

PROPER ORDER IN THE ELDERSHIP OF THE ASSEMBLY

Today, there are many groups breaking away from the main-line denominational system and forming small fellowships or prayer groups. "NO ORDER" seems to be the common theme throughout these groups. They want no label of "structure" ascribed to anything they are doing. This, they do because the church that they came out of has fallen into "wrong order" or "totally out of order" compared to God's Word. Their answer to "WRONG ORDER" or "OUT OF ORDER" is "NO ORDER". They proclaim, "We have no order". But as time pursues, it becomes obvious that "NO ORDER" becomes "DISORDER". Disorder leads to confusion. They wonder why the Spirit no longer moves in their midst. Our God is not a God of confusion. God has an order. There is only one order for His church and that is the only order that will work. His order is established on a foundation. And that foundation is the apostles (New Testament) and the prophets (Old Testament) with Jesus Christ being the Chief Corner Stone. There is also another truth that must be in every fellowship or prayer group. Christ, the Holy Spirit, must be the Head. God has laid out His proper order for His Body that will make up His church when He returns.

"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" ***

Galatians 4:16

Many churches operate with some form of Eldership. But along with the Eldership, they enlist a board of Deacons, Trustees and Committees that are set up according to what the denomination dictates or according to man's ideas.

This system usually operates with a hired pastor that Jesus called a "hireling". this system is a form of democracy that answers to the congregation and ultimately the congregation is in control.

The congregation votes for or against the pastor, elders, deacons, trustees and board of members. The congregation operates the church. This is the "hireling" system.

There are churches where the eldership is in total control of the congregation. The congregation must come to the eldership for permission for everything they do. The people must seek approval to marry, to have children, to move; every action must come under the direction of the eldership. Their total lives must come under the authority of the eldership known as discipline or shepherding. The congregation is in total bondage to the eldership.

Even though these systems fit a need of certain people, this is not the direction God gave in His Word on how the church is to be operated. Neither one of these systems are God's plan for His church.

Let's look at God's proper order in the operation of the church. There was no church and no church organization at the time Jesus walked on the earth. Jesus never gave instructions on how to operate His church. We can deduce that the church was formed under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Paul and the other writers of the New Testament have given the proper order to govern and operate the church from the book of Acts to Revelation.

The church began on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, direction was given and an order was set down on how the church was to operate.

"... Christ is the head of the church." ***Ephesians 5:23

The word for "church" is EKLESIA and is sometimes translated "assembly and congregation". EK means "out of" and LESIA means "a calling, or to be called".

Therefore, it is the calling out of something that makes the church.

The word EKLESIA did not always refer to the church in the New Testament. Let's examine the different ways the word EKLESIA is used in the Bible. Three times the word EKLESIA was translated "assembly".

" But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly." ***Acts 19:39

"And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly."

***Acts 19:41

"Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were coming together." ***Acts 19:32

These usages of EKLESIA translated "assembly" were not referring to "The Church". "Assembly" is the most proper translation of the word EKLESIA, even when it does refer to the church.

The word "church" today, is equated with organizations, denominations and buildings; separate groups worshiping in each their own way. When today's assembly comes together to worship, it would be more proper to say "the assembly comes together to fellowship."

Today, many picture a grand building complete with steeple and stained glass windows as their idea of a "church". It must look like a church or it is not accepted as a "church". Many think of a building when they hear the word "church". But the word "church", as referring to the Body of Christ, the Called Out Ones,

has nothing to do with buildings, organizations or denominations: but, rather, to a people.

There is one truth that all assemblies share. Christ is to be the head of every assembly of believers. Beginning with this fact: We must strive to bring the order established in the Word, into every aspect of the operation of the assembly. Christ, the Holy Spirit, established this order to operate His Eklesia.

Some may ask, "What makes the difference what order the church has as long as they worship God?" We must look to the Word for the answer to this question.

"Let all things be done decently and in order." ***1 Corinthians 14:40

God has an established order in everything He has ordained. There is an order to worshiping God. God has designed order throughout His creation and God has designed an order for His assembly. It is necessary that everyone in the assembly understand God's order and that, when that order is followed, there should be no question. But, when there is no order, then there is confusion and splits develop in the assembly.

When new people ask why things are done in a certain way, we should be able to answer their question from a Biblical perspective. Each and every one should be able to give God's proper order in that situation, according to the Word of God. Many assemblies have already decided upon a set order of man by which to operate, and are not willing for change to occur in order to come into God's proper order. They obey orders from man-made headquarters instead of the formula set forth in God's Word.

The first mention of the word "church" is after the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

"Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." *** Acts 2:47

The church, the Eklesia, the Called Out Ones, is the place of the saved. Yet, in many assemblies, the unsaved are welcome and sit for years. The leadership hopes they will come to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. The Eklesia is to be a place of the saved. The unsaved should not feel comfortable in our midst. The unsaved should not sit comfortably in the assembly month after month, year after year. The unsaved should be convicted and either accept the Lord or leave. If the unsaved are comfortable in our midst, there is no convicting power in the messages going forth from the pulpit. Unfortunately, the assemblies are full of unsaved people.

The set order of God's Eklesia began when Jesus chose the 12 disciples which became the apostles (except for Judas).

"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles: Simon, (whom He also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes,

And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor." *** Luke 6:12-16

Apostle means "one who is sent forth". Barnabas, Paul, Andronicus, Junias, Epaphroditus, Silas and Timothy were some of the first apostles in the beginning church age. Today, God is still sending forth apostles to begin assemblies.

The original twelve apostles were the leaders in the beginning. These twelve were the leaders in the beginning. These twelve were responsible for the assembly. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Jerusalem for counsel, the twelve apostles were also called the elders.

"And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter." ***Acts 15:6

"...they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question." ***Acts 15:2

Both apostles and elders are leaders in the church assemblies. The apostles are sent to start the assembly and the elders are set in place by the apostles to oversee the work.

The Greek word for elder is PRESBUTEROS and is translated PRESBYTERY in ***1 Timothy 4:14.

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery."

Elder and presbytery are words that are interchangeable. 1 Timothy reveals that the elders have the authority of laying on of hands, to use the spiritual endowment, ore gift, that was given them by God.

Another word used for leader is EPISKOPE and means "to superintend, to have the oversight of". The word is translated as "bishop and overseer". both words, PRESBUTEROS and EPISKOPE, refer to leadership in the Body. These words are interchangeable. PRESBUTEROS and EPISKOPE have the same meaning, the same responsibility and qualifications. Elder, bishop, overseer and presbytery are the same position. Today, some assemblies call their leaders, elders; others, bishops; others, presbyters or overseers.

The early church leaders were apostles and elders. The apostle,

who began the work, operated as an elder until others ere raised up to assume those positions and to do the work of the ministry. They were to be in the Word continuously, seeking the Holy Spirit's direction in the operation of the assembly; teaching, preaching and ministering the Word. They were not to wait tables. Their job was the work of the ministry.

"Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables.' ***Acts 6:2

Helpers were selected from the assembly. Seven men of good report were chosen to 'wait tables' and were under the direction of the elders. Deacons were chosen for this responsibility. This represents the second set of order in the church. The deacons were to do the labor under the direction of the elders. Deacons were chosen for this responsibility. This represents the second set of order in the church. The deacons were to do the labor under the direction of the eldership..

The third group in the assembly mentioned in verse 2 are the disciples. Disciples are learners, those who are being tutored. The disciples are set in the assembly to learn. As they learn and mature, they too, become usable to the ministry.

Therefore, there are three groups which make up proper order in the assembly; the apostles and elders, the deacons and the disciples. We refer to these as the three L's: The leaders, the laborers and the learners.

The pattern for proper order in the church must be Biblically based.

"Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had

taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must go through much tribulation to enter into the Kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." ***Acts 14:20-23

Paul ordained elders in every church. When Paul was in prison, he sent other men to do this.

"For this cause Left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." ***Titus 1:5

God raised up other men who knew the Spirit of the Lord to ordain elders in every city and in every church. Every church is to operate with an eldership, having Christ as their head. There is no other way in the Word to operate His assembly.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

***Romans 13:1-2

The word ordained is "to be commissioned to do a job". This refers to secular government, but also refers to God's government in the assembly and the power He has placed in the eldership: being set by God and ordained by God to make sure that the work continues, expands and grows.

In any assembly, there needs to be a firm foundation. God will not build on a foundation of sand (flesh). We must build on the firm foundation, the Rock, which is Christ, the Word and power

of God. If the house is built upon a foundation of sand when the storms come (judgment), that work will fail. If the house is built on a foundation of rock when the storms come, that work will stand. It will be established, this will be the house God will inhabit. Those who resist that power will receive to themselves damnation, which is judgment.

What are the qualifications of an elder?

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." ***1

Timothy 3:1-7

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God: not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate;

Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he

may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." ***Titus 1:5-9

Many churches have women in leadership. Does the word allow for women in leadership? The Word is very clear. Elders are to be men.

Verse 1 of 1 Timothy 3- If a man desire the office of a bishop

Verse 2 of 1 Timothy 3-the husband of one wife

"One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity." ***1 Timothy 3:4

Women are not the head of the household. In the above scriptures, all references to eldership are masculine. Therefore, the eldership is to be held only by men.

The eldership is not open to a single man (The husband of one wife). What about Paul? Paul evidently acted as elder to set in order many churches until others were raised up to assume the eldership. There is no indication Paul was married. Paul was given the Spirit of revelation and wisdom by God to do this work until others were capable of taking over as elders.

Paul wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; that a man must be married to be in the eldership. He must be the husband of one wife, ruling his home in a proper fashion. A single man is not the head of a household and cannot know how to operate the assembly. Most single men live alone or with their parents and are not responsible for a household. And elder, therefore, must be married.

In the above scriptures, there are 25 qualifications for an elder:

1. Desire to be in the service of God
2. Must be a man
3. Must be married
4. Must be blameless (above reproach)
5. Must be vigilant (serious minded)

6. Good behavior (orderly, modest, honest)
7. Given to hospitality
8. Apt to teach (able to handle the Word)
9. Not given to wine (abstain from alcohol)
10. No striker (uncontrollable temper)
11. Not greedy of filthy lucre (gain of the world, ill-gotten gain)
12. Patience (gentle)
13. Not a brawler (not to tarry at wine)
14. Not covetous (not a lover of money)
15. Not a novice (not a new convert)
16. Of good report of them from without (good reputation)
17. Not self willed (self pleasing, self centered, selfish, arrogant)
18. Not soon angry (not quick tempered)
19. A lover of good men (associated with those who love others)
20. Be sober (sound mind, self control)
21. Just (a right standing before God, righteous)
22. Holds fast the Word (knows and lives by the Word)
23. Grave (show honor and respect)
24. Not double tongued (telling a different story)
25. Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience before God

Is it necessary to have all 25 of these qualifications when you become an elder? No. Any man who desires a good work should desire these goals. These qualifications should be the driving force in their life. Any man, whose desire is to become a leader in God's work, should have these goals in his heart. We should be looking for these qualifications in the assembly. Once we know what these qualifications are, we should start developing them in the men who are raised up to be leaders. The first qualification for anyone who desires to be a leader, is that they must want to be in God's service. Their whole life must be turned towards that service. Not just to be seen of men. ***Matthew 6:5

Elders are always plural. How many elders should there be? The answer to that is: there must be more than one. There does not have to be a certain number. In man's order, there are usually three, five, or seven appointed because an uneven number assures a majority rule. But, in God's order, majority does not rule. Christ is the head and all elders are to listen to that voice. There were elders in the Old Testament. There were twelve patriarchs in Israel. They, then, appointed 70. Even or uneven, the eldership must be in total agreement, for the majority does not rule in the assembly. Who are the elders to answer to? To Christ. When the elders make a mistake, is it the responsibility of the assembly to rise up and correct them?

"Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren." ***1 Timothy 5:1

Many churches elect their eldership for a one year to three year term. If they do not please the congregation, they are removed. The eldership is not to be voted in by the congregation. Nor are they to be voted out by the congregation. They are appointed by God.

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."
***Romans 11:29

God has given gifts to the assembly.

"Wherefore He smith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." ***Ephesians 4:8-11

These are gifts to the assembly and are called of God.

Evangelists usually do not function as elders, for evangelists generally minister in the field. Even though Paul was an

evangelist, he was also an elder, an apostle and a prophet. The elders are set to oversee and operate the assembly. Those in the eldership should be able to teach. The pastor is selected from the eldership. This should be the person who has been given the ability to pastor. He must also be available to care for the every day needs of the flock. Pastors are to be part of the eldership. Is, then, the pastor a senior elder with more authority? The pastor is an elder and has no more authority than any other elder. There is no such thing as a chief, head or senior elder in God's order.

Some systems today hire their pastor. Again, Jesus called these hirelings. God says when trouble comes, they will flee the flock. Unfortunately, most trouble in the assembly comes from the leadership. Either the pastor has offended someone by something he said, or he is not free to minister because of the controls the leadership has restrained him with. Or the leadership is not equal and one tries to raise himself up above the others.

"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." ***1 Corinthians 12:29-31

Does every man in the eldership have all of these gifts? No. But all these gifts need to be operating in the eldership. Elders are called by God for life.

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

***Romans 11:29

The office of an eldership is a calling of God. God's gifts and callings are without repentance.

What happens when man is called as an elder and does not desire to fill the position? The man loses God's blessing. He does not lose his salvation, but he will not be used in the eldership again. If he is not usable in the place where God set him, then He will not use him again because he cannot be trusted.

The Holy Spirit sets the eldership in the church. Is every elder, in every assembly, set, ordained and established by God? No! It is only those assemblies which are led by the Spirit and which operate by the Spirit. If Christ is not the head of the church, then it is a man made order.

In Acts 6, we observed that the assembly is made up of three main parts; Leadership, labourers and learners. God has shown us the qualifications of the elders.

Second, are the qualifications of a Deacon. As was said earlier, helpers were selected from the assembly of disciples. Men of good report were chosen to do labor under the direction of the elders.

The church began to grow very rapidly after Acts 2:47:***

"Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

As the church began to grow, trouble came into their midst.

Much the same kind of problems as the church has today.

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations."*** Acts 6:1

The seed of division and separation began to take root; "there arose a murmuring..." Satan came in very subtly in a seemingly small thing. Many everyday things were not being taken care of by the elders. The elders place was to be in the Word continuously, seeking the Holy Spirit's direction in the operation of the assembly; teaching, preaching and ministering the Word.

Their job was the work of the ministry.

So God set up the second order of the Deacons, or the labourers.
"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas. ***Acts 6:5

The qualifications of a Deacon are found in ***1 Timothy 3:8-13:

"Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of the deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacons well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

There are 14 qualifications of a Deacon.

1. A desire to be in the service of God
2. The deacon must be under the leadership of the elders
3. Must be a man
4. Must be married to one wife
5. Have rule over their wife, children and household. Their wives must be grave (show honor and respect) not slanderers (false accusers) sober (abstain from alcohol) and faithful in all things.
6. Full of the Holy Ghost
7. Honest report
8. Full of wisdom
9. Grave (show honor and respect)
10. Not double tongued (telling a different story)
11. Not given to much wine (abstain from alcohol)

12. Not greedy of filthy lucre (gain of the world, ill-gotten gain)
13. Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience before God.
14. Be found blameless (above reproach)

Again, is it necessary to have all 14 of these qualifications when you become a deacon? No. But any man whose desire is to become a leader in God's work should have these goals in mind. And as the elders, through the direction of the Holy Ghost, prayerfully choose deacons, they must look for these qualifications and start developing these areas in our young men. God also gives direction for disciples. The word for disciple is **MATHETOS** and means a "learner"; those who accomplish, endeavor and learn to do. What relationship should the disciples have to the eldership?

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." ***Hebrews 13:17

Disciples are to submit to the eldership. The word submit means to "yield to those who are set in authority". The word submit is **HUPPOTASSO** and means "submitting, to raise up from beneath and put in authority in their lives. It is not the eldership's job to insist that the disciples be in submission to them. Peter spoke of himself as an elder.

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensample to the flock." ***1 Peter 5:3

Elders are not to lord over the flock.

When the disciples submit to the eldership, then the power is released in their lives because everything has come into proper order. In Paul's writing to Timothy, he gave direction to the

disciple.

"Rebuke not an elder..."***1 Timothy 5:17

Who, then, is to rebuke an elder? Christ, the Holy Ghost, only.

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine." ***1

Timothy 5:17

"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." 1 Timothy 5:19

This ceases any gossiping, rumors and talk against an elder.

When someone has an accusation against an elder, what should be our response to that accusation? There is a proper order.

Insist that there be two or three other people to hear the accusation. If there is a basis for the accusation, then those should go in love to that elder.

Jesus talked about teachers. Jesus was the Master. The word master in the Bible refers to a teacher.

"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." ***Matthew 10:24

The disciple (learner) is not to be superior over his master, or teacher.

"It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord..." ***Matthew 10:25

The disciple is not above his teacher.

"The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master."

(teacher) *** Luke 6:40

The word perfect means "mature". The mature shall be as the teacher. Why is the teacher necessary in the assembly? He is there to teach and mature the disciples.

We must, therefore, first become a disciple. Then, what are the qualifications of a disciple?

"If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, a and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple.

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

***Luke 14:26-27 and 33

The qualifications to be a disciple are very difficult. Are you ready to count the cost? If you desire to be Jesus' disciple and learn about Him, are you willing to meet these qualifications? Do you love everything less than your desire to follow Jesus? If God is not first in our lives, we cannot be His disciples.

Are you willing to do the servile jobs in the Body of Christ? It makes no difference where you are set in the body of Christ, you have been placed there to learn and grow into maturity. Whether you are a disciple or a deacon, you are there to learn.

God is calling many, today, to come up higher; to become usable in the kingdom. When God calls, we only need to answer, "Yes, Lord, use me." God is not interested in our ability; only our availability.

No matter what our calling in God is, the most important thing is that it be in order...HIS ORDER.

Life on your PC is safer, easier, and more enjoyable with Windows Vista®. [See how](#)