity? - have home studies.

"Chief Shepherd appear..."

- Responsibility
- Motivation
- Example **Ps 23; Jn 10**