

UPON THE ROCK

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Upon the Rock is published bimonthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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The Role Of An Elder

Larry G. Reynolds

The Lord's church was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord. Three thousand souls were added to the Lord's church on that day (Acts 2:40-47). The Lord's church continued to grow, multitudes both men and women were added to the church (Acts 5:14). The church was growing so rapidly that the apostles needed help in meeting the needs of the people. In Acts chapter 6 deacons were chosen to help meet the needs of the brethren. This enabled the apostles to continue preaching the word; as a result many more souls were added to the church in different cities. The church continued to grow in number and matured spiritually. We read in Titus where the apostle Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5). Qualified elders are necessary for the well-being of the local church. Paul, on the return trip of his first missionary journey, appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23). The first qualification of an elder is that they desire the office. Those who desire the position of an elder have grave and serious responsibility to oversee the Lord's church (I Timothy 3:1).

In this article we will discuss the role of elders in the church. The word church is used in two ways in the New Testament, universal and local. When we speak of the role of elders in the church we are speaking in the local church or congregation. We will discuss some of the major duties of elders and what they imply.

A man who is an elder in the Lord's church must have the ability to lead. The Bible states, "Obey them that have the rule over you..." (Hebrews 13:17). Also in I Timothy 5:17 states "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor..." The word, "rule" in these passages signifies "to go before, to show the way, to guide; to lead (Vines Expository Dictionary of the New Testament, p.989). Elders must be dedicated to the Word of God in keeping its purity and guiding the church to greater knowledge in the Word.

In addition to being leaders, elders are shepherds or pastors of God's flock. Paul told the Ephesian elders "to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Peter encouraged the elders to "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;" (I Peter 5:2). If elders are to shepherd the flock they must know the lives of their flock. They must get close to the families they are shepherding and make themselves available to them.

One of the qualifications of an elder is "apt to teach" (I Timothy 3:2). This indicates that he must know the Scriptures and be able to nurture and strengthen those whom he watches over. Several methods can be used by elders to nurture and strengthen the congregation. One way is the Bible class arrangement. Faithful and able teachers are secured to edify the church. Pulpit preaching is also an effective manner of edifying the church. The selection of a preacher is important in church growth. Sound Biblical preaching must come from our pulpits if the church is going to grow in the way that God wants His church to grow. The church will take on the characteristics of what is presented in the pulpit. If the pulpit preaching is weak the congregation will become weak. We are warned time and time again from the scriptures that false teachers will rise up among us and not spare the flock (Acts 20:29). Elders must be very careful as to what preacher they secure to fill the pulpit. Our present crises in the church over liberalism, fellowship, etc., would never have happened. or at worst, would only have been minimal, if elders had been doing their job. The Lord's church needs elders with courage to not compromise the truth for anyone or anything!

The Bible teaches that elders are to be examples to the flock. Peter exhorts elders, "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (I Peter 5:3-4). Elders are to be an example of Christian living so that the congregation has an example to follow. Christians are to walk in the path of righteousness and elders are to lead the flock in that path. They are to be examples as husbands and fathers and have

families that honor and respect them for the life they lead. In their business dealings they must conduct their affairs above reproach. One of the qualifications for an elder is having a good report from those outside the church (I Timothy 3:7).

Elders must be evangelistic in their thinking and planning. Souls must be on their minds constantly. They must be searching for ways to reach one more soul and keep the saved, saved. We are living in a time that we are able to communicate around the world in minutes. Elders need to be leading the congregation in scriptural methods to reach as many souls as possible. This requires elders to communicate and motivate the congregation to use their talents and abilities to reach the lost.

I am concerned about the amount of time and money that we spend on material things compared to the time and effort we spend on reaching out to the lost. Our budgets reflect where we are placing our time and money. Elders need to be leading the congregation to greater efforts in reaching the lost.

The work of elders carries with it a great responsibility. Sometimes they are taken for granted by the congregation and not appreciated for the work that they do. Elders who are giving of themselves and not wanting recognition go unrewarded for their work. If elders are functioning as they should spend many hours caring for troubled souls. We need to encourage the elders and let them know that we appreciate their work and sacrifice.

The Role of a Deacon

Dennis Dickey

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The word deacon comes from the Greek word [diakonia], a derivative of [diakonos], and it means "one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master." - Thayer. The English words best conveying the Greek meaning include: servant, minister, and deacon.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Hear - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).

Believe - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).

Repent - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).

Confess - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).

Be baptized - (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

(1 Corinthians 11:1). So long as we are walking in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:2 1), we remain in the light of God's word (1 John 1:7), and the blood continually washes over us. We have an obligation to the lost of this world to live before them a life worthy of emulation.

The church has a responsibility to **pity those around us**. The Lord often looked upon the multitudes with compassion (Matthew 9:37). But his pity was not confined to simply feeling sorry for them. The compassion he felt for their plight compelled him to see to their needs. Ultimately, he was most concerned with the welfare of their souls, and as such Jesus sought to lead them to the truth. But he also saw to their physical needs by providing for the outward man. The church must have the same compassion toward the masses. We must not only feel sorry for them in their lost and undone condition, but we must be moved to meet their needs. John would remind us, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him" (1 John 3:17). Our foremost concern must be for the souls of the lost, but we must also reach out a helping hand to meet the needs of the outward man as well. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). In seeing to man's physical needs, it is hoped that we may lead them to their greatest need—the Savior. We have an obligation to meet the needs of those around us as best we can (James 1:27).

The church has a very serious, serious role to fulfill in this world. Though we are not of this world, we still must live in this world (John 17:15) and influence the world for the good of the cause of Christ. For the good of the souls of the myriads lost in sin, we owe them these very things discussed above. If you are not a member of the church of our Lord, why not become one this very hour? By obedience to the gospel, culminating in your baptism into Christ (Galatians 3:27), the Lord will add you to his church (Acts 2:47). You owe it to God, to your family, to your friends and acquaintances, and to yourself to become a child of God and live faithfully in service to Him.

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While the Bible clearly defines the functional qualifications of a deacon and his wife 1 Timothy 3:8-13, it does not spell out in exacting terms the actual roles in which the deacon should serve. People have suggested the men chosen by the twelve disciples to serve tables in Acts 6 were some of the first deacons. However, an air of ambiguity prevents us from clearly identifying these "seven", as they are referred to in Acts 21:8, as true deacons.

B.W. Johnson and Barnes believe a deacon's qualifications reveal something about the office. In particular, deacons assist in the physical, spiritual, and financial needs of others through a variety of methods.

Eddie Whitten in his written sermon, "The Truth Regarding the Works of the Church", provides insight in defining the role of the church by dividing the responsibilities into the three functional areas of: evangelism, edification, and benevolence. One could make a strong argument that these same areas also carryover as governing principles for a deacon.

We observe by direct command from our Lord in Matthew 28:20, all Christians should teach others to observe the truth. In word and in deed a deacon must therefore teach others. But how and what must he teach?

A deacon fulfilling Christ's commandment will show a deep concern for the lost, and help God's kingdom grow and remain vibrant. The Teacher himself gave us insight to this rich truth when he told his parents, "...wist ye not that I must be about my Fathers business" (Luke 2:49)? Even from his youth, Jesus set an example we should follow in learning and sharing God's word.

Next, edification of others is also another important example where a deacon may serve. Paul, writing to the church in Galatia commanded, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Such a servant will show a deep concern for the well being and affairs of the church. This same striving to build up others may require sacrificial giving. The efforts of a diligent deacon will take time, money, and effort. We may measure our progress as Christ's follower if we willingly "...lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

He continued, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18). A deacon's actions speak volumes about his character.

A deacon also does well in showing benevolence towards others. Again, Paul wrote the Galatians to, "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). Jesus too stated as much when he said, "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:44-45).

Some have erroneously stated that deacons no longer have a purpose in today's church. However, now more than ever we need good deacons to obey the elders and God by helping to carry out the Lord's work in the church. We should also encourage our young boys to aspire the office of a deacon. The reward in zealously serving can be realized today and in the heavenly realm tomorrow.

At the Towne Acres church of Christ where I serve, we have deacons assigned to the following areas: Missions, Youth, Education, Visitation, Elderly, Membership, Finances, and Facilities. While not an all inclusive list, nor biblically mandated, this represents a well rounded approach to addressing the physical and spiritual need of brethren. Assigning one or more deacons to serve in these areas helps ensure we effectively carry out the roles of the church.

While a deacon holds no position of authority in the church, enlisting the help of members becomes of paramount importance for two reasons. First, a single deacon will usually find it impossible to address all of the jobs in his area of responsibility. Next, involving others helps them grow spiritually too. Proverbs 27:17 says,

(Luke 19:10). The church's work is to evangelize the lost (Mark 16:15-16). When the church loses sight of our singular purpose in this world, we cease growing and the gospel becomes hidden to them that are lost (2 Corinthians 4:3).

The church has a responsibility to **pursue peace**. In a world that is increasingly threatened with unspeakable atrocities at the hands of overly-zealous religious fanatics, the message of true peace found in Christ Jesus (Rom.5:1) grows more and more desirable with each passing day to a world that lives in constant fear and insecurity. It is the case that the church of our Lord is depicted as the army of God (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:3-4, etc.), marching forth under the blood-stained banner of the cross, led to victory (1 Corinthians 15:57) by the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). However, the army of God does not wage a carnal warfare (2 Corinthians 10:3-4), bent on forcing those who do not or will not believe to comply with God's commands or face threats unimaginable to their physical person. The church of Jesus Christ is waging war for men's souls (Ephesians 6:12) by carrying forth and proclaiming the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15) in an attempt to persuade men (2 Corinthians 5:11) to follow the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). We as Christians are charged that "if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18), and to "seek peace, and ensue it" (1 Peter 3:11). True peace will only come to those in the world when they respond in whole-hearted obedience to God's word. Sadly, many are proclaiming "peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14) by compromising the truth of God's word. Such will never lead one to the "peace of God which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7). We have an obligation to model a religion of true peace before the world.

The church has a responsibility to **present a pattern**. Christians must serve as examples of that which is good and godly before a world that is following the "broad way that leadeth to destruction" (Matthew 7:13-14). Christians are to be "examples of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul stated that "for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1:16). Our lives, too, serve as patterns to those in the world around us. We should live in such a way that we can say with all confidence, as did Paul, "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"

worse” (2 Timothy 3:13), Christians must preserve a faithful remnant of godliness. We must commit to living for the Lord. We must raise our children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4) so that subsequent generations may carry forth the seeds of godliness. If we fail to hold on to that which is good and right, then our world will fall further and further into the doldrums of sin.

The church has a responsibility to **provide light** in an ever-darkening world. Sin is further enshrouding the world in darkness. Day by day the light of goodness and godliness seems to grow dimmer and dimmer amidst the blackness and bleakness of iniquity. While this problem is not new, the magnitude of man’s trouble with sin appears to grow worse with each passing day. “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). The darker the night of sin becomes, the brighter the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ will shine. Christians are “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14), and, therefore, we are instructed to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Though we live in “the midst of a crooked and perverse generation,” we are to “shine as lights in the world” by “holding forth the word of life” (Philippians 2:15-16). The light provided by the godly living of God’s children is not produced by the followers of God. Rather, we reflect the light of Christ (John 8:12) and the glorious light of His holy word (Psalm 119:105) by living according to the commands of God. As we do, the world is able to see the Son shining in and through us (Galatians 2:20).

The church has a responsibility to **promote and propagate the gospel**. In the midst of a world that has long forgotten what true religion is all about, many even in the church of our Lord have ceased to remember the ultimate purpose of the church. It seems many are so enamored with a social gospel that the church is now supposed to cater to man’s every whim and fancy. There are debt management seminars to address man’s financial concerns; there are self-help workshops to address man’s emotional and self-esteem issues; there are singles weekends and divorcee’s clubs to meet man’s social ills; there are softball teams and golf tournaments to see to man’s recreational needs. I am not saying there is anything wrong with these things in and of themselves, but in far too many places these have become the focus of the church. Wrong, wrong, wrong! The church must be about the work of Jesus Christ, who came “to seek and to save the lost”

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” We too make one another stronger by sharing responsibility.

At Towne Acres we have a goal of getting all members involved in the Lord’s work. Asking members to assist with the various assignments helps both parties as it allows each to grow and mature. Speaking from experience, finding individuals who volunteer their help in completing assignments is a true Godsend.

The role of a deacon is so important in today’s Church, and an office God established. Young men should aspire to be deacons and will certainly receive blessings by serving in this capacity. A deacon who truly appreciates what Christ suffered for him will look forward to this challenging role.

The Role Of A Preacher

Jack Openshaw

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:11–16).

Our oneness in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-6) doesn’t destroy our individuality or diversity of talents and abilities. Each of us must mature and learn how to best use our abilities, talents and aptitudes, within the perimeters defined in God’s word, to edify the body of Christ and bring glory to God’s name.

God has given His church an enormous responsibility to make disciples of every nation (Matthew 28:18–20). This involves preaching, teaching, nurturing, administering, building, and several other tasks. If we had to fulfill this command as individuals, we might as well give up without trying; it would be impossible for one person alone. God has called us, through the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Peter 1:23), to be members of His spiritual body, the church. Some of us can do one task, some are best suited for another. **Together we can obey Him more fully than any one of us could alone.** It is a human tendency to overestimate what we can do by ourselves and to underestimate what we can do collectively. The truth is just the opposite; as Paul directs in the above text. Read also the divinely endowed wisdom of Solomon on this (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12). As the body of Christ, we can do more, functioning together, than we could ever dream of doing by ourselves. **God has designed His church to function this way** (1 Corinthians 12:12–31; Ephesians 4:11-16). We all are important, and necessary, and have much to do in the kingdom (Mark 13:34). **Some responsibilities are common to all of us and others are specific to our particular role in the Lord's church.**

It is a wonderful privilege to be a preacher and I thank God for the opportunity to serve in this capacity (1 Timothy 1:12)! It has “pleased God by the foolishness of preaching,” Paul said, “to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Paul said, “by the foolishness of preaching” and not “foolish preaching.” **There is too much “foolish preaching” today; that is not at all according to God's purpose for preaching; which is to make known His Word** (Titus 1:3)! Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the work of an evangelist, is an integral part of God's scheme of redemption (Romans 10:10–15). The need for preachers today is as relevant as it was in the first century of Christianity. That need is to make haste to the lost (Acts 8:29,30); and from the inspired Scriptures of God preach Jesus unto mankind (Acts 8:31-35). Doing this wonderful and important work has the greatest of dividends! The salary may not always be the best, but the retirement benefits are out of this world (1 Timothy 4:16)!

The preacher's role is to preach God's Word brethren! Let him do it; encourage him to do it; understand what it involves to do it and don't overburden him with so many other tasks that he can't do justice to what God will judge him for! Paul charges me, as a preacher, “. . .but

Preachers are no more valuable, special, important or deserving of encouragement than any other member of the body of Christ, but theirs is a difficult job that not many men are willing to do, so it would behoove us to help the ones who will in whatever way we can. Rather than just saying “amen” or “good sermon” to the things he preaches, encourage him and his work by being a fellow laborer who takes to heart the message that he preaches with all of his might. 2 John 3

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THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

Patrick Morrison

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Paul stated in Romans 1:14 that he was “debtor both to the Greeks and the Barbarians; both to the wise and the unwise.” He felt a great debt of gratitude to God for saving him from his sins and allowing him to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8). He felt a grave responsibility to the church and to the world as he went about to proclaim the good news of salvation through the blood of Jesus. Those who comprise the church of Christ today should feel no less of an obligation to the world around us. Not only are we indebted to God for His love and mercy He has so abundantly showered upon us, and not only are we indebted to faithful saints who have lived before us and encouraged us to walk in the paths of right, but we also have a weighty responsibility to those lost souls outside of the Lord's church. Just what do we owe the world? What is the responsibility of the church when it comes to those in the world?

The church has a responsibility to **preserve a godly influence** in the world. As the world around us becomes more and more unsavory, Christians are charged with being the “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). The idea here presented by the master Teacher is that of being a preservative of godliness in a world that is anything but godly. With each passing day, Satan seems to be gaining a greater foothold among the hearts and minds of men. As “evil men wax worse and

himself and his abilities or pointing the people to the Lord and His grace. I would recommend that if you want to encourage your preacher, do not compliment him and the work he does to his face as much as you do it to his detractors. No matter how “good” of a preacher he is, you simply cannot please everyone (which is why you should only concern yourself with pleasing the Lord). I have actually had members who did not like me in part, though I suspect there were actually other reasons, because they did not like the way I wore my hair. Others became frustrated with me because I grew a beard. People can sometimes be fickle and petty, as is seen with the children of Israel toward Moses during their wilderness wanderings, but that can take a toll on the preacher after a time. There will be people in the community who do not like him and will denigrate him because of his stand for the truth (Galatians 4:16). Even within the congregation there will likely be those who do not like him and will speak negatively about him to others, within and without the church. While those voices are generally in the minority, they can be very damaging to his influence at worst and disheartening to his efforts at the least. One of the ways you can encourage him is to provide a neutralizing voice to his critics. When others ridicule him, you defend him, stand up for him and mention all of the good things that he does for the Lord through the local congregation. Just as it can be especially hurtful to learn that someone has been talking bad about you behind your back, it can be especially encouraging to your preacher to learn that you have been defending him and speaking kindly about him in his absence.

I would suggest that the greatest way for you to encourage your preacher is to faithfully serve the Lord and be an active participant in the work of the church. Usually it only takes one person or one family who zealously commits their all to doing whatever needs to be done to make all of the backsliders, murmurers and hinderers bearable. Most men become preachers because they so love and are so committed to doing the work of the Lord that they want to do it all day everyday, so to have others in the congregation with that same zeal, love and devotion to the Lord is a tremendous encouragement. Another way in which this encourages the preacher is that he does not have to devote precious time to try and convert you back to Christ because you have fallen away (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20) or constantly walk behind you and push you forward in an attempt to motivate you to help carry your load in the church.

watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Timothy 4:2–5). God’s “woe” is upon me and every man who professes to preach but doesn’t deliver what God expects of him (1 Corinthians 9:16).

I am under heaven’s orders, as a preacher, to make the cross of Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, my central message (1 Corinthians 1:17–31). I am obligated to declare “the whole counsel of God” with sincere passion (Acts 20:26–32). I don’t intend to offend anyone, and my goal is to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). But I cannot omit necessary truths from my sermons just because God’s truth may offend someone. I must dare to be a Stephen and tell men what they need to hear; although they may not want to hear it (Acts 7:2–60).

I am under orders from heaven to “walk the walk” as well as “talk the talk.” Admonitions like “be thou an example of the believers” and “keep this commandment without spot” or “take heed unto thyself” go with the territory of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 4:12,16; 6:14). **Preachers, you can’t teach what you don’t know, and you can’t lead where you won’t go!**

The text books for preaching are undisputedly first and second Timothy and Titus. A pretty comprehensive list of responsibilities for God’s preacher is found in 2 Timothy 2 in particular. He is to have: the dedication of a soldier, the discipline of an athlete, the efforts of a farmer, the confidence of a believer, the skill of a workman, the cleanliness of a vessel, and submission of a servant. (Expositions Of "The Expositor," J. Winfred Clark, Vol. 1, Page 287). That’s a lot of hats for a man to wear! With a strong resolve and His Lord’s help he can do it (Philippians 4:13).

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THE ROLE OF A CHRISTIAN WOMAN

Connie Reynolds

Where does one begin to discuss the role of a Christian woman? In your imagination, think of viewing a slide show with the following images:

A teenage girl going out with her friends

A young woman living in a college dorm

A young woman teaching school

A woman in a business meeting

A Bible class teacher

A bride with her husband

A mother with a new baby

A mother with teenagers!

The mother of the bride or groom

A grandmother

A woman in a nursing home facility

From the day a young woman becomes a Christian, her activities in life constantly change. In all the scenes imagined above, her activities change, but her role as a Christian must shine through and be the most important. A woman has an effect on so many other lives! God gave woman such a special place! In this article we will discuss three necessities in the role of a Christian woman.

something good even better like a cherry on top of a sundae or icing on a cake. Whatever it means to you, and however and whenever you choose to give it, encouragement is something that everyone needs from time to time, even your preacher. Please don't misunderstand what I am about to say, because I am not attempting to place preachers on a pedestal or exalt them above any other part of the body of Christ, but preachers do have a somewhat unique responsibility that not everyone is capable or willing to take on. Generally speaking, in most congregations, the preacher is the one people come to for advice, wisdom, instruction, bible teaching, comfort, support, honesty and general help in times of need. To the godly preacher this is not viewed as a burden to be borne, but rather it is a privilege to be trusted and respected as one whose opinion is valued. Have you ever considered to whom does the preacher turn for comfort, advice and encouragement on tough days? Obviously He turns to the Lord since He is the greatest source of help available, but then again, all Christians do that. "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16). Perhaps you assume that he turns to his family, his wife and children or maybe his parents in times when he needs a lift (Genesis 3:18; Proverbs 5:18; 18:22). While it is certainly true that our homes can be a place of refuge and safety, most preachers do not want to contaminate that place of escape by "bringing home problems from work." Many older preachers have wisely advised younger evangelists to try and protect their families from some of the heartbreaking and painful realities they face and struggle with "at the church." What then can I do to help my preacher in his work and be a source of encouragement to him? One immediate thought might be to compliment him on his preaching and teaching. While it is certainly true that all of us, preachers included, enjoy a pat on the back and "good job" every now and then, I would suggest that there are many other things that would be much more meaningful and encouraging. In fact, if your preacher is a humble servant who is seeking to glorify His father and hide behind the cross (Matthew 5:16; Galatians 6:14), compliments on his preaching, while appreciated, can provide mixed emotions. On the one hand it is nice to hear someone say you preached a good sermon or that they liked/enjoyed what you had to say, there is also the concern on his part as to whether or not he was drawing attention to

God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19-22)

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How Can I Encourage Our Preacher?

By Brandon Britton

Editor's Note: Brandon Britton preaches for the East Hill church of Christ in Pulaski, Tennessee.

What do you think of when you picture the definition of the word “encourage?” Can you see a father with his arm around a ten year old boy in a baseball uniform, his cap pulled down over his eyes, his head hung down in shame because he struck out with the winning runners on second and third? Can you see a mother wiping away her daughter’s tears, trying to soothe the sting of her first broken heart? Maybe you picture a husband and wife standing over a grave, the wife holding tightly to her husband’s hand, resting her head on his shoulder and sympathetically listening to him whisper through tears, “I can’t believe daddy’s gone.”

Perhaps the word encourage conjures up more positive images in your mind, such as happy times or moments of anticipation. Do you see a dad helping his six-year old daughter balance on her bicycle, the training wheels recently removed, telling her, “You can do it because I’ll be right here beside you to catch you if you fall”? In your mind there might be a big sister straightening a wedding veil, handing her baby sister a bouquet of flowers and proudly proclaiming, “You look so beautiful, just like a princess in a fairy tale.”

The word “encourage” can mean many different things to many different people. For some it is what is desperately needed in times of hardship to help one who is suffering make it through, while to others it is a word of joyous support at a time of great happiness, making

The first necessity in the role a Christian woman is that she be an example to all she influences.

There are many instances in the Bible where we can read of the importance of a woman’s example. In 2 Timothy 1:5, we read that Timothy’s faith was first in his mother and grandmother. What a legacy if our children and grandchildren can see our faith and learn from it, there is nothing better we can give them. It can be an influence for generation after generation and into eternity.

In I Peter 3:1-4, we read that a husband can be won by the conduct of his wife. We are taught that our priority should not be our outward adornment (hair, gold, & fine apparel), but the inward beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Without speaking a word, a woman can set an example that can influence her husband to want to serve God.

Titus 2:3-4 teaches that the older women should be reverent in behavior and be an example to the younger women and teach them. We need to take this seriously and teach younger women the importance of their role.

The second necessity for a Christian woman is that she be a Bible student and continue always to grow spiritually.

A woman must consider her own spiritual needs. In the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:40-42, Jesus told Martha that she was troubled about many things, but Mary had chosen the good part, which would not be taken away from her. A Christian woman can be busy all the time doing many good things, but if she does not take time to consider her spiritual growth, she will wither away. In II Timothy 2:15, we are told to STUDY. A new Christian told me this week that he “has so much to learn.” He is right about that! A person who has been a Christian for years and years, however, should have that same attitude. There is so much to learn about God and His word and everything we learn helps us all the time in our everyday lives!

Study is part of growing spiritually and a second part is PRAYER! Pray, pray, and pray some more. We lose so much when we don’t lean on God and take the help He is always there to give. Pray without

ceasing! (I Thessalonians 5:17) At times when it seems there is nothing we can do, remember prayer. Pray for yourself, your family, your neighbors, the lost, the church, the sick, those who have fallen away, our leaders, the leaders of the world, the military, the families of the military, etc., etc., etc.

The third necessity for a Christian woman is that she has the attitude of a servant.

There are so many ways in which we can serve. I stand back sometimes and watch our teenage girls playing with the young children in our congregation. That is a way of serving! We often try to think of “grand” things. We need to just do the simple things. How important it is just to make a visitor or a new member feel welcome. Our ladies’ class just studied encouragement. How much good can be done by simply encouraging others? The results are immeasurable.

In Romans 16:1-2 Paul spoke of “Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea.” He said she had been a helper of many and of him also. In Romans 16:6 he greeted Mary, “who labored much for us.” There are many other instances where women are mentioned specifically and praised for their labor. A goal of a Christian woman should be to be thought of as some of these women were. If it can be said that we labored much or were a helper of many, what higher praise could be given?

There are so many needs in the church, in the home, and in the world, that women are especially equipped to handle. We need to always be searching out those needs and meeting them. Each of us has different abilities and strengths and each one is so important in the work of the Lord. Ladies, God made us special and gave us wonderful characteristics. Think back for a moment to our imaginary slide show. Whether you are the young girl going out with your friends or the woman in the nursing home facility, may you always strive to set a good example to all, continue to grow spiritually, and have the attitude of a servant.

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the church. Nothing can be more discouraging than when the congregation is not giving as they could and should. Paul told the Corinthians that: *“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come.”* (I Corinthians 16:2)

Be Patient, Understanding and Forgiving

A third way that you can encourage and edify your elders and deacons is by being patient, understanding, and forgiving towards them. You must keep in mind the fact that these men are not perfect and that they make mistakes and experience failures just like anyone else. The decisions that they often make are very difficult and sometimes they make the wrong decisions and the members must be patient and understanding. And sometimes they may offend you by their decisions, but you must have a forgiving and understanding heart.

You should also keep in mind that they also have responsibilities and duties outside of their work in the church. Elders and deacons often experience problems at work and at home. Many times these men are held to higher standards than anyone else. But everyone must realize that they are only human and that they suffer from their wrong decisions and the wrong decisions of others. They are in constant need of your prayers, your patience, and sometimes your empathy. *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another; even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”* (Ephesians 4:32)

There is no greater office or service than in the Lord’s kingdom. We owe a great amount of debt to the men that have served and are serving in these capacities. We also need to be thankful for their spouses. The wives of the elders and deacons can also be greatly discouraged and troubled. And we have to keep in mind that they also need our praise and encouragement.

It is every member’s responsibility to do all that is possible to promote the well being and success of the Lord’s church. We are all in this together. The apostle Paul spoke of the unity and closeness in the church. He said: *“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of*

you are thankful for them and their labors. This can also be done by sending them a note or card. The congregation can collectively encourage these men by honoring them at fellowship meals. Also you can pray for them. The prayers in the worship assembly should always express thanks and praise for the elders and deacons. The work of the elders and deacons can also be recognized and praised in the bulletin and other publications of the local congregation. Paul, Silas, and Timothy pleaded with the church at Thessalonica by saying: *“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.”* (I Thessalonians 5:12-13)

Loyalty

Second you can edify and encourage your elders and deacons with your loyalty, commitment, and support of the Lord and His church. Nothing is more encouraging to the leadership of a congregation than to see the members devoting their time, energy, and money to the work of the Lord. It is very discouraging when the leadership has to beg and plead with the congregation to support the works and programs of the church. Members that are self-starters, enthusiastic, and hard-working bring great joy and encouragement to the leadership.

Loyalty and commitment to the Lord is shown when Christian parents faithfully rear their children. The apostle Paul admonished the fathers at Ephesus concerning their children to: *“bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4) This brings great encouragement to the leadership and it shows that their labors and efforts are producing fruit in the lives of the members. Faithfulness of the members in maintaining a Christian home is a source of comfort and hope to all and especially the elders.

Both the elders and deacons are encouraged when the members of the congregation are fully committed to and supportive of the local congregation. This is shown by being involved in the works of the church, by being a Bible class teacher, if possible, and by participating in worship. Also the leadership is edified and encouraged when the membership financially supports the work of

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How Can I Encourage Our Elders and Deacons?

Kelly Webb

One of Satan's greatest weapons is discouragement. Today there is a great shortage of men that are qualified and willing to serve in the Lord's church. Congregations struggle to find men to fulfill the roles of elders and deacons. Satan has successfully utilized the effective weapon of discouragement to keep men from serving or serving effectively. Therefore it is of the greatest urgency for members of the Body of Christ to encourage and edify those that serve and those that have the potential to serve. Every member must do his or her part in edification especially towards these men. The efforts of Satan can be successfully overthrown by the diligent efforts of the faithful of God.

How can you encourage your elders and deacons? You can edify and encourage the leadership of the congregation in a number of ways. Encouragement comes by means of recognition and praise. Loyalty, commitment, and support, encourages your elders and deacons. They are also encouraged when you are patient, understanding, and forgiving towards them. Being involved and participating in the works of the local congregation brings a tremendous amount of encouragement to the leadership.

Recognition and Praise

First you can edify and encourage these men by recognition and praise. The elders especially have a tremendous responsibility placed upon their shoulders. In Hebrews 13:17 we are told: "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, and they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief for that is unprofitable for you.*" They are responsible for the souls of the members of the congregation. Members of the church should conduct themselves in a manner that recognizes the elders' authority, responsibilities, and accountability before God.

You can encourage your elders and deacons by giving them the needed praise and recognition for their hard work. This is in the form of verbal praise and recognition. You should regularly tell them that