

Appointment or Ordination of Elders

I. Ways it has been done in the past

- A. Elders appointed by nomination and vote (as used in parliamentary procedures)
- B. Elders appointed by a preacher
- C. Elders select other elders
- D. In one congregation, those that desire the eldership were put before the congregation, and after a study on elders, if there was no scriptural objection to the man serving, then he was appointed as an elder

II. Appointment in the Bible

- A. There are no direction scriptural instructions on the appointment of elders
 - 1. In the absence of direct instruction, it is helpful to look at anything related to this and look at the rationale behind it
 - 2. Good, sound, spiritual judgment must be used
- B. Old Testament examples of appointment to specific offices
 - 1. The Lord chooses Judges and Prophets
 - a. 1 Sam 3:19-20
 - b. Jer 1:5 - Jeremiah
 - c. Amos 7:15 - Amos
 - 2. Saul
 - a. 1 Sam 8:1-5 - People wanted Samuel to get them a King
 - b. 1 Sam 9:15-17 - Samuel consulted God, and God chose Saul
 - c. 1 Sam 10:1 - Samuel privately appoints Saul through anointing
 - d. 1 Sam 10:24 - The people gave their consent
 - e. 1 Sam 10:27 - Not everyone accepted Saul at first, but that changed after Saul experienced a success (1 Sam 11:11-13)
 - 3. David
 - a. 1 Sam 16:12-13 - David chosen by God & appointed by Samuel
 - b. 2 Sam 5:1-3 - The people later gave their consent
 - 4. Ex. 19:8 - Even in following God, the people gave their consent

B. New Testament examples of appointment to specific offices

1. Acts 1:15-26 - Selection of Mathias to replace Judas
2. Acts 6:1-6 - Selection of servants to oversee feeding of Grecian Widows
3. Acts 13:1-3 - Appointment of Preachers to Evangelize
 - a. The Holy Spirit selected Barnabas and Saul
 - 1) Ephesians 4:11 - He gave some to be ... pastors & teachers
 - 2) The Holy Spirit played a role in this
 - b. The leaders laid their hands on them after fasting and praying

C. Specific New Testament descriptions regarding appointment of elders

1. Acts 14:23 - Paul and Barnabas on first missionary journey
 - a. They appointed elders in these newly planted churches
 - 1) Why so soon with a young church?
 - 2) Due to Jews who may have already been synagogue elders?
 - 3) Certainly not the case in Lystra (Acts 14:8-18)
 - b. It was done with prayer and fasting
2. Titus 1:5 - Instructions to Titus
 - a. He was to set in order what remains (or what was lacking)
 - b. This involved Titus appointing elders in the churches of Crete
 - c. It is not God's intention for a sheep to remain without a shepherd
3. I Timothy 5:21-22
 - a. Timothy, like Titus was also charged with appointing elders
 - b. Appointment of elders was not to be a hasty process
4. So elders were appointed by preachers and church planters

D. Since there is very little *specific* and *direct* instruction concerning the appointment of elders, one can assume there is freedom in the process. From the passages regarding appointment, we can infer up the following principles:

1. The process is not necessarily a purely democratic one
 - a. The democratic process is more a matter of our own cultural heritage, not of a biblical process.

- b. One can deduce the reasons for a non-democratic process
 - 1) Paul, the preachers, and church planters were the leaders, spiritual mentors, and mature
 - 2) A purely democratic process would put the spiritually mature person on the same footing as the spiritually immature
 - 3) Paul and his trainees, through training, experience, and guidance understood spiritual leadership and what is involved, making them the natural ones to oversee the process of officially recognizing elders
 - c. The current leaders exercise oversight over the process
- 2. The choice was not a matter of personal preference, but of God's preference
 - a. As in the Old Testament examples, God chooses (Eph 4:11) elders through the qualifications laid out in scripture
 - b. The preachers/ leaders (like the Old Testament examples) guide the people through the process and affirm the elders once in place.
 - c. Note: It is not stated exactly *how* Timothy and Titus went through the actual process. The actual selection may have been *overseen* by them with the people doing the actual selection (as in Acts 6 with the servants) and then they gave their approval by affirming or vetoing whom the people selected as possibilities for the eldership. ON the other hand Titus and Timothy may have done the selection themselves. We simply are not told
- 3. The appointment was accompanied by prayer and fasting and the laying on of hands
- 4. If elders are already in place, it would be reasonable for they themselves (as leaders) to oversee the process
 - a) Like Timothy and Titus, current elders are the spiritually mature ones who understand what is involved in spiritual leadership
 - b) This avoids politics and the ugliness sometimes involved in selection processes which may not look very different from a political campaign
- 5. In the absence of elders, it would be reasonable for the preacher to oversee the process and appoint new elders
- 6. In the absence of both a current eldership and preacher, it might be

reasonable for a team of recognized spiritually mature men to oversee the process, or better, as in the case of Paul on his first missionary journey, to have a preacher or church planter come and guide them through the process.

III. Other Considerations

- A. What if not everyone consents to being under the oversight of elders?
- B. How long is an elder and elder?
- C. If it is pressed to far, no one would be “qualified” to be an elder. In this way, can a person eliminate anyone they didn’t like saying he is not “qualified”
- D. This raises the question of how should the qualifications list be viewed?
 - 1. Is it an all-inclusive check list?
 - 2. Consider this: There is a list in Timothy, one in Titus. Both were written at the same time. One was for Timothy in Ephesus, the other for Titus in Crete. Yet, the lists are not identical! They couldn’t compile the two lists together as we do today.
 - a. This lends weight to these lists not being a technical, official, and exhaustive check list
 - b. It is best to look at the lists and consider the rationale behind the qualities and qualifications Paul lists.
 - 3. These lists spell out some general principles for evaluating both the quality of character and the abilities of the man being considered for shepherding.

Review of the Qualities and Qualifications

Quality

Qualifications

(According to Timothy:)

Aspiration to Ministry

Above Reproach

Temperate (clear headed)

Prudent (sensible)

Respectable (modest)

Hospitable

Not pugnacious (not a bully)

Gentle

Uncontentious (not quarrelsome)

Free from the love of money

Good Reputation with outsiders

(Additional ones according to Titus:)

Not self-willed (stubborn)

Not quick tempered

Not fond of dishonest gain

Lover of what is good

Just (righteous)

Devout (pious, holy)

Self controlled (disciplined)

Husband of one wife

Able to teach

Not addicted to wine

Manages his own household well
Keeps children under control with dignity
Not a new convert

Faithful children

Holds fast to the faithful word
Able to exhort in Sound Doctrine and
refute those who contradict

Summary of Qualifications:

This grouping can serve as a guide for both self-examination and evaluation of those that aspire to the ministry of shepherding:

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| 1. Has the heart of a shepherd | Aspires to the overseership |
| 2. Has good Christian Character | Above Reproach
Good reputation with outsiders
Not fond of dishonest gain
Loves what is good
Husband one wife (one woman
man |
| 3. Can communicate well | Able to teach
Uncontentious (not quarrelsome)
Exhort in Sound Doctrine &
refute those who contradict |
| 4. Displays Christians maturity | Not a new convert
Holds fast to the faithful word |
| 5. Loves others | Hospitable
Not Pugnacious (not a bully) |
| 6. Is Self-Disciplined | Not quick tempered
Self Controlled (disciplined)
Prudent (exercises restraint) |
| 7. Is a Proven Leader | Manages own household well
Keep children under control
Faithful children |
| 8. Dedicated to God | Devout (pious, holy)
Holds fast to the faithful word
Free from the love of money |
| 9. Displays wisdom | Temperate (clear-headed)
Prudent (sensible, exercise
restraint)
Respectable (modest) |
| 10. Displays both humility and strength | Not self-willed (arrogant)
Able to refute those who
contradict |