



Editor's Note

A new ministry, Biblical Eldership Resources, has been formed to promote a biblically based form of church government in churches worldwide. Developed by a group of men fully committed to a plurality of biblically qualified and functioning elders in the local church, this ministry has created a website that includes 1) in depth exposition on the truth of eldership in the Scripture, in video, audio and written forms, 2) guidelines for helping pastor-centric churches make the transition to eldership and 3) a growing amount of resources to

to help elders (including many articles from Elders' ShopNotes).

Online distance learning resources will be added for remote access around the world. Plans have begun for translating and contextualizing these resources by regional groups who will in turn promote eldership in their areas. All this, of course, is in the will of the Lord. When churches embrace the biblical teaching on eldership, we believe they will naturally begin to search Scripture concerning other areas of church ministry and life. Pray for this new ministry and check out the website at: www.BiblicalEldership.com.

Biblical Foundations

Foundation for Serving

by Chuck Gianotti

Studies in 2 Timothy—Part 3 (2:14-26)

“Fifty-fifty, that is the only way marriage can work, each partner giving their fair share,” said one man with an air of confidence. Another, with a hint of superiority, responded, “No! Fifty-fifty never works, it’s got to be 100%-

100%!” A third man, retorted, “Actually, I’ve always felt each should give 101%.” They were wrangling over words and percentages—

which, by the way, weren’t even biblical words. But even biblical words can be subject to incessant scrutiny such that people can miss the proverbial forest for the trees. To be sure many times holding to right doctrine depends on precise understanding of words. At other times Christians can find themselves arguing over words when little is at stake.

Paul challenges his young brother, Timothy, to consider this issue carefully. Some debates among Christians are “useless” and lead “to the ruin of the hearers” (vs. 14). Endless, vain debates that are a thin disguise for one-up-manship or pride of doctrinal precision are a detriment to Christians individually and the church as a whole. Elders in particular must: 1) avoid wasting time on such things, 2) “remind” others of the danger of that kind of behavior and 3) guard the church against those who compulsively involve the Christians in such pseudo-spiritual conversations.

Paul’s disdain

Paul writes with disdain when he refers

to, “worldly and empty chatter” (16) and “foolish and ignorant speculations” (23) It is like a gangrene which festers and destroys (vs. 17). He even calls out the worst perpetrators by name, Hymenaeus and Philetus (vs. 17)! Everyone knew who there were, he wasn’t afraid to name names. They are the bad example to the others and Paul points out

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how their argumentation was creating doubt in people’s minds (18). That particular case had to do with their view of eschatology, the end

times, in particular that the resurrection had already taken place (most probably meaning that there is no future physical resurrection because a spiritual resurrection had supposedly already taken place). The result was that some people’s faith was “upset” (NASB), “destroyed” (NIV), “overthrown” (NKJV), for there would be no hope for the future, this is all there is. Such false teachers have no concern for the impact on people’s faith, they are more concerned about gaining a hearing.

How often do so-called “doctrinal” arguments leave Christians demoralized and discouraged. It is a sad thing that the world often pictures the church as full of division and arguments. Many churches are so sure they are right in their doctrine, but sadly are lacking in something far greater—Love. Division over true doctrine is acceptable, but historically much division has taken place over dividing between the dill and the mint (Matt 23:23).

The irony is that few people recognize in themselves this fault. Others, in their think-

(Continued on page 4)

In the previous article, we thought about how the Lord worked with His disciples, spending time with them to prepare them, so that He might send them out to carry on His work. We noted the importance of preserving a balance between the “internal” and “external” aspects as essential parts of discipleship. Finally, we looked at a checklist of some of the spiritual qualities that disciples must be learning in the assembly as part of their training.

In this article, we’ll think about how elders can lead the way in this important dimension of assembly life, for if the church is to be a place for making disciples, is it not reasonable to ask if those who lead are doing it? There can be no better evidence that discipleship is occurring, than a pool of spiritually healthy and active young believers coming along to carry on the work both at home and out in “the field.”

Lessons on Discipleship

In Luke 14, the Lord gave important teaching about discipleship, including two key illustrations: one about a man planning to build a tower (vss. 28-30) and the other about a king facing an enemy attack (vss. 31-32). There are good lessons to be learned from what He said, that can help us evaluate the strength of disciple-making in our own assembly, and suggest some steps to take if it’s weak.

First we observe that in both illustrations, an active decision was called for. Nothing would just “happen” with the passing of time. In fact, failure to act would inevitably result in the decision: “No.” Additionally we learn that the choice to move ahead would necessarily involve the sacrifice of time, energy and goods. Some element of risk would be involved.

Note also that both stories convey the truth that the decision to act is goal oriented, a worthwhile end being contemplated by the one responsible. Then too, each would have individuals under his charge whose lives would be affected by his decisions. This alone is a serious consideration!

Further, once made, each decision would require a carefully laid out plan which must be followed. The idea of everyone doing “his own thing” would spell disaster. In this connection, it’s not a bad idea for elders to ask “What is our plan; do we have one and do the people know what it is?”

Finally, the two stories illustrate the truth that discipleship is relevant to the Lord’s work in two spheres: at home (the building of the tower), and in the world (going off to war). Home base must be kept strong so that returning

trainers be willing to pass along the work, and accept the fact that those who formerly could only receive, are now sensing the need to give to others.

To use an illustration from recent personal experience, I had just finished teaching through the book of Philippians in our small group which meets in a home midweek. Everyone seemed to enjoy the study, and the logical question was “What shall we study next?” As a Bible teacher, one has opinions of what would benefit the group, but whatever book was chosen would be profitable.

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During the week, I received an email from the young brother who leads our small group. He pointed out that because the elders in our assembly have chosen to emphasize the theme of

warriors can be fortified and sent out again.

Moving Ahead

Once a decision has been made to move forward, it’s important to keep evaluating the progress. Do those in the fellowship understand that this local church is serious about discipleship, and has a plan of action? Are the elders willing and able to confront obstacles like harsh criticism of young believers (trainees), or relational problems that can set up cliques?

One aspect of discipleship training that is particularly crucial is the matter of making good “transitions,” a most helpful word for elders. This is different from the equally important idea of “passing the baton.” Passing the baton describes the process of handing the work along to the next generation. Transition is the process that the individual disciple passes through during his own training.

Disciples must be taught to expect a change or transition in their thinking as they move from being primarily “takers” to primarily “givers.” This is no different from the child rearing process in the home. In the early years of life, children are great “consumers” of time, goods, and love, but as they mature, they begin to assume some of the responsibilities of maintaining a home and family. With both ideas, it is essential that parents or

discipleship this year, he wanted to try an idea in the group that was a little different. It would aim at getting the people more involved. After all, he reasoned, people tend to be lazy. While they enjoy sitting by during the teaching of the Word, are they actively growing as they ought to be?

Now if disciple making has taught me anything, it is that the zeal and vision of youth must be harnessed to work or be lost. New wine will burst old wineskins, as the Lord put it. Who wants to be an old wineskin that rips apart and spill the wine rather than be flexible? “Why don’t you give it a try, and I’ll support you all I can,” I told him.

At the next meeting, 8 people were present. This young brother broke the group up into four smaller groups of two people each, and gave each pair a couple of verses with an assignment. “Take about 15 minutes and study your verses, and then we’ll all come together and report our finding on the subject of what place God’s Word should be having in our private lives.”

The young man with whom I had been paired was a new Christian, relatively new in our assembly who never spoke out in public, and was mostly silent in the small group. I was amazed as he patiently searched each verse, and explained what it seemed to say in his own words. Holding back my own thoughts on these well-

What an Elder's Wife Needs

by Ruth Spender

Why do some couples work well together while others seem to struggle? What does a wife need from her husband for this working relationship to flourish and grow? What is the "glue" that keeps our partnership vibrant and healthy over many years? I believe the answer is found in intimate communication. Just as we need that vital daily connection with the Lord, so it is for us as couples.

Malachi 2:15 teaches us that the strength of our marital bond is very important to God and should be zealously guarded. In 1 Peter 3:7, husbands are told to dwell with their wives in an understanding way so that their prayers will not go unanswered. How can a man gain this understanding of his wife if she does not lovingly share her needs with him? Quality time together is required. Men and women often process the same information very differently. There is a need for mutual understanding if we are to work together effectively as fellow-laborers.

A wife might suggest going out for

coffee and dessert in order to have a relaxing, quiet setting in which to communicate with her husband. Think about the things you would like to share with him and at the same time seek to learn how you can best support him in his spiritual work. These times of interaction pay huge dividends as we do not want to allow misunderstandings and conflicts to creep into the relationship. The enemy of our soul would love to take advantage of such times. Instead, we want to learn to develop a sensitivity to each others needs and seek to meet these needs with the Lord's help.

The New Testament gives us a beautiful example of a godly couple who worked well together, Aquila and Priscilla. Here we see two individuals who together were totally committed to the Lord's work, disciplining young converts, lodging Paul in his early days of ministry and hosting the church in their home. Paul even says of them that they risked their lives for his sake. What passion these two had!

Do we see ourselves, as a team,

with this kind of passion as we approach the work of God? Are we willing to put our lives on the line for the furtherance of the Gospel? Are we seeking to help couples around us who have a heart for ministry by teaching them what we have learned?

Some of our most precious times as a couple have been when my husband and I have talked and prayed together about the Lord's work and strategized on how best to accomplish the task at hand. None of this can be possible without a good working relationship between us as husband and wife.

Let us do all we can to encourage, assist and help with the work at hand. The wife who is willing to go the extra mile for her husband is the person who has a strong confidence and trust in the Lord (Proverbs 14:26). Her sense of oneness with her husband energizes her and the couple together is able to undertake great things for God which they would otherwise never consider. Thank the Lord for the privilege He has granted us to serve Him.



Rethinking Discipleship—Part 2 (cont. from page 2)

known passages, I could see a wonderful thing taking place. He was discovering God's truth for himself and putting it into words meaningful to him. God was speaking to his heart, and in a moment he would have the opportunity to give something back to the others.

When the group came back together and each took turns sharing the things they had discovered, it was clear that similar things had been happening in the other groups. I was pleased at the willingness of my partner to speak on behalf of our "group." I supported him with several added insights, but my heart was quietly thanking the Lord for the growth I was seeing in a single evening.

Looking Outward

All the above finds its ultimate fulfillment when the disciple gets actively involved in contributing to some aspect of the Great Commission out in the world

through personal service and outreach. This produces godly families; this is what builds up the assembly.

Thus it is vitally important that the church be a place not only for equipping and training disciples, but a place where the rest of the disciple-making process is supported. Communicating needs and opportunities for involvement through

making process along by providing real life practical opportunities for involvement, they are all the more useful if carried out with the knowledge and blessing of the elders of the assembly that supplies the trainees. This in turn will have a healthy "shaping effect" on the church itself. Are there times when prayer needs and special break-throughs can be shared

with the congregation? Are funds available to meet special needs? If growth and blessing are evident, is there openness to a call from God to commend the person to more extended ser-

vice?

In Luke 14, the Lord ended His message on discipleship by likening disciples to salt. Salt produces no effect sitting in the shaker; it must be applied to the food. Elders need to ask if the believers for whose souls they watch (Heb. 13:17) are really becoming salt in the community and in the world. This is the true goal of discipleship, and the fulfillment of the Commission given to us by the Lord.

Salt produces no effect sitting in the shaker; it must be applied to the food.

camp work, prison ministry, rescue missions and campus ministries are examples. Those with suitable homes can open them for Bible studies, small groups, prayer gatherings or for extending hospitality to visiting missionaries. Short term mission trips can provide invaluable experience for young disciples.

While these things help the disciple



Foundation for Serving *(cont. from page 1)*

ing, dissect the minutiae, but they themselves usually proclaim their opinions to be dealing with things of gigantic proportions.

Men of Balance

Elders must be men of the Word and of the Spirit, men of balance, in order to discern what is of primary importance, secondary importance and what is not even worthy of discussion. So, Paul instructs Timothy to diligently apply himself to the study of the Word (15). This takes more than a casual glance at the Bible in a daily devotion. It requires that an elder be a “student of the Word,” a Berean (Acts 17:11). With such a commitment, the elder will be able to discern whether, for example, the meaning of the proverbial tent pegs in the Tabernacle is worth asserting, or whether the length in time of the Lord’s Supper meeting is of the same importance as eternal security for the believer.

The leaders of God’s people (of which Timothy is an example) need to guard themselves against behavior that will undermine their role and goal as leaders. They should live honorable lives, standing ready at the Lord’s disposal (vss. 20-21). Paul gives a list of specifics, including, appropriate for all men, to “flee from youthful lusts” (22a). This is probably one of the biggest struggles most men have, especially in light of the prevalence

today of the internet.

On the positive side, a leader of God’s people cannot go lightly on those things emphasized to all Christians, like righteousness, faith, love, and a pure heart. There is no license for ungodliness; the godly leader is not morally independent, but called to the same high standard to which all have been called (vs. 22b).

In particular, the leader should not be “quarrelsome” (24). The role of a leader (in particular, of an elder) should be characterized by kindness and pa-

It is the Lord who brings about conviction. We are simply His tools, ready at His command.

tience and gentleness (24-25). These should color his instruction (24) and his correction of those that propagate what is false (25).

Grace for Change

False teachers won’t change primarily because of our persuasive argumentation or logic, or even the forcefulness of our rebuke. True change will result only from the grace of God working in their lives to bring about repentance (25). If the elders of the church react with undue harshness or fleshly attitudes, they are providing a hindrance. Peter puts it this way, “*Keep your be-*

havior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12). If this is so in dealing with non-Christians in the last days, then would it not also be true with false teachers in the church today.

This does not mean that we don’t confront false doctrine. The elders have a responsibility to do just that. But, this affects the *manner* in which we do it. It is the Lord who brings about conviction, we

are simply His tools, ready at His command.

Some have a habit of referring to Jesus condemnation of the Pharisees with His many “woes” and John the Baptist’s incendiary

rebukes of the hypocrites. Yet, Paul here instructs that we be gentle in “*correcting those who are in opposition”* (25). So can we never be firm? Of course we can, but at the same time we must be gentle, so that those who oppose right doctrine cannot gain a footing with the charge of against us of un-Christ-like behavior.



THE SMALL PRINT

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Note: All words referring to God have the initial letter capitalized. While the original languages of the Bible do not use capitalization, this is the convention in some translations but not in others. So at times there may be inconsistencies in usage in ESN articles.

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