**Where Do Elders Come From?**

Once upon a time, two young Christians got married, determined to be faithful to God and therefore to one another. He loved, cherished and nourished her and she respected and obeyed him, all the while helping him to become the leader God intended him to be. There were bumps in the road for sure, but they were devoted to one another. She was a “one man woman” and he was a “one woman man.”

Children came along and they were both committed to raising them up in the Lord. He knew it was his responsibility to train his children and she loved and taught them as well. Together, they prayed, read the bible, talked about the Lord often, and gladly attended all the assemblies. Their children were respectful and submissive. As they grew up, they realized that they too were sinners, and consequently became believers in Jesus. In all this, it was evident that he ruled his house well.

They both enjoyed having folks in their home. Sometimes it was visitors to the assemblies, a new couple that had just become members, a lonely widow, or the young folks in the church along with some of their friends. The time and money they spent was done cheerfully. He was approachable and listened well. He was a man given to hospitality.

By this time, he was spending more time than ever studying the word of God. Wanting to do more than just teach his family, he began giving short talks on Wednesday nights. Then it was speaking at the Lord’s Supper, then a lesson on Sunday night and pretty soon he was teaching an adult bible class. It was there where he began to learn how to handle the variety of questions, some foolish, some testing, and some honest that came his way. The way he dealt with the comments and questions demonstrated a spirit that was not quarrelsome but gentle. On occasion, he showed he was capable of exhorting and convicting some who contradicted the faithful word to which he held fast. He also began to teach neighbors, friends, and co-workers who agreed to study with him. He became a capable teacher of God’s word.

He was a hard worker at the office. And he was a good neighbor and honorable in his dealings in the market place. He even coached some of his children’s ball teams and was well respected for how he conducted himself, especially when the umpires missed the calls and the parents were giving him grief. In essence, he had a good reputation in the community among those who were not Christians.

Some in the church began to seek out his advice. It might be a young couple having problems in their marriage or another couple having difficulties with their children. Others came to him because of problems they had with other brethren. He was quick to hear both sides and made every effort to help these folks resolve their differences. He was just and sober-minded on such occasions. The church they met with did not have elders so the men held business meetings. It was there he showed himself not to be quick-tempered or violent, but rather a man of self-control. When he spoke, he often had something wise and helpful to say.

Where do elders come from? They come from folks like this couple who decided from the beginning to be faithful and to grow in the Lord. They wanted to do more, not for glory, but to serve others. They loved doing good and he was more than willing to make sacrifices to do what they did. (He was not greedy for money and that meant not working a lot of overtime to pay for hobbies he did not have time to attend to in the first place.) Some of their own brethren were not always appreciative of their efforts. It made them look bad when they were not as dedicated to the Lord’s work. But they persevered, even in the face of criticism. He behaved himself well, was holy and blameless and she was faithful in all things.

Then one day, the local church realized they had a couple of men among them like the one just described. So they examined them, found them to be like those described in **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**, and appointed them to be the shepherds of the flock. They had proven themselves as they had already been doing much of the work elders are to do.

This is not fairy tale stuff. It really would happen in more churches if some men would dedicate themselves wholly to the Lord and the rest of us would be willing to follow them while esteeming them highly in love for their work’s sake.

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