



Editor's Note

This issue of ESN arrives late, but not without much consideration. As you know, being an elder, the best of priority lists can become skewed by the unexpected, rearranged by lack of omniscient foresight and affected by fallible human decision making. Put simply, we elders have many demands on our time and often the choice is not between good and bad things to do, but between better and best things to do.

There is simply not enough time in the day or the week to do everything that we deem important. We can either adjust our priorities, eliminate some important things, learn to be more efficient, or just shrug our shoulders with a sigh and do what ever comes to our attention with the loudest noise—and

pray for sanity to keep us going until tomorrow. Jack Spender's article on involving the deacons will be a great help in solving this problem.

In this issue, we are beginning a new addition to ESN, our Doctrinal Outlines. Each issue we will include a brief, concise summary of one doctrine or part of a doctrine that is essential to our faith. These are not meant to replace commentaries or systematic theologies that every elder should have, but will provide a quick reference for the busy elder who needs to find passages supporting various key truths.

Please give us your feedback if you find these helpful.



Biblical Foundations

The Blessing of Deacons

by Jack Spender

Soon after the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost, some of the Christian widows began to complain about being slighted in the church's daily distribution of food (Acts 6 KJV). Rumors of this growing discontent quickly reached the ears of the apostles. As leaders within a fast-growing movement work, the apostles were busy men with responsibilities in teaching, preaching and prayer, not to mention "meetings" with local civil authorities. But they also had a solid history of practical involvement in caring for the needs of people (Acts 4:31-5:16), and could hardly turn a deaf ear to this new outcry. What should be done?

It is interesting to note what they didn't do. They did not deny the existence of the problem, nor did they ask for the names of "trouble-makers." Obviously they didn't need additional daily tasks to oversee, but it had become clear that

those presently serving the widows lacked either the will or the authority to deal with the pressures of competing ethnic groups. The apostles also knew that they must not sacrifice the primary duties of spiritual leaders by becoming preoccupied with the temporal matters of the church. Here is a subject with a message for the church today!

Three things were clear. First, the apostles knew their priorities. Second, they knew that ignoring the problem would damage the work. Third, they discerned that the root problem was not a lack of resources (shortage of food or funds), but something that concerned integrity and authority. In three brief sentences, they outlined a plan:

"It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:2-4 KJV)

The apostles knew they must not sacrifice the primary duties of spiritual leaders by becoming preoccupied with temporal matters.

By delegating work to others, the apostles escaped a pitfall into which many elders have fallen today. Through entanglement in the details of the church's routine ministries and problems, leaders can neglect times of fellowship with the Lord in the word and prayer and consequently have no life-changing message from the Lord, no vision for the expansion of the work.

Brothers Who Assist the Elders

Let's think briefly about these "elder assistants" normally referred to as deacons. The careful wording of the text is full of instruction. Qualified

men were to be chosen by the multitude. They must have a good reputation among the people, they must have a close walk with the Lord, and they must possess that solid inner personal quality of wisdom that comes from experience. The congregation was charged with the

work of finding the men and presenting them to the apostles.

We do not read of the involvement of the apostles in this action. Presumably the people of the church were trusted to make a wise selection, and it was to their advantage to do so, as the deacons would be serving the people. The actual authority to function, however, did not come from the multitude! The apostles would lay hands on them and give them the authority to serve as their representatives. As delegated servants, these men would minister to the congregation with the full support of the spiritual leaders who could now devote themselves to the most important work of all; spending time in the word and prayer.

Some have objected that deacons are not referred to in Acts 6 because the word "deacon" does not appear. Although the Greek noun for servant (diakonos) is not used in the passage, the related words for service and ministry (diakonia, dia-

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Practical Ministry

Elders and Women

by Chuck Gianotti

Men lead, women follow. Right? However, if we male elders aren't careful, we can look self-serving and disingenuous if that is all we teach on the subject. A great weight rests on us to demonstrate to the world, to the rest of "Christendom" and, more importantly, to the women who look to us for leadership, that our view does not mean we believe our sisters in Christ are to be treated as 2nd-class members of the body.

To be sure, the inspired Paul asserts that women are not to be in authority positions or teaching roles over men (1 Timothy 2:11-12 NIV) and in the next breath he specifically refers to elders as males (3:1-2). Yet, Paul also penned Galatians 3:28 and Peter joins him in 1 Peter 3:7 to say that female believers are to be accepted as "fellow heirs" of all the blessings of God in salvation and in our standing before Him.

I don't believe this is to be embraced solely on a spiritual level that has little to do with practical everyday life. In fact, Scripture is replete with instructions for us men on how to treat the women in our lives: We are to treat them sensitively and considerately (1 Peter 3:7), sacrifice for them (Ephesians 5:25), work toward helping them to become spiritually beautiful (5:26-27) and treat them the way we ourselves want to be treated (5:28-29). To be sure, these passages apply specifically to the marriage relationship, but the way a man treats his wife is indicative of and sets the tone for how he treats other women.

How can we elders lead in a way that does not minimize the value and dignity of the women in our fellowship?

Leadership means leading—so lead!

First of all, you cannot lead if you are not out in front! Leading, in its most primary sense, does not mean making the decision and then telling others what to do. Our guide on a trip to the Middle East pointed out that leadership in the Israeli army means you are the first one into battle. You plough the way, you blaze the trail. You are out in front.

Consider Jesus' lesson to the future leaders of His Church: "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, wash your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:14-15). That's leadership! It demonstrates, motivates—and it leads the way. Jesus as consummate Leader took the "lead" role in acting upon His own teachings. He led by example, not just by lecture.

Strong servant leadership that models the Christian walk of faith is one of the best things we can do for women. One woman

newly saved out of a world of radical feminism said in relationship to gender roles in marriage, "I can't think of a woman on the face of the earth who would not follow a man who loved her the way Christ loved the Church." For elders, I wonder if there are women thinking, "I would gladly follow your lead if you treated me the way Christ treated women in his ministry"?

How can you be that kind of elder?

Treat your wife special

People should see you treating your wife like she is the most important person in your life (next to the Lord). That's how the Lord Jesus Christ loved the Church (Eph 5:25). The extent of your sacrifice for her determines the extent of your love. Most men would gladly throw themselves in front of a speeding locomotive to save their wife from

A great weight rests on us to demonstrate that we do not believe women are second-class members of the body of Christ.

imminent death. That appeals to the heroic in us males, but few of us will have that stage to demonstrate our masculine prowess. What about demonstrating sacrificial love in day to day things? Here are some ideas.

Occasionally hold your wife's hand in public. Open the car door for her. Let others see you put your arm around her, or kiss her out in the parking lot. I don't mean ostentatious emotional demonstrations, but rather small gentle touches of affection.

Tell her often that you love her. And do it in different ways. I remember seeing a speaker sitting on the platform waiting to preach, breaking into a smile. I followed his eyes to see what he was looking at. He was looking at his wife and she was returning the smile. You could sense a genuine love between them.

One dear saint refers to his spouse not as "the wife", but as "my beloved"!

Before we were married, my wife and I were talking with our prospective photographer. A woman burst into his studio unannounced, rushed through the room, dashed into the back room and then out again, stopping for a quick kiss, and then out the front door she flew. We sat there befuddled, and then the photographer's eyes turned from the door to look at us. With a big smile, he exclaimed, "Isn't she wonderful?" I vowed at time that I would make every effort to speak glowingly of my wife in public.

When meeting new people on Sunday mornings, introduce them to your wife.

When making plans, consult with her to see how your activities will affect her. When making important decision that will affect the whole body, seek her input and perspectives.

As leader of your wife, don't wait for her to become a good follower. Christ did not wait for the Church to become attractive or obedient—He loved her first. The church, as a result, is made beautiful through His transforming care. The same can be true when we love and care for our wives. Their inner beauty will increase before our very eyes (and the eyes of everyone else).

Affirming all women

Loving your wife affects other women, in that they will feel less threatened and less "put down." It affirms them and gives them hope on two fronts: 1) that biblical gender roles in the church are a good thing for women as well as men and 2) there are indeed men who express Christ-like masculinity.

We can also affirm other women by how we treat them. My wife has noticed in some churches we have visited (and even some we have been a part of), that some male leaders just don't talk with her unless she first approaches them. The reasons for this can be many. Sometimes men and

women have different interests for conversation. Some men may feel more comfortable talking with other men than with women. But as elders we must not inadvertently "slight" women by overlooking warm and friendly interaction. Jesus demonstrated respect toward women by spending time with them and showing kindness as He spoke with them.

We need to affirm women both publicly and privately when they serve the body. This can be as simple as taking time to ask a woman on Sunday morning how her ministry is going, especially after a key event in which she has pour her time and energies. It may mean inviting occasionally key women leaders to an elders meeting, so you can pray for and with them. Nothing communicates so powerfully the elders' affirmation of a woman's ministry than hearing the elders praying for her.

Encourage women's ministries

Spiritual gifts are not limited by gender. Even the gifts of pastor-teacher (Ephesians 4:11), speaking (1 Peter 4:11) and leading (Romans 13:8) can be exercised by a woman ministering to other women or children. But many churches have few venues for women to utilize these gifts. The elders should encourage activities such as ladies' seminars, small groups and various women's outreaches.

Safeguards

A wise elder must be careful about doing anything that could be interpreted as "flirting"

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Edification: Mentoring through Exhortation

by Maria Forcucci

In the January edition of ESN, we talked a great deal about grace. Not only the grace we should be thankful for in God's personal dealing with us, but also for that which He sheds on others. In grace, we are told to edify each other. In grace, we must accept each other in spite of our differences in understanding, personality or opinion. In grace, we are to help each other grow to maturity. But what else can we do for those younger women who look up to us for help?

One good place to start is 1 Timothy 4. Paul assures Timothy that his youth in the Lord should not hinder him from serving or speaking boldly what he knows to be true. "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to *exhortation*, to doctrine." (v13, KJV emphasis mine)

Paul exhorts Timothy not to let his youth in the Lord hinder his ability to confront issues with other believers. Perhaps youth is not the barrier hindering us as the older women exhorting the younger, but there may be others. A lack of time and/or confidence can play a major role. Perhaps the whole idea of confrontation is a difficult one. However, it is Paul's recommendation to Timothy and so by application, it is God's recommendation to us. "The aged women likewise...that they may teach the young women..." (Titus 2:3-4) The word "teach" in this verse literally means "to train". I know of no kind of training that does not first

require one to give up an old habit in order to form a new one. This is where exhortation can be helpful.

The Albert Barnes Commentary says about exhortation, "This word properly denotes one who urges to the practical duties of religion, in distinction from one who teaches its doctrines." This provides us with an excellent balance between treating saints with love and respect (grace) while chal-

In grace, we are to help each other grow to maturity.

lenging them to climb the next rung of their personal spiritual ladder (exhortation).

We need to be careful at this juncture for there may be times when we rebuke too harshly, others times not at all. Either can lead to permanent blind spots. The goal of exhortation is to "spur others to action". That can mean anything from confronting sin to working through a practical project together. In any case, it requires a great deal of patience by the "exhorter".

I remember the day an older brother gave me an exhortation about becoming a

better parent. He cleverly sandwiched his remarks about my "spirited" daughters needing a tighter reign between two positive encouragements about my thankful spirit and willingness to serve. His affirmation that day weighed much more in my heart than his mild rebuke. Changes were made almost instinctively because of his "technique" and our house started to feel like a home again not long after. (We're still working on it!)

In the same way, we should not be afraid to confront people's shortcomings, growth needs, etc. as long as we offer our love, emotional support and commitment to see them through. Giving grace and acceptance does not mean overlooking wrongdoing or spiritual laziness. Likewise, exhortation does not mean criticism or condescension. We simply want to see each one among us flourish in a safe but truthful environment.

Of course, to be truly effective at exhortation, we need to be able to receive it as well!

The Lord does not command just the older to exhort the younger, but, "...exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb 3:13) Our dear Lord was filled with grace *and* truth. What a challenge and an honor to endeavor to train young believers as He would.



I Can Only Image

I can only imagine
What it will be like
When I walk by Your side.
I can only imagine
What my eyes will see
When Your face is before me.
I can only imagine.

Surrounded by Your glory,
What will my heart feel?
Will I dance for You, Jesus,
Or in awe of You be still?
Will I stand in Your presence,
Or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing hallelujah,
Will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine,
I can only imagine.

I can only imagine
When that day comes
And I find myself standing in the Son.
I can only imagine
When all I will do
Is forever, forever worship You,

I can only imagine
I can only imagine

Surrounded by Your glory,
What will my heart feel?
Will I dance for You, Jesus,
Or in awe of You be still?
Will I stand in Your presence,
Or to my knees will I fall?
Will I sing hallelujah,
Will I be able to speak at all?
I can only imagine,
I can only imagine!

By Bart Miller
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From the Q-files

If Mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.

Lt. Col. John Sieverling, 308th Fighter Squadron commander, U.S. Air Force, says this is one of his top 10 leadership principles. "Yes, this is a leadership quote, even if I read it on my mother-in-law's potholder. The obligations of military duty often conflict with achieving marital bliss, but take every opportunity to make sure your significant other is enjoying the ride. Also, a quick 'How's it going?' phone call to that deployed member's spouse will do more for retention than you will ever know."

Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.

Another of Sieverling's top 10 principles. "This is General Patton's ultimate anti-micromangement quote. Although it's often easier to tell your subordinates exactly how do a particular task, who says you know the smartest way to do it? Micromangement stifles initiative and kills motivation. The folks in the trenches know the best way, so practice "centralized control and decentralized execution" and get out of the way."

Blessings (cont. from page 1)

konein) are used in the first two verses. By the time Paul wrote to the Philippians some 30 years later, elders and deacons were the two standard offices in the church, and it is reasonable to assume some prior explanation of the term. In his letter to Timothy, Paul gives guidelines to help the young churches in the recognition of deacons (1 Timothy 3). In any case, the main point to be insisted upon is that whether or not an assembly has formally recognized deacons, the elders must actively delegate pressing temporal concerns to others so that the spiritual priorities of leadership can be preserved.

Facing the Need

In many local churches, “elders’ meetings” are really deacon meetings. After an opening prayer, business is taken up, the greater part being devoted to financial and building concerns along with assembly programs and perhaps difficult people and situations to which they must relate. If the scriptures are opened at all, it is to prove a point or find passages that address a problem at hand. Rarely does one hear of a group of elders coming together “to give themselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4), i. e., to pray for unity, for vision and direction for the work, and to search the scriptures sim-

ply to better know the Lord, the truths of the faith and the spiritual diet for the feeding of the flock.

Those who are appointed to do the work of deacons should find encouragement in knowing that, in addition to serving the Lord’s people, they are protecting the elders from becoming spiritually irrelevant through loss of intimate contact with the Head of the church, Christ Himself. Elders must not forget that deacons serve under their authority and rely on their support in difficult times. Further, deacons give time to the work as a sacrifice for the Lord so that elders may be free to wait on the Lord together. They (i.e. the deacons) can become discouraged if elders simply use the time thus provided for other temporal details of the work instead of the primary labor of elders, spending time in the word and prayer. Let every elder ponder these words: “It is not fitting that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.”

It is no coincidence that after the problem in the church at Jerusalem was resolved through the appointment of capable men, we are given the following summary: “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:7) 

Elders & Women (cont.)

or could place him in a compromising situation. His own flesh can be weak and some women can be susceptible to being inadvertently enticed. Indeed, the critical qualification for an elder is to be a “one-woman kind of man” (this is the essence of 1 Timothy 3:2).

The wise elder will install safeguards. For example, some have made it a policy generally to never visit a woman alone in her home or they will not drive in a car with a woman alone. But boundaries should not be

so tight that they prevent us from being warm, friendly and accepting of the women in our churches.

Bottom line is this: we who believe in male leadership in the local church need to lead wisely and inclusively. We need to affirm women and encourage them in their ministries. Finally, we can esteem our wives highly by passing on this copy of ESN so she can read Wives’ Corner and be built up in her ministry! 

Resources

Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW), 2825 Lexington Road, Box 926, Louisville, KY 40280. www.cbmw.com.

The CBMW organization was formed in 1987 to affirm the positive biblical gender roles and to combat the rise of feminism in the church. They have produced an outstanding collection of essays, articles, books and audio resources supporting the “complementarian” view point that men and women are equal in God’s sight, yet have differing roles in the church and family life.

Their two main flagships are: 1) the monthly journal filled with well-researched and well-written articles presenting the most recent cutting edge interaction on this subject. and 2) the website which allows you to download almost all of their resources for free.

Many noted evangelical authors and scholars have endorsed this ministry, such as Carl F. H. Henry, S. Lewis Johnson, D. James Kennedy, Erwin Lutzer, John MacArthur, Dennis Rainey, Joseph Stowell, R.C. Sproul, John Walvoord, John Piper—to name a few.

Systematic Theology, by Lewis Sperry Chafer. (Dallas Seminary Press).

This classic is still my favorite reference for studying theology. Written in 1947, Chafer’s monumental work presents a conservative, evangelical understanding of the main doctrines of our faith. He writes as a scholar but also with the warmth of a pastor’s heart who loves the word of God and loves to teach it. This multi-volume set is highly recommended for those serious about growing in their knowledge of biblical truth.

ELDERS’ SHOPNOTES

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