

# Woodland Park Baptist Church

## Constitution and Bylaws

"...so you may know how one ought to conduct  
himself in the household of God..."

I Timothy 3:15

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WOODLAND PARK BAPTIST CHURCH  
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS  
INTRODUCTION

In the past and up to the acceptance of this new Constitution and Bylaws, the Woodland Park Baptist Church, originally established on April 26, 1914, has been governed by a Board of Deacons and a majority vote of its membership. Only the pastor has been de facto elder of the church in spite of the fact that he has not been known as an elder but as a pastor. All decisions of the church have been initiated by the pastor and the Board of Deacons and have been approved or rejected by the church by majority vote.

When this form of government was scrutinized and carefully examined by the church's present pastor, Reverend Wayne A. Barber, and after preaching thirteen sermons on the Scriptural concept of the government of the local church, particularly on the qualifications of elders and deacons, it was decided that the present form of government should be re-examined and re-evaluated. The Board of Deacons assigned to Pastor Wayne Barber and to Spiros Zodhiates, a member of Woodland Park Baptist Church, the task of preparing a new Constitution and Bylaws to submit to the deacons and to the membership of the church. After a preliminary viewing by the congregation, this document was submitted to a study committee to consider various suggestions and to answer requests for clarification. This committee made up of the Senior Pastor Wayne Barber, Spiros Zodhiates, Robert Westcott, Chuck Hall, Chuck Weaver, and Rick Shepherd took these suggestions and made the appropriate revisions. This document is hereby submitted.

Situation at Woodland Park

In the establishing of elder rule here at Woodland Park Baptist Church, we have no apostle such as Paul in our midst to appoint elders. It was Paul's Apostleship (1 Cor. 9:1) which gave him such a privilege, and today we have no apostles in the restricted sense of the Twelve, among whom Paul was counted. However, the man who is presently the leader of this church, under the Holy Spirit being the "one elder," is under the God-given sense of responsibility to lead the flock to follow a Scriptural form of local government. He has taught the Word faithfully in our midst and in His goodness God has seen fit to bless this local church. We are now seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit to see who among us have been so affected by the spoken Word so faithfully expounded that they could be designated as elders of this local congregation.

The first thing that we as a congregation must do is determine, through the study of the Word of God and our dependence on the indwelling Holy Spirit, whom He would have us seek to approve as our elder brothers to serve us all and, above all, to serve God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This constitution and bylaws are in view of this change of the church to the practice of the plurality of elders and deacons.

# CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

OF THE

WOODLAND PARK BAPTIST CHURCH

CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

## PREAMBLE

It is to be remembered that the real charter and constitution of this church is God's Holy Word.

However, as required by law, the following articles and bylaws are for the orderly function of the church. These articles and bylaws are always subject to reconsideration as to their full and indisputable agreement with God's Word. As such, we, the members of the Woodland Park Baptist Church, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

## ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of the church shall be Woodland Park Baptist Church.

## ARTICLE II: MAIN PURPOSES AND BASIC FUNCTIONS

### Section 1:

The chief purpose of Woodland Park Baptist Church is to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:3-13) (1) by a personal faith in and commitment of our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1, 2) and (2) in and through corporate worship, fellowship, prayer, evangelism, missions, and discipleship (Rom. 12:3-21; Matt 28:19, 20).

### Section 2:

Our further purpose is to edify one another and to build up the Body of Christ toward Christ-like maturity (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:16).

### Section 3:

The basic goals of this fellowship of believers are (1) to draw others in its immediate and general vicinity to Jesus Christ and (2) to engage in a world-wide evangelistic and missionary endeavor. Reaching those who need the Gospel and teaching them the whole counsel of God are to remain the paramount objectives of this church (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8; 20:18–35). A further goal related to these, to be achieved at the earliest possible date, shall be to give as much to missions as we expend for our corporate worship as a fellowship of believers.

## ARTICLE III: DOCTRINAL POSITION

### **Section 1: The Bible**

We believe the Bible to be the pure Word of God (Ps. 12:6), wholly true (John 17:17), from which nothing can be subtracted and to which nothing can be added. We believe in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scriptures in their original manuscripts (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). No pastor or staff member may be called to the ministry of this church who does not fully subscribe to this position on the Scriptures and to the doctrinal statements contained in these bylaws. The same holds for those indicated for service as non-staff elders, deacons, or teachers.

### **Section 2: God**

We believe in one God (Gen. 1:1; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5, 6; 46:9) eternally existing in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; yet being only one God (Matt. 3:16, 17; 28:18–20; John 10:30; 15:26; 2 Cor. 13:14; James 2:19).

### **Section 3: Christ and His Kingdom**

We believe in Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with God (John 1:1; 8:58) God's unique Son (John 1:14; 3:16), as the God-man born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18–25), sinless in His life (Heb. 4:15); that He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as a substitutionary sacrifice for us (1 Cor. 15:3–8; John 11:49–51; 18:14; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; Rom. 5:6–8; 1 Thess. 5:10; 1 Peter 3:18) that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood and reconciled by His death (Rom. 3:21–30; 5:9–11); that He not only died on the cross for our sins, but that He resurrected bodily for our justification (Rom. 4:25); that He is now at the right hand of God the Father (1 Peter 3:22; Heb. 10:12), acting as our High Priest (Heb. 3:1, 4:14–16; 5:6, 10; 8:1, 2; 9:11–27) and our Advocate (1 John 2:1, 2) before the Father; that He is coming again in power at any time to rapture His church by raising the dead and translating the living believers (1 Thess. 4:13–18). After the Great Tribulation on this earth, He will come again to establish His millennial kingdom upon earth (Rev. 20:4–6), to judge the world (Rev. 20:11–15), and to establish His eternal kingdom (Rev. 21:1–27; 22:1–5) with commensurate rewards for the believers and punishment for the unbelievers (1 Cor. 3:12–15; John 5:28, 29).

### **Section 4: The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the person of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead (John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; Acts 2:32–33), co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son (2 Cor. 13:14) and who exists in the world today to reveal the fullness of Christ (John 15:26), convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8–11), regenerating (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5–7), sanctifying (1 Peter 1:2), and sealing forever (Eph. 1:13, 14) those who have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:21–26). We believe that no one can be saved from sin or be born again without a supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit in his life. We believe that no one can attach himself to the Body of Christ unless the Holy Spirit energizes that attachment (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). (See Section 5: Salvation).

## **Section 5: Salvation**

We believe that each individual is born in sin, and therefore is a sinner by nature, having nothing whereby he might justify himself before God the Father (Rom. 3:9–18; 5:12); that each individual must therefore receive the death of Jesus Christ and the shedding of His blood on the cross as for himself (John 1:12; Rom. 3:21–26; 4:16–25; 5:1, 2), and in repentance must ask God's forgiveness for his sins (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38; 17:30; 26:20); that having received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior by faith, he is spiritually saved or born again (John 1:12; 3:4, 5; Rom. 10:9, 10, 13); that in regeneration the Holy Spirit is sent to permanently indwell, enable, and empower the believer to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4; Eph. 2:1–10). Each believer is thereby a child of God and a member of the family of God for time and eternity (Rom. 8:1–39).

## **Section 6: The Church**

A. The Universal Church of Jesus Christ consists of those who have personally believed on the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:13, 14), who are born again, and baptized into His Body by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). These believers constitute the Body or the Bride of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 5:25–32; Rev. 19:7–10; 21:2). This universal church consists of individual believers meeting and worshiping as groups of believers anywhere in the world (Heb. 10:25; Rev. 5:9, 10). No one belongs to the church of Jesus Christ universal simply by virtue of belonging to a local Bible-believing and Bible-preaching church.

In spite of minor doctrinal differences and practices existing among local churches, members of the body of Christ are to love, appreciate, and bear the burdens of other Christians (John 15:12; 1 Thess. 4:9, 10; Rom. 15:1–7).

B. The Local Church. In the New Testament, there were churches made up of individual believers who lived in certain areas which constituted the church at Corinth, at Berea, at Philippi, etc. It is in this sense that the Woodland Park Baptist Church exists and is known as such. The local church is composed of born-again believers who have voluntarily united together for the purposes of worshiping God, ministering to the saints (fellow believers), evangelizing the world, and discipling new believers (Acts 2:42; 1 Thess. 1:2–10). It provides an opportunity for those who are of the same mind in Christ to meet together for the study of God's Word, common prayer, social contact, and

mutual uplifting (Heb. 10:25). Woodland Park Baptist Church will never seek to exclude from its more general fellowship other believers who may belong to other churches or other denominations or who may differ from us in minor matters but nevertheless belong to the Body of Christ.

We hereby declare that the criteria of receiving individuals into the membership of this church are only fallible and human. Every endeavor, however, shall be made in order that no one, either by profession of faith or transfer from another church, may be accepted into the membership of this church unless evidence is given that such a person honors the Lord Jesus Christ by voluntarily and circumspectly walking in the way of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:2). Therefore, everyone indicating a desire to join this church shall be instructed accordingly that his or her becoming a member of this church witnesses to the character of the whole body of believers known as Woodland Park Baptist Church. Such a person should be thoroughly examined as to his or her profession of faith and holiness of character (See Article IV: Membership).

### **Section 7: Doctrinal Distinctiveness of This Church**

- A. The preeminence of Jesus Christ as our risen, living Lord and Savior (Col. 1:15–18; 2:6, 7).
- B. The supreme authority and profitability of the Scriptures. We believe in the verbal plenary inspiration of the Old and New Testaments in their original manuscripts (Matt. 7:28; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).
- C. The competency of the individual in direct approach to God (Heb. 10:19–22).
- D. The priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5, 9).
- E. The necessity of a born again membership (John 3:3–8; 1 Peter 1:3, 23).
- F. The symbolic ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion, (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 8:36–38; 9:18) and the Lord's Supper, (1 Cor. 11:23–28) are to be held at frequent intervals. The physical element of water in baptism does not save the sinner, but is a voluntary external testimony to the work which the Holy Spirit has already done in the heart of the believer. Following the Lord in baptism is an act of obedience and has its proper reward as such. It does not save the sinner. In Acts 10:47, 48 the Gentile believers were baptized with water after they had been spiritually baptized with the Holy Spirit. We believe a person is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ upon conversion (1 Cor. 12:13).  
  
The physical elements of bread and the fruit of the vine are not the actual body and blood of Christ but are symbolic of Christ's body broken for us and His blood shed for our justification before God (1 Cor. 11:24–29). It is an occasion of remembrance and self-examination.
- G. The autonomy of the local church. This means that each local group of believers is itself responsible to follow the direction of the Lord Jesus as given by Him in His Holy Word by His Holy

Spirit (Heb. 13:7, 17; Rev. 2, 3). No autonomous local church is to be governed by any ecclesiastical organization or body of churches outside that local church but should always in a spirit of humility be open to Scriptural counsel, encouragement, teaching, rebuke, and/or correction where needed from a sister church or churches (e.g. Acts 15:22–35).

H. Participation in fellowship with other believers (Acts 2:42).

## ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

### **Section 1: Becoming a Member**

Membership in this local church shall be open to anyone who professes personal faith in Christ for his eternal salvation, who has signified this by a holy life, a comprehension of the basic doctrines of the Word of God, and water baptism (by immersion) after conversion. No one shall become automatically a member of this local church by mere transfer of letter unless he confesses full agreement to the doctrinal position of this church as described in Article III.

An applicant for membership in this local church will be welcomed in his decision, but in fairness to him and to the church, it will be necessary, before he is approved for membership and able to share in all the privileges and responsibilities of this local body of believers, that he give a verbal testimony of conversion and walk with Christ before the Elder on Membership and those serving with him. In addition, each applicant for membership must complete the New Member's requirements as determined by the General Council of Elders. After completion of these requirements, and on the acceptance of this individual by the Membership Ministry Council of Elders, a recommendation will be made to the whole congregation regarding accepting this person into the membership of the church.

Associate Members. Those temporarily living in the Chattanooga area and wanting to make this church their home may be accepted as associate members. These and all other believers worshiping with us are welcome to sit together with us at the Lord's Table, once they are admonished as all others should be, to examine themselves that they partake of the Lord's Supper worthily (1 Cor. 11:28–30).

### **Section 2: Responsibilities of the Members**

A. General Responsibilities. Each member is responsible before God as a believer-priest to assist in determining the will of Christ for his or her own individual life and this local assembly under Christ.

1. Each member must be involved in giving feedback to the church concerning personal needs and in sharing insights in areas where God's will must be known for the church.
2. Each member must, therefore, be able to submit himself to the Lord in prayer so that he learns to discern the voice of the Chief Shepherd as He leads the flock.

3. In general, each member will be responsible, as God enables him, to do his part in the "work of service" (Eph. 4:12; 1 Peter 4:10, 11). This calls for the regular participation in the life and the services of the church, including a voluntary contribution of financial support as the Lord may prosper him or her (Heb. 10:24; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 8:3-5).

4. If a recommendation from any member for the improvement of the whole body is offered, it should be addressed to the elder in charge of the area of responsibility.

B. Meetings of the Membership. Meetings of the membership shall be called by the General Council of Elders to share pertinent information about various needs in the church body, to overview the status of the various ministries of the church, and to receive feedback from the congregation concerning the life and ministries of the church. This includes matters pertaining to the constitution and bylaws, the call or dismissal of full-time staff, the acquisition or disposition of church property, the annual budget and other such matters.

A two-week written notice to each member will be required for such meetings.

It is the nature of the Body of Christ to be a caring body. Therefore, any member may at any time share with an elder or elders any suggestions or concerns for the betterment of the church body in the light of pertinent Scripture.

C. Attitude Toward Local Church Leaders

1. Give Careful Attention to the Behavior of Those Who Teach. It is the responsibility of the congregation to closely examine the behavior especially of those elders who preach the Word. They must not only speak out the Word of God, but their behavior must be consistent with it with visible and evident results. The implication in Heb. 13:7 is that the faith of the pastor teachers is worth imitating if it produces visible results in their own behavior. Faith which does not translate into saintly behavior is not worth following. (See Heb. 13:7 in Appendix). However, each believer is always obligated to obey the Lord and the Scripture in all matters regardless of any failures in the elders' teaching or conduct.

2. A Congregation Should Have the Proper Positive Attitude Toward Its Elders (Heb. 13:17; see Appendix).

### **Section 3: Removal from Active Membership**

All dismissals from the membership shall be made after due counsel and consideration by the General Council of Elders. Such a dismissal or removal from the membership roll shall be made for the following:

A. Transfer of Letter. Any member in good standing may request that a letter of membership be transferred to another fellowship of like faith. No letter will be granted to a member who is under the corrective discipline of this church or to a member who seeks to transfer to a church which,

based on the judgment of the General Council of Elders, is not loyal to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

B. Non-Letter Transfer. Any member who unites with another church without a letter will be dropped from the membership.

C. Personal Request. Any member who requests that his/her name be dropped from the membership roll shall be dismissed after due admonition and counsel from the General Council of Elders.

D. Physical Death. When a member dies his/her name shall be removed from the active membership roll.

#### **Section 4: Disciplinary Removal from Membership**

A person may be dropped from the membership roll for any of the following reasons:

A. Inactivity/Inappropriate Absenteeism. See Article VII, Section 2, B.

B. Continuous Sinful Conduct and/or Erroneous Teaching. See Article VII, Section 2, C.

#### **Section 5: Reapplication for Membership**

If a former member chooses to apply for membership, he/she may do so following the procedures in Section 1 of this Article. In cases of corrective discipline, the procedures for Restoration found in Article VII, Section 3 will be followed.

### **ARTICLE V: AFFILIATION**

A. As the Lord in creation expressed His will that man not live a solitary but a social life and then instituted the family, so He has also instituted the local church. Although a local church should be directly dependent upon God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, yet it must recognize that as individuals we are interdependent. The local church provides the context of such interdependence. We also believe that a voluntary fellowship with other spiritually like-minded churches is in good order and in no way involves the giving up of our individual freedom and direct dependence upon God.

B. Therefore, Woodland Park Baptist Church has chosen to continue the affiliation that it has had for many years with the Southern Baptist Convention, as long as this Convention does not subjugate the will of this autonomous body of believers, but accepts it as part of the whole Body of Christ. The function of the Southern Baptist Convention is viewed by Woodland Park Baptist Church as a fellowship of autonomous churches who recognize their mutual dependence. This affiliation is

maintained by voluntary contributions to doctrinally approved missions on local, state, national, and foreign levels. This affiliation is also supported by sending messengers to the annual convention for voting the doctrinal, ethical, and procedural positions of the members. Based on 2 John 10, 11, we assume the responsibility that our stewardship is to support only doctrinally, morally, and ethically sound ministries.

C. This affiliation is for the purpose of accomplishing common endeavors with other churches. Our affiliation, however, does not prevent us from associating ourselves with any other groups of churches or mission endeavors. The extent of support to the Southern Baptist Convention and any other missionary or other organization shall be voluntary. Any association with like-minded church and missionary endeavors will include an examination of each one as to its doctrinal position, effective outreach, adequate government and auditing of funds, and willingness to keep the church informed of the activities, especially those supported by the church.

## ARTICLE VI: CHURCH GOVERNMENT, LEADERSHIP, AND OFFICERS

### **Section 1: The Chief Shepherd**

The Lord Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of this congregation. It is before Him that all other leadership must bow (Eph. 1:22, 23; Matt. 23:8–11; 1 Peter 5:4). He communicates His will for the church through His Word, the Bible. He gives additional guidance by means of the specific leading of the Holy Spirit who indwells the heart of each believer. He also shepherds the flock through the leaders of the church to whom He has given specific gifts.

### **Section 2: Biblical and Historical Background of the Government of a Local Church**

A. The Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, as presented in the New Testament, is not to be conceived as a kingdom of this world, a political kingdom. The Kingdom of God is one of a King who sets out to establish a primarily spiritual kingdom. His kingdom is sovereign and does not depend on the acceptance or rejection of the general populace. Therefore, it is not the believers who acclaim the Lord Jesus Christ as King, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ who came into this world to bring His kingdom, His rule within the human heart, and finally His outward rule in the world.

B. The Foundation of the Church. Christ left a small body of disciples under the direction of the Apostles with a charge to preach the Gospel to the world; but He gave nothing which can be called either a Constitution or Bylaws. However, He did give certain general principles for us to follow. The Pastoral Epistles and Third John provide the guidelines for a cohesive and disciplined set of principles in view of the fact that the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was not to be immediately realized and local churches needed to be organized for an effective ministry.

C. The Priesthood of All Believers and the Rulers of a Local Church. The priesthood of believers is an indubitably established fact in the New Testament (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). The

church is made up of both the rulers and the individual believers. The local church made up of all believers accepts these rulers as their representatives appointed by God (not to represent them before God but to rule among them with God's unction, having been endowed with special gifts) (Eph. 4:7-16). All Christians, however, are priests alike before God and have direct access to God without intermediaries (1 Tim. 2:5).

### Section 3: Elders

A. General Statement. In its operation, the church will be led by a group of godly men called elders. These shall be men in whose lives the working of the Holy Spirit is evident, who have given a worthy witness of the authority of Christ in their lives, and who have met the qualifications given in the Scriptures. The totality of elders, which shall have no numerical limit, shall constitute the Elder Body. Authority for the day-to-day ministry matters will reside in the General Council of Elders.

B. Qualifications of Elders. The qualifications of elders are spelled out in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. For an explanation of these qualifications see the Appendix.

C. Responsibilities of Elders. The elders shall be responsible for:

1. Exercising a general superintendence over the church, the flock of God (Acts 20:28; John 21:15-17).
2. Showing forth a consistent study and teaching of the Word of God through their life and words, whether with groups or individuals, entrusting truth to those who will impart it to others (1 Tim. 5:17; 3:2; 1 Thess. 5:12; Titus 1:9; 2 Tim. 2:2).
3. Being good managers or stewards of God over their God-given ministry (Titus 1:7) An elder must be active in ministry to remain an elder (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3).
4. Helping those in need (Gal. 6:10; 1 Thess. 5:14-22).
5. Giving diligent labor, caring leadership, and guided counsel in the Word (1 Thess. 5:12; Rom. 12:9; 1 Tim. 3:4, 5; 5:17; Heb. 13:7).
6. Exercising pastoral care (1 Thess. 5:14, 15; James 5:14) and hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8) among the flock (1 Peter 5:1-5).

### D. Tenure of an Elder on the General Council of Elders

1. Upon affirmation by the congregation, and after being ordained as an elder to serve in this local body, an elder shall serve on the General Council of Elders for a term of six years. After serving a six-year term, the elder will not serve on the General Council of Elders for a period

of one year. The elder is eligible, upon nomination and affirmation, to serve on the General Council of Elders for another six-year term after such one-year period.

2. In general, an elder who has served twelve or more years on the General Council of Elders (including service before 2012 on the General Council of Elders) should be relieved from further service on the General Council of Elders. However, upon recommendation by the General Council of Elders and affirmation by the congregation, an elder may serve additional terms on the General Council of Elders.

3. Initially, the General Council of Elders shall consist of those elders currently serving on the General Council of Elders immediately prior to the adoption of this paragraph. To facilitate an orderly transition to the observance of six-years terms for elders on the General Council of Elders, the following elders who began active service before the adoption of six-year terms shall conclude their current terms of service according to the following schedule (in the order by which they began serving as elders):

Mike Jennings:	2012 (specific date to be determined by the General Council)
John Rankin:	2013 (specific date to be determined by the General Council)
Steve Corley:	___, 2015 [NOTE: use specific date 6 years from when he joined?]
Dave Lawson:	___, 2015 [NOTE: use specific date 6 years from when he joined?]
Wes Bowman:	___, 2016 [NOTE: use specific date 6 years from when he joined?]
Bobby Dalrymple:	___, 2016 [NOTE: use specific date 6 years from when he joined?]
Wayne Barber:	[The Senior Pastor serves on the General Council of Elders while he serves as Senior Pastor, not for a term of years.]

4. An elder who has served the church particularly well may be designated as an Elder Emeritus by the General Council of Elders. The consent of the elder to the Emeritus designation shall be required, unless the elder is incapacitated.

E. General Council of Elders. The General Council of Elders shall be composed of up to fifteen (15) men who have been affirmed by the congregation as elders and are presently serving active terms on the General Council. The General Council of Elders is commissioned to rule the church under the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:4).

1. The Senior Pastor acts as the Moderator of the General Council of Elders. In case of his inability to attend or to execute his duty as Moderator, he will appoint a substitute from among the General Council of Elders.

2. The Senior Pastor is given the right, if he chooses, to appoint a Moderator of the General Council of Elders so that he may be relieved of administrative duties and engage in the study and the proclamation of the Word of God without administrative encumbrances. In such case, the thus appointed Moderator of the General Council of Elders is responsible for

keeping the Senior Pastor informed of all that transpires. The appointed Moderator of the General Council of Elders, if that is the decision of the Senior Pastor, must be accepted by the General Council of Elders. When the position of Senior Pastor is vacant, the General Council of Elders shall appoint one of its members as Moderator of the General Council of Elders.

3. The General Council of Elders shall prayerfully seek unity in all matters since we believe the Holy Spirit guides with a oneness of mind (Acts 15:1-29; Phil. 2:1, 2). (In matters of compensation or discipline of an elder or one of his family members, the elder in question shall abstain.) Unity on a matter can be expressed by agreement among seventy-five percent (75%) of the elders eligible to vote on the matter. Unanimity shall be required on Biblical matters or other decisions the group determines warrant this safeguard.

4. When the General Council of Elders requests that the congregation affirm its decision on a matter, the General Council shall receive and make a record of the comments and questions raised by church members. Depending on the nature of the issue and the feedback provided, the General Council may hold one or more forums where church members and the elders may address the matter. During the period designated for seeking the congregation's affirmation, the General Council of Elders shall continue to consider the matter and whether the congregation's responses indicate that the General Council's decision is being affirmed. If the General Council of Elders concludes that the congregation is not affirming its decision, the General Council may announce that conclusion and withdraw the request for affirmation. At the close of the affirmation period, if the General Council continues to believe that its decision is correct, the Moderator of the General Council of Elders (or his designee) shall ask the congregation to demonstrate whether they affirm the decision. The Moderator (or his designee) shall declare that the congregation has affirmed the decision if, after conferring with the other members of the General Council who observed the congregation's response, he concludes that seventy-five percent (75%) or more of the congregation demonstrated that they do affirm the General Council's decision on the matter.

5. In the case of a need for new elders and when one or more elders leaves the General Council of Elders, the General Council shall ask the congregation to prayerfully suggest the names of men ("candidates") to be considered for service on the General Council of Elders. A candidate shall meet the Scriptural qualifications for elders and should either have been a church member for at least two years or have prior experience serving as an elder in a like-minded church. The General Council shall receive suggested names of candidates from any church member. The General Council (or its appointed selections council) shall review those suggestions and determine the candidates' qualifications and desire to serve. Completed questionnaires and testimonies may be used as a part of the review process. The General Council shall promptly determine whether to submit any candidates to the congregation for further consideration. Within sixty (60) days of receiving a suggested candidate's name or written review materials from the candidate, the General Council of Elders shall update the candidate regarding his candidacy and should include specific, confidential feedback concerning the General Council's assessment of his qualifications to

serve as an elder. When the General Council of Elders determines that a candidate (or candidates) should be considered by the congregation to serve on the General Council, it shall inform the congregation of such nominations and allow the congregation a period of thirty days to respond in writing to the General Council of Elders if there is any biblical basis for any nominee to not be ordained and affirmed as an elder. In the event of such response from a member of the congregation, the General Council of Elders shall review the response with the nominee, and if necessary, with the writer of the response in order to determine proper disposition of the issues raised by the writer. After the passage of thirty days and the resolution of any and all issues, the General Council of Elders shall ask the congregation to affirm the selection of each nominee to be ordained as an elder (if not previously ordained as an elder) and to begin a term of service on the General Council of Elders.

6. Any elder serving on the General Council of Elders may be dismissed from the General Council, and any elder may be dismissed from the Elder Body, by agreement among seventy-five percent (75%) of the elders on the Elder Body eligible to vote on the matter (in matters of discipline of an elder, the elder in question shall abstain). This shall be done within the confines of 1 Tim. 5:19, 20.

7. At least 60% of the elders serving on the General Council of Elders shall be “non-staff elders” (*i.e.*, not staff members of the church). In the event that non-staff elders constitute less than 60% of the elders serving on the General Council (*e.g.*, when a non-staff elder leaves the General Council of Elders at the conclusion of his term, by resignation, or otherwise; if a non-staff elder becomes a member of the staff), the following provisions shall apply:

- a. Within 60 days, the General Council of Elders shall ask the congregation to submit suggestions for non-staff elders; and
- b. During the time that non-staff elders constitute less than 60% of the elders serving on the General Council of Elders, a sufficient number of “staff elders” (*i.e.*, elders serving on the General Council who are also staff members of the church) shall refrain from voting so that non-staff elders constitute at least 60% of the elders that may vote on issues before the General Council. Staff elders shall do so (refrain from voting) in the order by which their current terms of service on the General Council of Elders are set to expire.

8. The General Council of Elders shall include a plurality of elders who are also staff members of the church—the Senior Pastor and one or more other staff elders. A staff member of the church may serve as an elder on the General Council of Elders if he is affirmed by the congregation to do so, but only if non-staff elders will constitute at least 60% of the elders serving on the General Council of Elders when such staff member would begin his term of service on the General Council. Being a paid staff member, however, does not automatically render a person as an elder. All who serve on the General Council of Elders must be qualified according to Scriptural qualifications, affirmed by the congregation, and ordained as an elder to serve in this local body.

9. A paid staff member, if affirmed by the congregation to serve as an elder on the General Council of Elders, will be of equal authority with non-staff elders and employment will be a matter of separate and distinct consideration. A paid member of the staff who serves on the General Council of Elders may cease to be an employee of the church, either voluntarily or otherwise, but may still continue to be an elder. A non-staff elder may become a member of the staff and receive commensurate compensation for specific services rendered.

10. Members of the staff who are also elders may extend their services to areas other than those pertaining to their eldership functions, and unpaid elders may call upon such to help them in the execution of their responsibilities. A paid staff member who is an elder will be held accountable to the General Council of Elders just as are all non-staff elders, without distinction.

#### F. Ministry Councils

1. The General Council of Elders will oversee the various ministries of the church through ministry councils, staff members, or others who may be appointed by the General Council of Elders.

2. The General Council of Elders shall establish and oversee such Ministry Councils as are deemed necessary for the fulfillment of the stated purposes and functions of the church as given in this Constitution and Bylaws.

G. Meetings. The special elder ministry councils and the General Council of Elders will meet as often as necessary to carry on the particular duties.

H. Accountability. The General Council of Elders is a self-disciplining group with members accountable to one another (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Tim. 5:19, 20; Eph. 5:21). The elders serving on the General Council should periodically consider one another, in connection with each one's anniversary on the General Council, to encourage faithful, active service in ministry (Heb. 10:24-25.) Each elder is under the oversight of the General Council and subject to both formative and corrective discipline as are all members of the church.

The General Council of Elders shall report to the congregation on the ministries of the church at least once a year.

#### Section 4: Deacons

A. General Statement. The New Testament gives us a clear indication of both elders and deacons in the local church. Deacons were those who rendered service (diakonos) in the local church. As distinct officers in the local church they are referred to in the plural (diakonoi, Phil. 1:1), and are mentioned in addition to elders in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. The government of the local church rests upon the

elders (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17), while the deacons give needed assistance in the various ministries of the local body of believers

B. Qualifications of Official Deacons. The qualifications of the deacons are detailed in 1 Tim. 3:8–13. For an explanation of these qualifications see the Appendix.

C. Responsibilities of Deacons. Inasmuch as in the New Testament there was never an organized group of deacons constituting a body for leadership, that being taken care of by the elders, the deacons shall serve as assistants to the elders in the work of the ministry and as servants for the various needs of the church.

D. Tenure of Service. No limit is placed upon the time that a deacon may serve.

E. Addition or Substitution of Deacons. In the case of a need for deacons or for the substitution of existing deacons, the Moderator of the General Council of Elders shall appoint three elders to serve with the Moderator as a deacon nominations council. This council shall receive names of nominees from any church member and shall review all nominations and interview nominees regarding their desire to serve and their qualifications. This council shall receive completed questionnaires and testimonies from each nominee as a part of the review process. (Any person currently serving as a deacon or having previously been ordained as a deacon, but not currently serving, should complete the questionnaires and provide his personal testimony as a matter of information.) This council will then submit the names of those deemed qualified to the General Council of Elders, who on approval will inform the congregation of such nominations and allow the congregation a period of thirty days to respond in writing to the General Council of Elders if there is any biblical basis for any nominee to not be ordained as a deacon. In the event of such response from a member of the congregation, the General Council of Elders shall review the response with the nominee and if necessary with the writer of the response in order to determine proper disposition of the issues raised by the writer. After the passage of thirty days and the resolution of any and all issues, the General Council of Elders shall proceed with the ordination of the nominees approved as deacons except for those previously ordained.

## **Section 5: The Place of Women in the Local Church**

The place and service of women in the New Testament is evident as one reviews the Gospel records (Luke 1:26–56; 2:36–38; 8:2, 3; Matt. 27:55, 56; Mark 15:40, 41), the account of the early church (Acts 1:14; 5:14; 6:1; 9:36; 12:12; 16:14; 17:34; 18:2; et al), and the epistles to the believers throughout the Mediterranean world (Rom. 16:1, 3, 6, 13, 15; 1 Cor. 1:11; Phil. 4:2, 3; et al). The Scriptures show that women played an active part in the life of each congregation.

In Gal. 3:28, Paul points out that in Christ Jesus male and female are one. There is an equality before the Lord. Balanced with that is a distinction in the roles of men and women in the ministries of the local church. For example, in the equality of men and women before the Lord, we find no contradiction in what Paul indicates that women should not speak in church if the word woman, gune, is understood as

the wife (1 Tim. 2:11–15). The Scriptures teach that in the oneness of the marriage bond, the two being one body, there can be only one head and that head is the man (1 Cor. 11:3). Therefore, the wife is not permitted to speak as if she were the head. The teaching of the Apostle Paul is that a wife should so behave as not to show superiority over her husband. This does not mean that a woman cannot know more than a man or be a leader in certain areas but in the church she should not do anything or assume any role which may adversely affect the husband-wife relationship.

In the Pastoral Epistles, we find a regular roll of "widows," who have provision made for them by the church. This reveals the importance of these widows in the local church (see 1 Tim. 5:3f; Cf. Acts 6:1; 9:39, 41) and serves as an example of the kind of care and concern widows and others in need are to receive in this church.

There is ample evidence in the Scriptures of a fundamental Christian assertion of the intrinsic worth of human personality, whether it be men or women (Gal. 3:27, 28). The mutual dependence of men and women and their common origin in God teach that the male has no exclusive place "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:11, 12). In this church, women will be allowed to serve in the capacity in which the Lord enables and Scripture directs. This opens up many avenues of service. It is important to understand in the matter of service in the local church that God has given specific roles to both men and women. The Scriptures instruct that the particular roles of elder and deacon are reserved for men (1 Tim. 3:1, 8; Titus 1:6). The roles given to women in turn complement and enhance the total ministry of the local body of believers (e.g.: Rom. 16; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 5:10, 14, 16; Titus 2:3–5). It should be remembered that the Word of God never seeks to hamper men or women in their service roles but rather seeks to direct them in fulfilling their roles in a way that promotes holiness in daily life, fruitfulness in service, unity in the body of Christ and harmony in the family (Eph. 4, 5; Col. 3).

## **Section 6: Church Staff**

### **A. Senior Pastor**

1. The qualifications of the pastor or pastors are those given in 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5-9. He must be spiritually and educationally qualified to lead the church as an undershepherd of God, to preach, train, and provide leadership to carry out the spirit and letter of the New Testament and Constitution and Bylaws. The pastor (or pastors) must become a member of the church on the acceptance of his call.
2. Responsibilities. The responsibilities of the pastor shall be: (a) To earnestly carry on a preaching, teaching, and training ministry, with the aim of bringing each member to a place of spiritual maturity and fruitfulness, and to a place of spiritual harmony with the rest of the church body; (b) To set an example in Christian living and dedication; (c) To oversee the administering of the ordinances; (d) To serve as the Chairman Ex Officio of the elders, and by virtue of his office to serve as Ex Officio member of all the church boards, task forces, committees, and groups, with the exception of a Pulpit Committee and Ministry Council

overseeing staff compensation; (e) To endeavor to provide for the pulpit to be filled on a regular and consistent basis, including times of absence.

There shall, by all members, elders, and deacons, be respect for the office of the pastor. He shall be held in esteem and respected as an undershepherd of God (1 Thess. 5:12, 13). To aid him in carrying out his ministry, the church body shall not burden him with tasks unrelated to those duties that are absolutely necessary to his undershepherding. The main task of the pastor is the preaching of the Word of God from the pulpit and nothing shall be permitted to diminish the time and effort that the pastor needs to make such a ministry Spirit-filled and instructive. The pastor shall serve for an undesignated period of time. He shall give three months notice to the church if the Holy Spirit leads him to resign, and the church shall give the senior pastor three months notice in case the church feels that his ministry at this local church is ended. By mutual consent this period may be lengthened or shortened.

3. Calling a Senior Pastor. In the pursuit of a new Senior Pastor the first responsibility lies with the General Council of Elders, and the decision by the General Council of Elders to call a new Senior Pastor is subject to affirmation by the congregation.

#### B. Staff Pastors, Associate Staff, and Support Staff

1. Qualifications of Staff Members. A Staff Pastor must meet the qualifications of an elder given in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. In addition, there must be evidence of a call to a specific ministry with the significant spiritual gifts and adequate training needed to fulfill the task to which he has been called. Consequently, Staff Pastors are members of the Elder Body.

Associate Staff Members and Support Staff Members (men or women) must meet the spiritual qualifications of a deacon listed in 1 Tim. 3:8-13, since those qualifications relate to service in the local church body.

2. Responsibilities of a Staff Member. Each Staff Member will be responsible to fulfill his calling to specific ministry as given by the Senior Pastor and in conjunction with both the particular Ministry Council with which he or she serves and the General Council of Elders.

3. Calling a Staff Member. Under the leadership of the Senior Pastor the church may call additional Staff Pastors and Associate Staff as needed to serve in the ministries of the church. Recommendations shall be made to the particular Ministry Council who in turn shall make recommendations to the General Council of Elders for approval. The General Council will present it to the congregation for affirmation.

#### C. Staff Compensation

1. Biblical Bases for Compensation. The Scriptures indicate that a laborer is worthy of his hire (Luke 10:7). The word hire (misthos) is equivalent to wages, pay. It is basically the payment made for services rendered.

In 1 Cor. 9:14, Paul states that "They which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." The general teaching in 1 Cor. 9 is that a preacher or gospel worker is worthy of receiving compensation for his services. Titus 1:7 shows that there is an honorable pay for diligent work and there is a sordid or indecent or dishonorable gain that one seeks, taking advantage of someone or something. No one should preach for the sake of pay, but should preach because of the high calling of God and the need for preaching. The acceptance of pay is simply in compensation for the time given, which time if given in other pursuits of occupation would provide a living.

2. Consideration for a Staff in the Local Church. The Scriptures show that a paid staff ministering in a local congregation is legitimate and proper. It is also appropriate that there be checks and balances between the compensated staff and elders and deacons who volunteer their time. The Scriptures do not prohibit a staff member from also being an officer of the church. There should be circumspection so that the paid staff does not "lord it" over the church, but rather does the will of God, seeking to meet the needs of the people.

3. Compensation Guidelines. Those giving their time to perform special services have the right to compensation as determined by the General Council of Elders, but no one has the right to be compensated simply because of filling the office of an elder or a deacon or serving on a committee or ministry council.

All guidelines concerning compensation to members of the church staff are the responsibility of the General Council of Elders and shall be determined by them in conjunction with the Ministry Council on Staff. The Ministry Council on Staff has no power to determine compensation for Staff Pastors and Associate Staff but shall oversee this area and make necessary recommendations and suggestions to the General Council of Elders, who alone have the authority for such expenditures.

## **Section 7: Board of Trustees and Officers**

A. For the purpose of representation before government and other official bodies, the General Council of Elders shall choose five elders or deacons to constitute the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall act under the direction of the General Council of Elders.

B. The Board of Trustees shall be appointed by the General Council of Elders upon nomination by the Moderator of the General Council of Elders. They shall serve for one year with their term renewed or terminated each year by the General Council of Elders.

C. The Officers of the Board of Trustees shall include a Chairman and a Secretary appointed by the General Council of Elders.

## ARTICLE VII: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

### **Section 1: Formative Discipline**

Every disciple (learner, follower, disciplined one) of the Lord Jesus Christ is to walk under the discipline of the Lord Jesus and His word (His instruction, direction, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Mutual submission to one another in the reverence of Christ (Eph. 5:21) is a part of that discipline. Along with that, God has called the church to submission (1 Peter 5:5) and obedience (Heb. 13:17) to the elders He has placed over His church. This formative discipline is part of the holy walk He has commanded for each true believer and for the church as a whole. God readily supplies His grace to those who are submissive and obedient to Him and His Word, and He resists those who proudly resist His leadership (1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6). This is a part of His work in both formative and corrective discipline within His church.

### **Section 2: Corrective Discipline**

A. General Statement. When a member of this church fails in an area of formative discipline it may be necessary for the elders and this church body to apply corrective discipline as instructed by God in His Word.

All corrective discipline will be concentrated in the General Council of Elders, and this Council will determine whether a matter is to be brought before the church body for action.

Members in the early churches were subject to confrontation for reasons such as:

1. Unwillingness to become reconciled to an offended brother (Matt. 18:15–17),
2. Unwillingness to engage in work (2 Thess. 3:6–15),
3. Divisiveness in the church (Rom. 16:17, 18; Titus 3:9, 10),
4. Sexual immorality or habitual covetousness, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness, or swindling (1 Cor. 5:1–13),
5. False teaching (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17, 18),
6. General sinful conduct (Gal. 6:1).

Members of the church are expected to conduct their lives in accordance with Biblical standards of holiness as they grow to become more like Christ. When a member knowingly ignores the direct commands and prohibitions of Scripture, he shall be dealt with according to the principles of discipline and restoration found in such passages as Matt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1, 2; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Matt. 7:1-5, etc.

B. Inactivity/Inappropriate Absenteeism. In being part of a local body of believers, it is the responsibility of each member to be faithful in attendance and participation in the meetings and ministries of the congregation unless hindered by illness or other providential circumstances. To be lax or indifferent toward faithful participation may indicate the need for admonition concerning one's faithfulness to the local church.

It is the responsibility of the Elder on Membership and his Ministry Council to oversee the regularity of participation and to examine the possible reasons for inactivity. If inactivity is consistent without adequate reason, the Ministry Council on Membership, led by the appropriate elder, shall exercise every possible effort to reclaim to this fellowship those who, for one reason or another, have absented themselves from the fellowship of the congregation. Every effort toward redeeming restoration must be exercised by this church. If there is not appropriate response from the individual, the Ministry Council on Membership may recommend to the General Council of Elders the dropping of such a person from membership. Such a person dropped cannot have membership privileges.

In seeking to restore a member, every reasonable effort must be made to resolve any conflict, correct any error, or remove any offense. This will be done through biblical counsel, admonition, and with loving concern.

C. Withdrawal of Fellowship. When a member continues to knowingly ignore the commands or prohibitions of Scriptures in daily walk or teaching so that his/her life and/or erroneous teaching continues to hinder the peace of the church or its testimony, the General Council of Elders may recommend the withdrawal of fellowship and termination of membership of the offending member. This shall be done following the guidelines given in Matt. 18:18; 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 13; and 2 Thess. 3:6-15. One thus cut off from the fellowship of the church shall be treated as a non-member until he/she gives evidence of true repentance. This response to the offending member includes loving admonition, prayer, and a call to repentance and obedience.

When a member's actions lead to the regrettable obligation of terminating that person from membership, this will be based on the unanimous agreement of the General Council of Elders. This Council will exercise their judgment as to whether the matter shall be brought before the congregation for their action or whether the action of the General Council simply be communicated to the congregation.

D. Membership Status. Once the process of corrective discipline has been commenced pursuant to this Article VII, the member subject to discipline shall not be permitted to voluntarily withdraw or

otherwise surrender his or her membership. By becoming a member of this church body and maintaining membership, one knowingly submits to the formative and corrective discipline of the church, and voluntarily waives the right to withdraw or surrender membership during any period of corrective discipline.

### Section 3: Restoration to Church Membership

The goal of all discipline is a holy walk under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and obedience to His Word. The right to exclude persons or the withdrawal of fellowship is in harmony with the teachings of the Word of God (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6), and is balanced by the call to restore such persons who have given satisfactory evidence of repentance (2 Cor. 2:6-8). When a person gives such evidence, the General Council of Elders shall recommend that the person be restored to full fellowship in this church.

### ARTICLE VIII: FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The Elder on Finances and his ministry council is the primary body for financial accountability. However, the expenditures in which they can involve the church must be limited only to those that the General Council of Elders will authorize. For any major expenditure the General Council of Elders must be consulted and its authority must be secured.

The General Council of Elders shall appoint an Auditing committee including at least one public accountant to audit the financial statements of the church, as they may deem necessary. On an annual basis the General Council of Elders shall give a report of the financial condition of the church to the membership and shall make the annual financial report available upon request. An independent audit shall be performed when deemed necessary by the General Council of Elders.

### ARTICLE IX: PROPERTY RIGHTS

No member of the Elder Body, or Trustees, or a deacon, or any other church member, has any individual right to any part of the property of the church. On the other hand, no member of the church or any administrative committee may be held responsible for the corporate obligations of the church.

### ARTICLE X: BYLAWS AND AMENDMENTS

The elders shall draft and amend such bylaws as are necessary for the implementation of this Constitution.

1. No bylaw in violation of the Scriptures or of the terms of this Constitution shall be valid.
2. Notice of any proposed bylaw amendments must be made in writing at least four (4) weeks prior to the date of the consensus affirmation of the membership. During that period any member may express his conviction concerning the proposed amendment by submitting a written statement to the Moderator of the General Council of Elders for consideration.
3. Any amendments to this Constitution must be based upon the unanimous recommendation of the General Council of Elders and the affirmative consensus of the voting membership.

## APPENDIX

I. On Hebrews 13:7. In Heb. 13:7 we read: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." The expression, "them which have the rule over you," is one word in Greek, the present participle hoi hegoumenoi, used as a noun. The literal meaning is "those who are leading the way." The basic verb is hegeomai, "to lead the way." The specific function of these is designated as those who have spoken the Word of God. These are leaders who were preachers and teachers of the Word of God, and they are the ones to be remembered in a special way. The people to whom the leaders speak are to imitate their faith. "Whose faith follow." The Greek verb for follow is mimesthe, "imitate." This imitating of their faith, however, is as they review the result of their behavior, "considering the end of their conversation." What is translated "considering" is anatheorountes, from ana, "again," or an intensive, and theoreo, "to closely view with attention, to scrutinize closely." What is translated "the end" is ekbasis, "having result" (used also in 1 Cor. 10:13). And the word "conversation" is anastrophe, "mode of life, conduct, deportment, behavior." Reference is made here to the result of one's behavior.

II. On Hebrews 13:17. Heb. 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule [tois hegomenois, "to your leaders," as in verse 7] over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."

What is translated as "obey" is peithesthe, which when followed by the dative of person, as it is here, means to assent. It is the duty of those who hear the pastor-teachers preach the Word to bring themselves in an attitude of mental and spiritual assent, agreement. If one listens with a negative attitude thinking that what one hears is not for himself, one does his pastor and himself a disservice. One should listen with an open mind and heart.

The second imperative verb is hupeikete, "submit yourselves," which is derived from hupo, "under," and eiko, "to yield." Heb. 13:17 is the only place it occurs in the New Testament. It stands distinct from hupakouo, (which involved listening, akouo,) meaning to obey. Hupeiko involves attitude as does the previous imperative verb in Heb. 13:17, peithesthe meaning place yourselves in positive attitude so you can be persuaded by your pastors. A more literal translation of these

commands to the congregation toward their pastors is: "Be disposed to persuasion and yielding." The verb hupeiko in classical usage meant giving way or yielding to authority. The congregation ought to recognize the spiritual authority of the pastor and of the other elders. Remember that in both verse 7 and verse 17 we have the word for leaders in the plural, hoi hegoumenoi (ton hegoumenon, genitive plural in verse 7; toishegoumenois, dative plural in verse 17). In verse 7, the leaders are designated as "those who spoke the Word of God" and these can be either the pastor-teachers at one time in one place, which would involve more than one pastor-teacher at one church, or those pastor-teachers who successively taught at a local church. In verse 17, however, there is no designation of those leaders being only pastor-teachers in the sense of those who preach the Word of God, but other leaders also who, along with the responsibilities assigned in Titus 1:9, oversee other areas in the local church. The attitude of the people must be one of positive openness to persuasion and yieldedness to these leaders.

The reason for such a positive attitude toward them is "for they watch over your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." The verb "watch" is agrupnousin the present indicative of agrupneo, derived from agreuo, "to chase," and hupnos, "sleep," they sacrifice sleep so that they can watch over a situation or people. That verb, of course, indirectly speaks of the duty of elders and the reason for a positive open and yielding attitude on the part of the people of the congregation. "They watch for your souls" indicates that watchfulness over the souls of the people in a local church is the foremost duty of the elders. The church is a soul-wellness center, not a social club.

"As they that must give account." Elders must never take their responsibilities lightly. Not only must each elder hold himself accountable to his fellow elders, but also to the totality of the congregation, and above all to the Lord as they will one day appear before the judgment seat of Christ as all believers will (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).

The result of a positive attitude of the people toward the elders becomes the motivation of a joyful task by the elders. "That they may do it with joy and not with grief." It is not very encouraging to spend sleepless nights to serve people (in many instances voluntarily) and to face stonewalls who do not respond positively and do not yield their preconceived ideas and petty ways. The participle stenazontes is translated "not with grief." Stenazo, however, means to groan, to sigh. It refers not only to grief, but also to the externalization of it. When the congregation hears these sighs and groanings of the elders, it is time to examine its attitude.

It does not do the congregation any good if its attitude of negativism causes sighing and groaning elders. Their watchfulness may be turned to indifference. "That is unprofitable for you," says the Apostle. The word for unprofitable is alusiteles, which occurs only here. It derives from the privative a, "without," and lusiteles, from luo, "to loose" and telos, "tax, toll, that which is paid for state purposes." Lusiteles is "that which looses an obligation, profitable, useful, advantageous," and alusiteles is "unprofitable," that which does not get you anywhere.

III. Qualification of Elders. The qualification of elders are spelled out in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

1. Being an elder is defined as hard but good work (1 Tim. 3:1). "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." The qualifications are preceded by the statement, "This is a true saying." In Greek it is pistos ho logos. The word pistos, here translated "true" means trustworthy, dependable. (For a word study on pistos, "faithful," see Spiros Zodhiates study on 1 Cor. 1:9 in A Richer Life for You in Christ.) The word for "saying" is logos, which indicates that behind the saying there is the connotation of logic and reason in what is said. Paul, in his preamble to the qualifications of an elder says, in effect, "What I am going to say is dependable and there is a reason for it." Too many churches have trouble because they disregard these qualifications in regard to those who govern the local church.

a. There must be a desire to be an elder. This office should never be imposed. The desire involves a personal inner calling of God.

b. The office of a bishop refers to being an elder and serving at a local church. This does not necessarily refer to becoming a pastor, but to becoming an elder, one of the elders of a local church. A church ought to have more than one elder, the pastor-teacher(s) being one (or some) of the elders (Eph. 4:11; Acts 20:28). What is translated as "the office of a bishop" is the one Greek word episkope which means bishopric, which refers to a particular area of responsibility at a local church. The word derives from epi, "over" and skope, "the act of watching over people and situations." It is the task of being in charge of others and situations at a local church. At a local church there are certainly many areas of responsibility which should be shared by more than one person.

c. It is a function which one desires. It must not be something that is thrust upon someone. There must be the desire for it. The Greek word is oregetai, which means to stretch oneself after (see also Heb. 11:16, desiring a better country, heaven). Orexis, the noun, "desire or appetite," can have a bad connotation. In Rom. 1:27 it is translated "lust," referring to the homosexual desire. On the opposite side of the spectrum we have the good desire of superintending others in a local church. The desire is so strong that it becomes a passion in the good sense of the word. In English, the word "desire" occurs twice in 1 Tim. 3:1, "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a Bishop, he desireth a good work." The first word translated desire is oregetai, but the second is epithumei, which means to desire earnestly, to long for with passion (thumos). This word epithumia, has a bad connotation as a noun ("lust, inordinate desire" in Rom. 1:24; Gal. 5:16, 24; Eph 2:3) and also as a verb, epithumeo (Matt. 5:28). But it can also mean to earnestly desire in a benevolent manner (1 Thess. 2:17; Rev. 18:14), and to desire passionately in a good sense (Matt. 13:17; Luke 15:16; 17:22; 1 Peter 1:12). One can have a passion to dominate others as part of an ego trip, or to serve others with the desire of helping them. No one should earnestly seek the office of an elder-bishop unless he has a passion for altruistic service.

d. Being an elder means work. "...he desireth a good work." The word is ergon, which means labor. It is not a decorative office to be an elder of a church. It is work, hard work which must be sought with a passion to serve. The church has too many passionless leaders who would rather have the name for the honor of it, but escape as much of the work as possible. No one should seek to be an elder who does not passionately desire to work at it, for it is a good beautiful task of serving others.

2. An elder should be blameless. "A bishop then must be blameless..." (1 Tim. 3:2). The qualifications which are enunciated by Paul in 1 Tim. 3:2-7 are preceded by the impersonal verb dei, "it is necessary." They are not optional but absolutely necessary in their totality.

The first qualification in 1 Tim. 3:2 is that he should be blameless or irreproachable. The word in Greek is anepileptos, a person in whose life it is impossible to find anything for which to blame him. It refers to a person who has no skeletons in his closet, as we would say today. Probably this is the highest and most comprehensive qualification of all. If one qualifies for this, all the other qualifications are specific details of character and behavior.

3. An elder should be unindictable. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless..." That word given as the first qualification in Titus 1:6 is anegkletos, translated as blameless, as the word anepileptos in 1 Tim. 3:2, but in Greek the words are different. Here in Titus 1:6 anegkletos means not arraignable. One can be unindictable before a court of justice but he can be blamable. This first qualification in Titus may very well preclude someone who has had a conviction in court on some moral charge or one who may have committed a crime but has not been discovered, therefore untried, but who, if discovered and tried, would be found guilty and therefore not "blameless" (1 Tim. 3:2).

The stress in both these qualifications, blameless (1 Tim. 3:2) and unindictable (Titus 1:6), requires an elder to be clear of any possible blame in any area, and to be clear of any legal charge.

4. An elder should not be a "womanizer". This qualification occurs in both 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:6, "the husband of one wife." This means that a man is to be faithful to his own wife and whether he be married or single he is to be above reproach in his relationship with women. This is so that people will have full confidence in his dealing with other women and so that he would do nothing dishonoring to Christ.

This does not mean that an elder necessarily must be married but if he is, he must be Scripturally married and be faithful to his own wife (Matt. 19:3-12; Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:1-40).

It does not mean that a elder who, having been the innocent party in a divorce and remarried according to the teaching of the Word of God, cannot serve as an elder or a deacon (1 Tim. 3:2, 12). (On Scripturally legitimate divorce and remarriage, see Spiros Zodhiates, What about Divorce? and May I Divorce and Remarry? on the pertinent Scriptures Deut. 24:1-4; Matt. 5:27-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7). This qualification of the elders means that if one is married he must be faithful to his wife and not be a womanizer.

5. If an elder has children, they should be faithful. "Having faithful children" (Titus 1:6). If an elder is married and has children they should be faithful, and should be believers. Of course, this does not mean that he must have children, but if he has, and the children are still young and under his jurisdiction, unless they are faithful, he better not serve as an elder. It is a different matter when the children are grown and are responsible for their own decision. A father cannot be held responsible for the behavior of his adult children but he is responsible for the behavior of his dependent children. Titus 1:6 furthermore adds that an elder's children be "not accused of riot or unruly." The word for "accused" is "in accusation," or in the process of accusation. Such accusation may be judicial or general. The word translated "riot" is asotia, which means debauchery as the way of life followed by the younger son of the parable in Luke 15. He lived asotos (Luke 15:13), "riotously," or in a manner which showed he was unsaved. The word derives from the privative a and sozo, "to save." "Unruly" is anupotakta, "disobedient, insubordinate."

The family of an elder must also be considered seriously. If the children who are under the authority of a father are accused of having gone astray or as not subjecting themselves to him, the otherwise qualified elder had better not seek to function as one.

6. An elder should be sober or temperate. "A bishop must...be...vigilant" (or sober) (1 Tim. 3:2 KJV). The abstinence indicated by the adjective nephalios is used also in respect to the wives of the deacons, in 1 Tim. 3:11, "Even so must their (deacons') wives be...sober," and 1 Thess. 5:6, "that the aged men be sober." "Therefore, let us...be sober," is desired for all believers in view of Christ's coming (1 Thess. 5:6). The Greek word nephalios means sober, temperate, or abstinent, especially in respect to wine. Paul's admonition to all believers is valid, especially to those who hold leadership roles in the church, that they should abstain from wine. The use of wine is dangerous because it easily leads to excess. "And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). In as far as Timothy was concerned, Paul recommends that wine be used only for medicinal purposes: "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). And aged women are admonished not to be "given to much wine" (Titus 2:3). Temperance as far as wine is concerned is also stressed in 1 Tim. 3:3 in the negative expression, "not given to wine." This is the adjective paroinos, also found in Titus 1:7. Paroinos means that one is constantly "by" or "near" wine, having it readily available. Observe in as far as drinking wine is concerned how we have a positive command in being nephalios, "sober," and a negative admonition, me paroinoi, "not having wine next to one all the time."

7. An elder should have self-limiting freedom. "A bishop then must be...sober" (1 Tim. 3:2). The word sophron in Greek, translated "sober," is extremely difficult to fully express with an equivalent English word. It derives from soos, meaning "sound," and phren, meaning "mind." It is one who has a healthy mind. The Greeks interpreted a sound mind as one which directed one's actions in consideration of their consequences in regard not only to oneself, but also to others. Sophron, therefore, is the person who is free to act, but his sound mind tells him how to use and even limit his freedom of action. A person who does not know how to use his freedom is aphron, the name attributed to the rich successful farmer who mistakenly interpreted his success in an abundant yield of his farm as freedom to hoard the unneeded excess while he should have thought of success as an altruistic opportunity. He misused his freedom in interpreting material success for only personal considerations (Luke 12:20). An elder, by virtue of his leadership in the church, should impose upon himself limitations on his action. He should never say, "I am free to do whatever I wish." His freedom must be limited by an altruistic consideration of how his actions affect others. See also Titus 1:8.

An elder should be one who knows how to use his freedom. Sophron, "sound in mind," is what produces nephalion, "a temperate person." Drunkenness begins in the mind. And as a preventive of the possibility of yielding to temptation he should not be paroinos, "one sitting or being where wine is readily available." Overcoming the devil and temptation is to flee from them, not to enjoy their company. "And thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:11; 1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 2 Tim. 2:22).

8. An elder should be decent. "A bishop then must be...of good behavior..."(1 Tim. 3:2). The next qualification of an elder is, as the King James Version has it, "Of good behavior." The Greek word is kosmios, used only in 1 Tim. 3:2 and 2:9 where it is used of women's dress and translated "modest apparel." Kosmios is an adjective which denotes not only decency, but also beauty, decorum, order, from kosmos. It refers to a behavior which also involves the dress or clothing one wears. Believers, especially women, should remember that although they are in the world, they are not of the world. An elder should dress decently, decorously as part of his behavior. The dress, too, must not be governed by the fashion of the world, which passeth away (1 Cor. 7:31). An elder and a Christian in general should behave—particularly dress—not following the current fashion if that fashion is contrary to decency as described in God's Word. He must please God and, at the same time, be decent and orderly in his behavior and apparel. A sophron person is one who has a sound mind which directs his behavior, dress, and everything else visible and invisible to the world around him.

9. An elder should be hospitable. "A bishop then must be...given to hospitality..." (1 Tim. 3:2). A local church ought to give hospitality for a visiting preacher or missionary. The word is philoxenos, derived from philos, "friend," and xenos, "stranger," a friend of strangers. This is repeated in Titus 1:8. It is a virtue which is enjoined upon all Christians by Peter. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Peter 4:9). It does not cost anything to befriend strangers who come into the local church. No one should be a stranger more than

once. How many come to church and are not befriended for a long time, if ever? A local church should be a haven of friends, a group of caring people such as the world cannot find anywhere else.

In describing the general behavior of Christians, Paul says "Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). What is translated as "given to" actually is chasing, going after an opportunity to show hospitality, diokontes. This means not waiting to be asked to have somebody in your house, but taking the initiative. Make it known that your house is open to strangers, and not only that you would have them if the motel happens to be full. And how wonderful it would be if the money saved from motel and hotel bills were used for missions. What interaction and blessing can come to both parties, the ones giving hospitality and the ones receiving it. Furthermore, hospitality can bless not only the one who seeks it and demonstrates it, but also the mission of the church in reaching its community and the world for Christ. An elder should take seriously the apostolic admonition in Heb. 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

10. An elder should be apt to teach. "A bishop then must...be apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). The Greek adjective didaktikos is excellently rendered in the King James Version as "apt to teach." It includes not only innate capability, but also desire to teach. We use the word in English with the same meaning, "didactic." It occurs in 2 Tim. 2:24, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive (be quarrelsome); but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." This means that every elder in the local church must be able to clearly communicate the Word of God according to the guidelines of Titus 1:9. (See Qualification No. 25.)

11. An elder should not be quarrelsome. "A bishop then must be...no striker..." (1 Tim. 3:3). An elder, no matter what his particular function in the church must not be a "striker," as the King James Version translated the word plektes, from the verb plezzo, "to strike, smite." The same adjective, plektes is also used in Titus 1:7.

12. An elder should not be eager for dishonorable gain. "A bishop then must be...not greedy of filthy lucre..." (1 Tim. 3:3). The word aischrokerdes, in the King James Version translated "not greedy for filthy lucre." It derives from aischros, which means indecent, dishonorable, spoken of what is offensive either to modesty and Christian purity (Eph. 5:12; Titus 1:11) or to the manners and customs of a community if these are contrary to the explicit precepts of God's Word (1 Cor. 11:6; 14:35). The second word is kerdos, "profit," which in Titus 1:11 is used with aischros, while in 1 Tim. 3:3 is used as a compound adjective, aischrokerdes. This refers to two areas of activity of the leader. First, in his secular job or business he should not be known as one who squeezes the last penny out of people, so to speak. The Scriptures are definitely not against decent proportionate profit such as we are taught in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) where our Lord commends the profit earned commensurate with the investment made. In the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27), we have the direct command of our Lord, "Occupy till I come." The imperative verb in Greek translated "occupy"

is pragmateusasthe, which actually means "do business, trade, carry on commerce which involves profit." What is prohibited here, however, is dishonest profit which would cause the testimony of Jesus Christ to suffer. The second area of possible indecent profit is that an elder may try to exploit the needs of a local church in doing business with the church itself or with other members of the church for the purpose of undue and indecent profit for himself. See also Titus 1:7.

13. An elder should be reasonable, forbearing. "A bishop then must be...patient..." (1 Tim. 3:3). The word epieikes, derived from epi, "unto," and eikos, denoting "proper, fitting," means a person who is fair, moderate, forbearing, as he examines each case on its own merits instead of applying general rules without considering the circumstances of a situation. It is the opposite of plektes, "a striker," one who hits and is quarrelsome instead of understanding of the circumstances involved. In Titus 3:2 the same word is used and is translated "gentle," in contrast to brawlers, while in 1 Tim. 3:3 it is translated "patient" in contrast also to a striker and a brawler. An elder ought to be a person who, instead of making a fight out of a certain situation, should rather show consideration and gentle understanding.

14. An elder should not be a brawler—not fighting. "A bishop then must be...not a brawler..." (1 Tim. 3:3). The word is amachos, which occurs in both 1 Tim. 3:3 and Titus 3:2, and it means a person who is not contentious or disposed to fights and quarrels. One such elder in a church may disrupt the whole community of believers. Such a person disposed to fights and quarrels should never be appointed as an elder. This does not mean that one should not contend for the faith once delivered to the saints as we are so commanded by the Apostle Jude, in the third verse of his epistle. We should contend for the faith, but not fight other believers.

15. An elder should not be covetous or a lover of money. "A bishop then must be...not covetous..." (1 Tim. 3:3). The King James Version translates the Greek word aphilarguros as "not covetous." This command word, however, derives from the negative a, "without," philos, "friend," and arguros, "silver," or "money," and literally means one who is not a friend of money. The word which corresponds to covetous in Greek is pleonektes (1 Cor. 5:10, 11; 6:10; Eph. 5:5), one who wants more of what he has in spite of the fact that what he possesses has not satisfied him, or one who craves for that which he does not have and would like to have, in spite of the fact that it has not satisfied others who have it. See also Titus 1:7.

16. An elder should be one who rules his house well. "A bishop then must be...one that ruleth well his own house..." (1 Tim. 3:4). The function of an elder is to rule. The local church is likened to a household. In the same manner that the children and the wife submit to the leadership of the father and husband, so must the church submit to the Biblical leadership of the elders. The corresponding expression in Titus 1:6 is "having faithful children." The verb translated "rule" is proistamenon, the present participle of proistemi, which literally means "to stand before," to lead with the idea of presiding over the affairs of the family. A man who cannot give proper leadership to his own family cannot give it to a congregation. In 1 Tim. 5:17, we have the same verb, a perfect adjectival participle proestotes, "the elders that rule."

The word does not indicate authoritarian rulership but rather responsible example. In Titus 3:8, 14, the verb is used of setting an example in good works, translated "maintain."

"...having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" In the rest of 1 Tim. 3:4, we find the kind of leadership that is meant by the expression, ruling one's house well, in regard to the children of the family: "Having his children in subjection with all gravity." The word "subjection" is hupotage, which means under him in their proper order. The word "gravity" in Greek is semnotes, "dignity." This provides a qualification as to how a father disciplines his children; that they may be under him but in their decent and proper order. The eldership of a father ought not to be authoritarian, but decently and prudently authoritative, as the leadership of an elder ought to be in regard to the church. What is translated "with all gravity," in Greek is meta pases semnotetos (1 Tim. 2:2; 3:4; Titus 2:2). What is "semnotetos"? It is the noun of the adjective semnos which is used of things in Phil. 4:8 and translated "...whatsoever things are honest." The adjective is also used of persons in 1 Tim. 3:8 and translated as "grave." "Likewise must the deacon be grave." Also, in verse 11, the wives of the deacons must be "grave." In Titus 2:2, the advice is that "aged men should be grave." The word is akin to sebomai, which means to reverence. It refers to behavior which arouses respect on the part of others. It refers to things or people which are dignified. The noun semnotes, which should be the characteristic of a good father or leader in the management of children at home or people in a local church, is "dignity." There are two ways of making a child obey. One is by authoritarian command which the child may resent and which may never prove permanently beneficial, and the other is dignified leadership causing a child to understand his or her position in the family and act in a proper manner.

This is the way that elders should lead in a local church. In a local church we do not want believers who only obey certain laws imposed by the leaders, but rather who love the Lord Jesus in such a way that they are persuaded that it is to their best advantage and to the glory of God to obey out of love and recognition of the advantages of the better way.

In 1 Tim. 3:5, we have a parenthetical clarification of the meaning of the word, proistemi, "rule," of verse 4, "For if a man know not how to rule (prostenai, second aorist infinitive, indicating each time a decision is to be made), his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" "Rule" here is equated with taking care, which in Greek is epimeleomai, which means to have care upon or over, such as the sick (Luke 10:34, 35), or of the church as here. This is what the good Samaritan did for the wounded man of the parable of the good Samaritan when he brought him to an inn. He tenderly took care of him. It is the same as the verb, merimnao, "to take care, give thought, be anxious." When it concerns self, it is being anxious as something to be avoided (Matt. 6:25, 28), while when it is concern for others it is a benevolent and necessary activity, a virtue (1 Cor. 12:25), and means to exercise tender care for others. As the rule of the father for his own children and household is that of forethought and provision, as well as concern, so it must be with the elder of a local church. It is the rule of

protection, guidance, and provision that is referred to as a necessary characteristic of an elder as of a decent father.

In Titus 1:6, we find similar qualification for the elder: "...having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly." That word, "unruly," anupotakta, "disobedient, or not in their proper place or order," is the negative concept of en hupotage of 1 Tim. 3:4, translated, "in subjection." (See Qualification No. 5 about the children of an elder.)

17. An elder should not be a new convert. "A bishop then must be...not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Tim 3:6). The word neophutos, "a novice," occurs only here and derives from neos, "new," and phuo, "to generate, to produce, bring forth new sprouts, "It means a neophyte, a new convert whose stability in the faith has not yet been tried and proven.

Paul gives a reason for not installing a new convert as an elder: "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." There is a great danger in somebody who has just been converted and elevated to a position of leadership in the local church, that he may think more of himself than he really ought to. He may think that he knows more than he really does. Pride is an instant danger of sudden elevation. The expression, "lest being lifted up with pride," in Greek is hina me tuphotheis from the verb tuphoo, which literally means to surround with smoke, and metaphorically to make conceited, proud, to inflate. The meaning therefore is, lest being conceited and therefore throw up a smoke-screen trying to deceive others in thinking more highly of himself than he deserves. The danger of such pride is that one falls into the condemnation of the devil. The verb for "fall into" is empipto, derived from the preposition en, "in," and pipto, "to fall, thus to fall in." It indicated more of an entrapment rather than an intended result. No new convert who suddenly is in a position of leadership or teaching is safe from pride. A local church should never provide this circumstance of entrapment for a new convert in assigning a leadership role to him. The devil is ready to elevate anyone at the beginning of his ministry, even as he tempted Jesus. Sudden elevation into responsibility in the Christian church is an entrapment of the devil in which fellow believers should never have a part.

Paul explains what is necessary for a convert to become a leader (1 Tim. 3:7): "Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." He must be given adequate opportunity to establish his solid testimony among those outside the local church so that when he becomes a leader within the church there will be acceptance, not only from the people within the church, but also of those without, thus the church being elevated in the eyes of those who are following its witness from without. This indicates that every elder in a local church must have a good reputation in the community in which he lives, lest he becomes an object of ridicule. Let there be no situation in which the people outside the church will say, "Look at that church, what kind of elders they have. We know what they are as we deal with them in business as they work for us and with us." No reproach should be brought to the name of Christ by the church giving responsibility to a

novice whose character in the community has not been tried. The verb, empipto is used twice, once in verse 6 and once in verse 7. That it is an entrapment is evident from the use of the word pagis, "snare or trap." "...lest he fall empese (second aorist subjunctive of empipto) into reproach and the snare of the devil."

18. An elder should be capable of being God's steward. "For a bishop must...as the steward of God..." (Titus 1:7). In Titus 1:7, after we are told that the bishop should be unindictable (see Qualification No. 3), there is a further qualification that says, "as the steward of God." The word "steward" in Greek is oikonomos from which our English "economist" is derived. An economist is in charge of money. The intimation here is that money is the most likely area of contention, for which one may be taken to court. What the Apostle Paul is saying is that no one who is likely to deal with money as an elder should have a criminal record. He should not be one who can be tempted by misappropriation of money and consequently be prosecuted. His management of money must be as unto God and he must be a steward of God, realize it and act as such. The leaders over finances should be above reproach and unindictable.

19. An elder should not be arrogant. "For a bishop must be...not self-willed..." (Titus 1:7). In the King James Version the Greek word, authades is translated as "self-willed." It derives from autos, one's "self," and hedomai, "to take pleasure." It is a person who takes pleasure in himself, one who wants to have his way no matter what, and as a result of that, he becomes arrogant and, by hook or crook he wants to impose his will on others. The word also occurs in 2 Peter 2:10, describing false teachers, "But chiefly (of the unjust reserved unto the day of judgment) them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." A person who seeks to have his own way, regardless of the opinions and feelings of others, ought not to be an elder.

20. An elder should not be soon angry. "For a bishop must be...not soon angry" (Titus 1:7). The word is orgilos, "easily angered," derived from orge, "anger." The word is found only here and it must be interpreted as referring to one who gets easily angry for the wrong reason and at the wrong time and in the wrong measure. To be angry when the person and teaching of Christ are trampled upon is a virtue. But to be angry because self is not praised and satisfied is a sin. Paul does not teach that the elders of a church should be sitting ducks who are not excited by anything that goes on. Their anger, however, should be limited only when affront is brought to the cause of Christ and not to themselves personally. We must never forget that even our Lord was angered when he was chided by the Pharisees in a synagogue because on the Sabbath he healed a man who suffered from a withered hand. We read in Mark 3:5, "and when he had looked around about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts..."

An elder should be a person who is not angered unless there is an unselfish reason to be angry.

21. An elder should be benevolent. "For a bishop must be...a lover of good men..." (Titus 1:8). The King James Version translates the Greek word, philagathos as a "lover of good men." The Greek word, philagathos derives from philos, "friend," and agathos, "benevolently good." It means one who loves and practices with self-denial what is good. It is wishing to be benevolent and practice it too. But is not a Christian enjoined by our Lord to love also his enemies (Matt. 5:43, 44)? In the passage in Matthew the word for love is agapao, indicating the quality of love God had for the world in John 3:16, a redemptive love for the lost. An elder should have this sort of love for his enemies. An elder should be one who loves to not only be among people who are benevolent, but to love benevolence and do it. A selfish person should not be entrusted with the function of an elder.

22. An elder should be just. "For a bishop must be...just" (Titus 1:8). The word dikaios does not refer to man's relationship with God in this instance in the sense of righteousness, having appropriated the righteousness of Christ, although that is presupposed, but it refers to man's relationship with his fellow humans, and especially those of the local church over whom he has responsibility and leadership. It is one who is even-handed and views the right of others as if they were his own. It is being just and equitable, impartial in his judgments and decisions in the position of leadership that he has.

23. An elder should live holy and unpolluted by the world. "For a bishop must be...holy..." (Titus 1:8). The word translated "holy" is hosios, which along with hieros, "sacred," should be distinguished from that which denotes separation from the world and attachment to God, hagios, "holy." Hosios is one who recognizes that there are laws instituted by God which one must reverence and apply in his relationship with others. Hosios is a person who recognizes and discharges his duties as prescribed by God in the moral realm, even as God prescribed ceremonial duties. It relates more to the keeping of God's ordinances than the character of life which is demonstrated more by the term hagios, "holy." An elder should recognize God's moral commandments, not only pertaining to man's relationship with God, but also his relationship with his fellow humans and that they must be the basis of the function of one's daily life.

24. An elder must have self-control. "For a bishop must be...temperate" (Titus 1:8). The word egkrates, translated "temperate" occurs only here and derives from en, "in," and "kratos, "might, strength, power, dominion." It means strong, powerful, exercising dominion over what he wants to escape lest he becomes controlled by it. It is a person who is master of his passions and who is content in doing and having only what God wants him to do and have. It is the opposite of profligate, one who does whatever he wants in order to satisfy himself.

25. An elder should be a protector of sound teaching and a rebuker of false teachers. "For a bishop must be...holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). The participle with which the verse opens is antechomenon, which means to be attached to the faithful word which he has been taught. This attachment involves not only holding, but also proclaiming.

The word "faithful," pistos, in regard to the Word of God, means dependable, and the dependability of the teaching of the elders can be determined by whether it is according to the substance of the teaching of the Apostles. It is the duty of the elder to protect the dependability of the Word, that it is nothing less and nothing more than the didache, "the doctrine." It is the adherence and putting forth of apostolic teaching that causes an elder to be strong and to be able to exhort as he himself teaches sound doctrine, without deviation from apostolic teaching. It is apostolic teaching that makes an elder strong and enables him to exhort or comfort (parakaleo), which means to stand by and entreat on behalf of others. There is, however, a second duty for the teaching elder, and this is toward those who oppose the Word of God as gainsayers. The gainsayers are those who "speak against," antilego, in contradiction of that which is apostolic teaching. These contradictors may be inside the local church or outside, and they should both be exposed. The word translated "to convince," is elegcho, which means to convict, to prove one in the wrong. In a local church situation not everybody among the believers or in the group of elders serving in different capacities can fully agree on everything. A local church, however, should be aware if anyone in the church or among elders has some divergent doctrine or teaches something that is contrary to the Scriptures. If there were no unanimity of doctrinal teaching, and even interpretation, there would be dissention. Among the leaders, allowing for discussion of the meaning of Scriptures, there should be coincidence of doctrine and the teaching of such doctrine. Both words referring to teaching are used here. Didache includes both the body of belief and the teaching of the doctrine, and didaskalia includes both but with greater emphasis on the teaching rather than the body of precepts. The Apostle Paul's concern is that there should be no teaching that is sneaked through or that is not clearly stated and clearly understood.

IV. Qualifications of Official Deacons. The qualifications of the deacons are detailed in 1 Tim. 3:8-13. Some of the qualifications are the same as those of the elders and they will not be fully discussed here except to be mentioned since reference can be made in the section entitled "Qualifications of Elders."

1. Decent and dignified, semnos. (See Elder Qualifications, No. 16).
2. Not double-tongued. The Greek word, dilogos, means speaking one thing and meaning another, or saying different things at different times on the same subject to accommodate the situation.
3. Not given to much wine. In the case of the elders, we saw that the attitude toward drink, particularly wine, is expressed by the word nephalios (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 2:2), meaning temperate, sober, abstinent with respect to wine. (See Elder Qualification No. 6).

The second term in paroinos (1 Tim. 3:3), one who is constantly by the bottle, so to speak, or is near to wine (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7).

Here in 1 Tim. 3:8, we have the third admonition as the King James Version translates it, "Not given to much wine." What is translated "given to" is the Greek verb, prosecho, "to set one's attention toward." It means to care for something in such an absorbing manner that other duties are neglected. One who sets importance on having as much wine as possible should not be a deacon.

4. Not greedy for filthy lucre. The word is aischrokerdes, eager for dishonorable gain or profit, as stated for the elders in 1 Tim. 3:3. (See Elder Qualification, No. 12).

5. Clean conscience. As the King James Version has it, "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9). This means that a deacon must realize that all that pertains to the Christian faith is not explainable. However, one should not feel guilty that he is accepting the seemingly unacceptable because it is possessed with the element of mystery. The same apostle states it clearly in 1 Cor. 2:7, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." Neither God nor the way He works nor the way He decided to save man are elements within the grasp of human intelligence. They constitute a revelation which can be accepted only by faith, which acceptance is not an affront to human intelligence, but the recognition that it is impossible for a finite human being to discover the depths and mind of God. Therefore, the acceptance of that revelation by faith is at the heart of Christianity. If anyone has any doubt about the mysterious element in God and His revelation, he should not be a deacon. His conscience must be clear that he is not a Christian because he is an ignoramus, but because he is inferior to God. One should remember that the fall of man was occasioned by his desire to know as much as God (Gen. 3:5). Therefore, the acceptance of that which man could neither design nor discover is an act of intelligent faith.

The term "pure conscience" means a conscience that has been purified and cleansed by the blood of Christ which, in itself, is the greatest mystery. The word for "pure" is katharos, which really means "cleansed," having been impure at one time. The Lord Jesus said that "the pure in heart shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). The word is the same. One cannot see God unless his heart has first been purified by Jesus Christ, and no one has a place as a deacon in a local church who does not have a pure heart and can see God, and seeing God behind the mysteries of creation and redemption finds them fully acceptable.

The word "conscience" is suneidesis, which is a compound word from the conjunction sun, "together," and the verb eido, which refers to instinctive knowledge resulting from what a person is. Conscience means knowing what God knows, not because of equal intelligence and capability, but because one who is saved is indwelt by God Himself. Only a child of God can know who God is and what He can do as a result of His cleansing power. A deacon should be one whose heart has not only been cleansed, but one who knows together with God that this has taken place, and that he is a partaker of a knowledge that is not common to all humans, but is privy only to those who have been made partakers of the nature of God (2 Peter 1:4).

6. Tested and tried. "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless" (1 Tim. 3:10).

The word that is translated "proved" also involves testing, dokimazo. This indicates that before a deacon serves or is appointed as a deacon he should be tested. Very few churches do this and the result is calamitous for the peaceful operation of a church. The trial and testing must encompass the checking on all the qualifications detailed here. Who is to test a deacon? This is something that is not spoken of in regard to the elders in 1 Tim. 3:1–7 or Titus 1:5–9. Is it possible that it is because the deacon is the first initiatory step into the function of the government of a local church while maybe the elders have first served as deacons and have already been tested and proven?

This gives us ground to believe that an elder should have deacons, or one deacon serving with him and others as trainees.

7. The deacons' wives. First Tim. 3:11, in the King James Version, says, "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." You will notice in your Bible that the pronoun "their" is in italics, which means that it is not in the Greek text. There are some who interpret the word gunaikas as referring to deaconesses instead of to the wives of the deacons whose qualifications have just been enunciated. We have no instance in the entire New Testament of any woman serving as a deaconess. The only exception is Rom. 16:1 where Phoebe is mentioned, but she is not called diakonissa, (the feminine of deacon, deaconess,) which would have provided absolute proof that she was functioning as a deaconess and not simply serving, which the word diakonos, for the most part, means in the New Testament (Matt. 20:26; 23:11; Mark 9:35; 10:43). The word diakonos is also used specifically of an officer of the church, one who has charge of the alms and treasury of the church, an overseer of the poor and the sick, particularly (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12; 4:6). Therefore, it is doubtful whether in 1 Tim. 3:11 Paul is speaking of deaconesses since it is safer to translate Rom. 16:1 regarding Phoebe as a servant instead of a deaconess.

What Paul is saying to Timothy is that it is important not only to examine those who would serve as deacons in a local church, but also examine what kind of wives they have. Detailing the qualifications of the wives of deacons, he says that they should be:

- a. Decent and dignified. The word is semnas, which was already used in regard to the deacons in verse 8 and in regard to the aged men in Titus 2:2. (See Elder Qualification No. 16). Decent and dignified refers to behavior and dress. The noun, semnotes occurs in 1 Tim. 2:2 in relation to all believers and in conjunction with piety or godliness. It also occurs in regard to the bishops or elders in 1 Tim. 3:4, translated "gravity." It is also designated as a quality with which Titus himself should be characterized as an example to other believers (Titus 2:7).

- b. Not slanderers. The word for "slanderers" here is diabolous, which is here used as an adjective. Usually, when it is used as a noun it refers to the devil, ho diabolos with the definite article (Matt. 4:1, 5, 8; Eph. 4:27; 1 Tim. 3:6, 7 etc.). Here it is used as an adjective derived from the verb diaballo, used only in Luke 16:1 and where it should be translated "to falsely accuse," for the devil never justly accuses anyone. Diabolous, therefore, in the case of a deacon's wife is correctly translated "slanderers," or "false accusers." No one should serve as a deacon in a local church whose wife is a false accuser.
- c. Sober in regard to alcoholic beverages. The word is nephaleos, the same word as we find in 1 Tim. 3:2 in regard to elders and in Titus 2:2 in regard to aged men. The temptation for women is to be addicted to wine because of the constant availability of it at home. It is therefore part of wisdom not to have it available at all. (See Elder Qualification No. 6).
- d. "Faithful in all things" (1 Tim. 3:11) This is something that is not said either of the elders or of the deacons, but only of the wives of the deacons. It indicates the importance of the wives of ministering deacons. The word pistas, refers to both the adherence to the Scriptural content of their faith being identical to apostolic teaching and to their behavior. The husband must be able to depend upon his wife in all things and particularly in his service as a deacon.
8. Not a womanizer (1 Tim. 3:12). The expression, "the husband of one wife," is the same as in the case of the elders in 1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:6. (See Elder Qualification No. 4).
9. Proper supervisors of their children and their home. "Ruling their children and their own houses well" (1 Tim. 3:12). The word for "rule" here is the same, proistemi, as in 1 Tim. 3:4, 5; Titus 3:8, 14. It refers to proper supervision of their children and their home. (See Elder Qualification No. 16).
10. The promise of reward for the good performance of the office of a deacon. (1 Tim. 3:13). The Apostle Paul is pointing out that it is possible to be a bad deacon or a good one. If one has the aforementioned qualities and is properly tested, he stands a good chance of serving well.

In the Scriptures we find the promise of a reward for everything done well in accordance with the divine pattern as here detailed. "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 3:13).

The King James Version expresses the aorist participle, hoi diakonesantes, "those who did serve" implying that this service is that of a deacon. Contextually it is correctly assumed to be the good execution of the office of a deacon. Although this has a limited contextual meaning, it can be taken more generally in its application, that there are rewards for serving.

What is translated "purchase" is the Greek verb peripoiontai the present indicative middle of peripoieo, which is derived from peri denoting acquisition and poieo, "to work." It means to acquire for oneself (Acts 20:28). It is used exactly the same way in modern Greek, I treat someone or myself.

What does a deacon who served well treat himself to? The direct object is "a good degree." The Greek word for degree is bathmos, basically meaning a step of a stair which one desires to ascend. The word is used only in 1 Tim. 3:13 and it means a step of dignity, a standing in advance of others. The adjective, kalos, "good," is the same word as the adverb kalos, "well" in the expression "those who did serve well." Those who served well earned for themselves a good promotion, a step forward. This, of course, implies that there are deacons who do not move forward because of their bad service as a deacon. This is such a wonderful principle to remember in a competitive world. Everybody can promote himself or herself through hard work. Promotion in any other way by deceptive appearances only takes you to a height for an eventual crash.

The second reward of a good service by a deacon is that he earns for himself "great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." The word for boldness is parrhesia, which is derived from pas, "all," and rhesis, "speaking." It is speaking without fear or intimidation, frankly, freely or boldly (John 7:13, 26), openly, plainly, without ambiguity (Mark 8:32; John 10:24; 11:14; 16:25, 29), with authority (Philemon 8).

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