

God's Command and our need to have Elders

Scripture: Titus 1:5 “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, NASU

Introduction:

It's Elder selection time again. Usually as a matter of practice we do this every three years here at Cedarloo although that isn't a set rule, but certainly needed at this time. So we are going to take a break in the Sermon on the Mount Series and spend some time preaching, discussing, thinking, and praying about the potential elder servants among us. Then if such men meet, God's design and expectation, we will ask the Holy Spirit to call them out through our faithful consideration.

I've heard a couple of comments lately that really are true observations. The comments are something to the effect that “*we don't seem to see much of the elders lately.*” Boy I'm really glad that several of you have noticed this very obvious fact.

It's been noted by more than one study that for elders to have an effective presence a bare minimum of 1 elder is needed for every 50 people, ...while 1 for every 25 is closer to the ideal.

With our current situation of an average attendance between 130-140 every Sunday. Our two elders end up primarily being fire-fighters running from one problem to the next in an exercise of simple oversight. So the presence of shepherding spiritual guides on many occasions ends up taking a back seat because of our lack of man power.

With this in mind, please allow me to put it quite frankly.....We need more elders desperately and in my opinion the frustrations of not having enough will certainly lead to burn out and certainly hamper spiritual growth here at Cedarloo.

However, may it be plainly said that we are not ever so desperate that we install men who are not ready or unqualified.

Transitional Statement:

The truth is that our brotherhood is finding it harder and harder to find Elders. I'm not sure exactly what that means. However, a couple of things are fairly sure.

First, some men just haven't got ready yet. They simply haven't reached the appointed hour for their service. On this note it seems quite clear that leadership training should be among the tops items on any priority list.

Then, I guess it has always been true that some men who are able are just not willing. This is not necessarily wrong because an effective elder serves from desire not from obligation. But I have to wonder why men are not desiring to step up and serve the Lord.

I. Firt let's start with a question. Does the church need elders?

A. *QUESTION: How many of you have ever attended a church without Elders?

1. If you want some pointed details on why the church needs Elders see these folks after church.

a. They will tell you about the dreaded business meetings?

1) How many of you have sit through church business meetings?

b. When I was 14 years old I used to sit in those meetings

1) Once I listened to brothers in Christ curse at another.

2) I listened to brothers, not very spiritual as far as Christian maturity, making spiritual decisions.

a) The outcome was a church that had more split ends than a bad hair do.

3) **The very thought of a men's business meeting makes me want to puke.**

a) **And certainly it is not God's design**

2. Think for a minute about poor decisions that come out of church business meetings: They are usually fostered some of the following:

a. A lack of spirituality

1) When people lacking Christian maturity try to lead others...they both end up in the ditch.

Matthew 15:14

14 "... if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

b. Then there always seems to be this great error of thought that the majority knows best.

1) Let's take a vote:

2) Let's make spirituality a matter of majority rule...

a) Who will make a motion.....and seconds?

3) In this there is a tendency for what is popular to often times becomes more important that God's expectations.

c. Then there is always somebody that during the meeting declares something with such force that everyone goes along just to keep the peace.

1) This seems so ridiculous but I have seen then played out so many times it makes me blue in the face.

d. Then, sadly enough, I have witnessed decisions agreed upon because the man who made them had deep pockets.

B. God knows His people well.

1. He knows that many times we tend to be stiff necked, blind to His needs and desires and even hard hearted.

2. It has always been His plan to have leaders among His people.

a. Read the entire bible for reference.

3. For New Testament Christianity God's design includes elders.

Titus 1:5

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, NASU

Acts 14:23

23 When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

a. Appointed in every church

II. From the Old Testament let's consider that God Himself raises up leaders

A. Reading: Exodus 18:1-12 This is the setting for our story today:

1. At Sinai Jethro comes to Moses

Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. 2 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Moses' wife Zipporah, after he had sent her away, 3 and her two sons, of whom one was named Gershom, for Moses said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land." 4 The other was named Eliezer, for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." 5 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was camped, at the mount of God. 6 He sent word to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her." 7 Then Moses went out to meet his

father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare and went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had befallen them on the journey, and how the LORD had delivered them. 9 Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 So Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD who delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, and who delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; indeed, it was proven when they dealt proudly against the people." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law before God.

2. Israel had been freed from slavery
 - a. Lead out of Egypt by God Almighty
3. A celebration was at hand
 - a. A big block party of sorts
4. God had claimed these people for his own
 - a. And God had began to shape them
 - b. Molding them into his own nation.

TS But molding people turns out to be a rather difficult task!

III. You see, Israel carried a lot of baggage with them

THEIR PAST, IN MANY WAYS, SHAPED WHO THEY HAD BECOME?

- A. They had been given a promise through Abraham Gen. 12:3 & 22:18
 1. Great nation
 2. Land
 3. Blessing
- B. In Exodus 1 they ended up enslaved in Egypt 430 years
 1. Is it possible that their attitudes may have included anger and bitterness?
 2. Probably likely
- C. Let's think about what shaped them while in Egypt: **(Exodus chapters 1-17)**
 1. Purposefully afflicted

2. Forced to make bricks ...hard labor
3. Subjected to inhumane population control
 - a. (Shiporah and Puah) instructed to kill sons
 - b. Latter all sons were thrown into Nile
 - 1) Grief and heart ach to lose a child
4. Beaten by Egyptian masters
5. Fought with each other
6. Made to make bricks without a supply of straw
 - a. impossible to meet quota
7. Mad at Moses for their problems
 - a. Lack of understanding in God
 - b. And a real lack of faith
8. Became discouraged
 - a. Bible uses term (shortness of spirit) Ex 6:9
9. Lived through plagues of Egypt
 - a. Some of which effected them Ex 8:22
 - b. Death all around them during last plague
10. Then God in a pillar of cloud and fire lead them out of Egypt
 - a. So they were lead out of Egypt with only what they could carry
 - b. Homeless
11. They were found to be afraid of Pharaoh at Red Sea
 - a. Again failing to see the big picture
12. They were not very faithful
 - a. Grumblers
 - 1) No water
 - 2) No food
 - 3) Should have stayed in Egypt
 - a) Thought God was not with them if things were not going well.

IV. Our struggles today are similar in many ways.

- A. I thought about how Satan uses many of these struggles to tear us down.
- B. So I took out a sheet of paper and begin to think of all the ways Satan tries to destroy us.....here are a few.
 - 1. Stress, worry and anxiety
 - a. Comes from a lack of trust in God
 - 2. Financial problems.
 - 3. Selfish desires
 - 4. Anger
 - 5. Insecurity
 - 6. Relationship problems
 - a. Marriage
 - b. Children
 - c. Family
 - d. Loneliness
 - 7. Bitterness
 - 9. Sickness
 - 10. Sexual sins
 - Adultery
 - Fornication
 - Puberty
 - 11. Hypocrisy
 - 12. Complacency
 - 1/2 hearted members
 - 13. Hidden Sin in Camp
 - 14. Commitment issues
 - 15. Hurt / fear / frustration
 - 16. Problems of the Past
 - 17. Liberalism/ Radical
 - 18. Abuse
 - 19. Spiritual immaturity
 - 20. Gossips
 - 21. Addiction
 - a. Booze
 - b. Drugs
 - c. Porn
 - 22. Lack of forgiveness...self/others
 - 23. Jealousy, Envy & Strife
 - 24. Burn out

V. In Regard to such things, Moses Had More Work than He Could Manage

(Exodus 18:13-17)

13 It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. 14 Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for

the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" 15 Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 "When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws." 17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good.

A. Moses was trying to do it all.

1. He needed help

B. Our shepherd's job is enormous and they are in danger of getting burnt out

C. Think about some of their responsibilities:

1. Spiritual truth
2. Prayer...seeking God's way
3. Waiting on God
4. Focus
5. Bible study
6. Training
 - a. Future church leaders
 - b. All of us regular folks
 - c. Themselves (Keeping their skills up)
7. Vision
8. Guarding flock
9. Growth and maturity in God
10. Encouraging
11. Discipline
 - a. Helping folks get back on the right path
12. Rightly dividing the truth
 - a. Acts 15:6 Jerusalem conference
13. Distribution of funds.
 - a. Acts 11:30
14. Arbitration
15. Getting folks involved
16. Counseling
 - a. Marriage
 - b. Personal
 - c. Children
 - b. Grief
17. Confidentiality
18. Making sure no-one falls through the cracks
19. Keeping humble before God

20. Their own families
 - a. Including themselves
21. Church Balance
22. Examples
23. Patient and Loving
24. Advice
25. Mentoring

III. Having an insufficient number of elders wear them out and the church

(Exodus 18:18)

18 " You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

A. First of all Moses will wear out.

1. Physically
2. Emotionally
3. Burn Out

a. I wonder what effect this had on Moses' family?

B. The Israelites will wear out too.

1. Why?

- a. They surely get tired of long lines
- b. And weary of being neglected because of such a large work load.

2. Church, the Sheep get weary when the shepherds are overworked.

IV. The Solution is to ask for help

(Exodus 18:19-23)

19 "Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, 20 then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. 21 "Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 22 "Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 "If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace."

A. Get Help because the job is to big

B. Our job here is really to big for only 2 Elders

V. God had groomed Moses over a life time of successes and failures to be ready for this season

- A. Think of all God put Moses through to get him ready to lead God's people
- B. And God has also groomed some of you who sit here today.

Conclusion:

-IS THIS US TODAY?

- We are leaving so many things on the table
- Not because we want to but because we need extra help

-Let us search our hearts carefully

- Giving fullness of thought to our decisions
- Recognizing the importance of the Lord's work here.

-Church let's make an investment of prayer to God as we consider our selections:

- Ask for Guidance and Wisdom
- Ask God to open the hearts of men who should be, and need to be leading
- Ask God to close the doors on any man who would harm the church.

*Please pray for your current Elders and preacher daily....God can and will do mighty things for his glory through us if we are ever before Him.