



Leadership in the Apostolic Church

By Galen Thompson

The New Testament Church was birthed on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon about 120 followers of Christ who, in obedience to Christ's command (Acts 1:4, 5), gathered at Jerusalem in unified expectant prayer. The news of this phenomenon spread like wildfire through the Temple, which was packed with people from all over the known world who had gathered for the hour of prayer (9 am) during the Celebration of Pentecost. A massive multitude of curious onlookers quickly pressed in. Peter, under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, seized the opportunity and began to preach the first apostolic message. The results: *"And they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"* (Acts 2:41). What a dynamic birthing! Life was breathed into the infant church body. Strong and healthy growth ensued: *"And the Lord ADDED unto the church daily such as should be saved ... Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of men was about five thousand ... And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women ... And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples MULTIPLIED in Jerusalem greatly"* (Acts 2:47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7). What a tremendous outpouring of the Holy Ghost! According to historians, TENS OF THOUSANDS came into the Jerusalem Church within the first years.

How did the early Church respond to an immediate leadership crisis? How did they disciple and assimilate so many into the body of Christ at one time? How did they so effectively propagate the gospel of Christ throughout their known world?

God was not caught off guard at the birth of the New Testament Church. Such rapid growth created a need for immediate MULTI-PERSON, MULTI-LEVEL leadership. Preparation and leadership training began long before the event of the birth of the Church. God had a leadership **team** prepared!

-Christ's Leadership Development-

"And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach," Mark 3:14

Jesus, during His three years of ministry, made an incredible investment in the lives of that He was preparing to lead His forthcoming Church. Much of His ministry was focused on the DISCIPLING and MENTORING of twelve men. Rarely do we find Jesus apart from the twelve. TOGETHER they ministered, walked, ate, and slept. Consider how much of those three years was spent on the road walking. It is likely that the equipping of the future leadership team took place during these times - and it was these twelve trained Apostles that did provide the cooperative leadership of the First Apostolic Church of Jerusalem (Acts 2:14; 4:32-35; 5:12-18, 29; 15:2).

Of the twelve, Jesus more intensely focused upon an inner circle of three: Peter, James and John. The result of the intense closeness that developed with "the Mentor" became evident later in their leadership:

1. Peter $\frac{3}{4}$ given the keys to the Kingdom, preached at Pentecost, opened the gospel to the Samaritans and Gentiles, and left us a couple of Epistles.
2. John "the beloved" $\frac{3}{4}$ gave us the Gospel of John, three Epistles and the great Revelation of Jesus Christ.
3. James $\frac{3}{4}$ the first Apostle to give up his life for Christ, came to an untimely death when Herod Agrippa martyred him.

Quote: Dr. Lynn Anderson, in his book, They Smell Like Sheep, states of Christ's leadership development, "Good equippers do it like Jesus did: recruit twelve, graduate eleven, and focus on three."

In addition to the equipping of the twelve (and focused training of the inner three), Jesus widened the leadership pool by establishing, equipping and sending seventy more men into ministry (Luke 10). Jesus PLANNED and PREPARED for a Church birthed with immediate unique needs. Jesus, in equipping His followers, left them a pattern whereby they were prepared to equip others.

We must replicate Christ's leadership development pattern if we are going to effectively reap and meet the needs of today's harvest. Although duplicating Jesus' time commitment to the twelve may be impossible (those presently mentored and I all have families - so living and traveling together for three years would not be ideal!), a pattern for developing leadership was established.

Noteworthy elements are:

- 1) He made a LONG-TERM COMMITMENT to them. (Three years)
- 2) He spent QUALITY TIME developing interpersonal relationship with them. *“That they should be with Him,”* (Walking, taking time away in the mountain)
- 3) He went THROUGH LIFE’S EXPERIENCES with them. (Through storms, funerals, picnics and persecution)
- 4) He was TRANSPARENT with His emotions and burdens. (He wept - Jn. 11:35; he was angry - Mt. 21:13; He rejoiced - Lk. 10:17-21)
- 5) He gave them HANDS-ON experience. *“That He might send them forth to preach,”* (Mt. 10:1-14, Lk. 10:1-24, Jn. 4:2)
- 6) He lived A LIFE OF INTEGRITY before them. (I Pet. 2:21-23)
- 7) He cared enough to CONFRONT them, and He REBUKED them when needed. (Mk. 8:31-33, Mt. 17:14-18)

-Early Apostolic Leadership-

Jesus’ pattern for developing/mentoring leadership was duplicated by the early Apostolic leaders: Paul was mentored by a PEER, Barnabas - Acts 9:26-28;11:25-26. Success demands a SUCCESSOR: Paul mentored Timothy - Acts 16:1-3; I Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:19-22; II Tim. 3:10-11. Timothy was then charged to mentor others - *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”* (II Tim. 2:2.). Developing leadership through discipleship and mentoring is not only Biblical, it is imperative!!!

As the New Testament Church rapidly grew, so did their demands. This resulted in a need for additional leadership. The disciples then added seven DEACONS to their leadership team (Acts 6:1-7). The Acts of the Apostles tells us that the Apostolic leadership in the Jerusalem church was multi-person and multilevel: APOSTLES AND ELDERS (Acts 15:2-6, 22-23; 16:4; 21:17-18).

From the pool of seven deacons ADVANCED two notable leaders:

- *“STEPHEN, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.”* Whom, when *“they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake... cast him out of the city, and stoned him”* (Acts 6:8,10; 7:58).
- *“PHILIP THE EVANGELIST,”* second listed of the seven, left Jerusalem and evangelized Samaria, Gaza, Azotus, *“and passing through he preached in all cities, till he came to Caesarea”* (Acts 8:5-40).

A progressive upward flow was established early in the multilevel leadership.

The Apostolic church owned neither buildings nor property, but “*continued daily with one accord in the TEMPLE [public building], and breaking bread from HOUSE TO HOUSE [oikos - home were a family dwells and friends and relatives frequent]” (Acts 2:46). This Apostolic duo-evangelism method was successful as “...*the Lord added unto the church daily such as should be saved*” (2:47). “*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. And in those days... the number of disciples multiplied*” (Acts 5:42-6:1). It also provided multiple leadership opportunities and a pool from which, as we will discover later, elders were appointed.*

The persecution that came upon the Jerusalem church scatter the contented SAINTS abroad to do the work of God throughout Asia Minor. “*Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch... preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord*” (Acts 11:19-21). The Apostles and Elders remained at Jerusalem -Acts 15. These saint-sparks erupted into apostolic fire wherever they landed. Each oikos became an evangelism center. As the affects of the scattered Church (body of called-out believers, not a building) broadened, the Jerusalem Church sent out Barnabas to Antioch to exhort, establish and equip the new converts. The results: “*And much people were added unto the Lord*” (11:24).

“*Barnabas then went off to Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year the two of them lived in fellowship with the congregation there, and gave instruction to large numbers. It was in Antioch that the disciples first got the name Christians*” (11:25-26 NEB). The oikoses came together for instruction. Here equipping and assimilation took place. Note, “*They [Barnabas and Paul] assembled themselves WITH THE CHURCH*” (KJV). The Church - believers - proceeded the “preacher-teacher.” The saints went out into the communities and established evangelizing, growing oikoses. Then the “equipper” came. Too often today a preacher is sent to assemble saints, rather than an assembly of saints with a sent preacher. The Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, and Preacher/Teacher are gift ministries to the Church (Eph. 4:11-13). The Church must exist before it can receive a gift.

Barnabas and Paul mentored up leaders in Antioch (Acts 13:1). Then, from Antioch God sent Barnabas and Paul to evangelize the world (13:2-4). God blessed their missionary work and churches (bodies of believers, not buildings) were started in many towns. They effectively propagated the gospel through their duo-evangelistic efforts. Nearly thirty years after Pentecost Paul confirms the continuation of the duo-evangelistic method, as he reminds the Ephesian elders, “*I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you PUBLICLY and from HOUSE TO HOUSE*” (Acts 20:20). Before concluding their first evangelistic excursion, Barnabas and Paul revisited the groups to ESTABLISH LEADERSHIP. They ordained ELDERS in every Church beginning at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (Acts 14:21-23). This pattern continued throughout the Apostolic Church (Titus 1:5, James 5:14, I Peter 5:1). Elders became God’s designated spiritual leaders in the local assemblies (Acts 20:28). The Apostle Paul maintained oversight and development of the

elders through visits and letters. Paul then mentored Timothy and Titus to appoint and mentor of elders.

Paul confirms the Divine intent of multi-person, multi-level leadership by teaching on ELDERS and DEACONS (I Tim. 3, Titus 1) and also by declaring, “*God gave 1.) some to be apostles, 2.) some to be prophets, 3.) some to be evangelists, and 4.) some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for the works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the full measure of the perfection found in Christ*” (Eph. 4: 11-13 NIV). God never intended for the leadership necessary “*to prepare God’s people for the works of service*” to come from a sole individual, but from more than one person and more than one fold, layer, or level: elders and deacons.

Let us first observe the elder in detail.

-Elders-

What is an elder? The Greek word is *presbuteros* (pres boo ter os), from which we derive our English word PRESBYTER. It means: older, senior; one who leads by experience; literally, elderly or elder-like. In light of this definition (EXPERIENCED) we see why Paul had to return later or send someone like Timothy or Titus behind him to ordain elders.

Paul’s addressing of the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-38 helps give understanding to their leadership role in the Apostolic Church. To these men, mentored by himself (vs. 17-20), Paul says, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the FLOCK, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you OVERSEERS, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (vs. 28). Here we discover two defining characteristics/qualities:

- I. SHEPHERD - “Take heed therefore unto...all the FLOCK ... to FEED the church of God. Many versions (TEV, NIV, PME, and NEB) render the latter part of the verse, “Be shepherds of the Church of God.” “Shepherd” is a metaphor that God chose as a model for spiritual leadership throughout the Bible (Psalm 23:1;100:3, Isa. 40:11; 53:6, Ezk. 34:31, Heb. 13:20, I Peter 2:25; 5:2). Jesus Christ, our “Chief Shepherd” exemplified the Shepherding role. As already stated, Shepherd style leadership requires a *long-term commitment, quality time, hands on experience...etc.* (7 Characteristics previously mentioned).

Shepherd is translated or in our English language as PASTOR.

- II. OVERSEER - “Over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee overseers.”

Overseer: The Greek word is *Episkopos* - Superintendent, Bishop. The emphasis is not on the word “OVER” but “SEER”: One who watches on the behalf of.

The word BISHOP, used by Paul to Timothy (I Tim. 3:1-7) is the exact same Greek word *Episkopos*. We commonly refer to “Bishop” as PASTOR: an “office of service”.

Peter, who referred to himself as an ELDER, in exhorting elders, used the exact same two defining characteristics/qualities as Paul, “FEED THE FLOCK of God which is among you, TAKING OVERSIGHT thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to THE FLOCK. And when the CHIEF SHEPHERD shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (I Pet. 5:1-4).

-Characteristics/Qualities of an Elder/Bishop/Pastor-

Let us begin by observing the qualities set forth in the Scriptures:

“If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. For if a man does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of the church of God? He must not be a man who has been recently converted; else he will swell up with pride and be condemned, as the Devil was. He should be a man who is respected by the people outside the church, so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the Devil’s trap” (I Timothy 3: 1-7, NIV).

“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless - not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to much wine, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Titus 1:5-9, NIV).

“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under you, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it 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 will never fade away” (I Peter 5:1-4, NIV).

(See handout “Spiritual Qualities of an Elder”)

List the three qualities of an elder that most spoke to you during the above reading. Why?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

For simplicity, I have divided the Scriptural qualities of an elder into five groups: 1) Spiritually- minded - Full of the Holy Ghost, 2) Seasoned, 3) Strong Family Relations, 4) Man of Character, 5) Visionary.

I. Spiritually-minded - Full of the Holy Ghost

- A. The Apostles determined, in Acts 6:3, that those first chosen to serve the Jerusalem Church must be “men of good reputation who are both practical and SPIRITUALLY-MINDED (PME) ; FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST (KJV) .”

This quality is foremost to obtaining ANY scriptural qualities for leadership, whether that of an elder or deacon. An intimate relationship WITH God results in being “full of the Holy Ghost;” spiritually-minded or spiritually-disposed; IN TUNE to the Spirit: an obvious requisite to dealing in spiritual matters.

What are the requisites for an intimate relationship with God?

- B. An elder must have some PRACTICAL LIFE EXPERIENCE and some SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE in order to oversee spiritual matters in this life. Let it be noted of today's church leaders, as it was of Peter and John, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13).
- C. Barnabas, "a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and faith", was selected by the Jerusalem church to establish the first daughter work, Antioch (Acts 11: 19-24).
- D. From Antioch "the Holy Ghost said, 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where unto I HAVE CALLED THEM.'" Thus, Barnabas and "Saul...filled with the Holy Ghost embarked on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-4, 9).
- E. Review elements:
 - 1) An intimate relationship, in tune with the Spirit, spiritually minded, "full."
 - 2) Spiritual experience. (Will be discussed in detail later)
 - 3) Called by God.

II. SEASONED

Definition: To make fit by experience; having passed through seasons; prepared.

- A. Review definition of Elder: older, senior; one who leads by EXPERIENCE.
- B. God told Moses, "Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be elders of the people, and officers over them ["who are known to you as leaders and officials" (NIV)] and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone" (Num. 11:16,17). The elder/leaders must already have been PROVEN SEASONED leaders.
- C. Although our culture places little value and respect on age, maturity, and experience, God and most past and present cultures do. AGE is a factor. Jesus did not begin His earthly ministry until he was THIRTY years of age.

D. Paul, then later Timothy and Titus, RETURNED or CAME BEHIND to ordain elders in every city. TIME enough had lapsed for spiritual leaders to emerge. First, experience had to be gained and leadership qualities displayed before appointment. This is seasoning.

E. Experienced in life's PRACTICAL and SPIRITUAL seasons.

1) Practical

- Have been through a few of life's experiences.
- Passed through pressures of critics, crisis, and confrontation.
- Understands people - personality, gender and cultural differences.
- Developed successful relationships.
- Mature and experienced with finances.

With experience comes stability in the practical affairs of life. Wisdom and perspective only come with age.

2) Spiritual

- Paul, in I Timothy 3:6, warns that an elder be “not a NOVICE” (KJV); “a NEW CONVERT” (NASB). He needs a little spiritual seasoning.
- Familiar with Jesus; experienced in prayer.
- Toughened and seasoned by battle; familiar with Spiritual warfare; knows the joys and perils of victory and the sorrow and strengthening of defeat; experienced some mountains and some valleys.
- Wrestled with sin and temptation and won.
- Experienced and confident in the Word of God
 - ↳ “Able to teach.” Vine makes this helpful comment: “Not merely a readiness to teach is implied, but the spiritual power to do so as the outcome of prayerful meditation in the Word of God and the practical application of its truth to oneself” (p. 51).
 - ↳ “Encourage others by sound doctrine”
 - ↳ “Refute those who oppose sound doctrine.”

Just an observation: An Elder is WHO one is, not WHAT one does. A Bishop or Elder, as an office, is WHAT one does out of WHO he already is. One must first be an elder before obtaining the office of an Elder. “Seasoned.”

III. Strong Family Relations

The family is the place where one's skills in responding to life's experiences, developing human relationships, spiritual leadership and Bible knowledge are most convincingly demonstrated and significantly tested. If he is unable to

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maintain healthy relationships at home and exercise spiritual leadership/authority, the church will not accept his advice and will reject his authority.

A. **His wife**

Dr. Lynn Anderson spoke the following on this subject matter in his book *They Smell Like Sheep*:

“Paul said an elder is to be the ‘husband of but one wife’. Literally, in Greek, this means a ‘one-woman man’. At least four key insights tumble out of this phrase.

First, this line obviously addresses MORAL PURITY. An elder cannot be one who chases women or even has ‘eyes full of adultery’. Few factors shatter trust as deeply as sexual sin. His commitment to sexual purity- even his emotional marital fidelity- must be obvious and without question to his wife and to all who know him.

Second, beyond unquestioned fidelity, ‘one-woman man’ also carries positive implications. It not only describes what he will not do, it tells us what he will do. A one-woman man manages and nourishes a HEALTHY INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP with his wife. They are happy together. He knows how to communicate openly with his wife. His healthy marriage shows evidence that he will be able to manage and nurture healthy, successful relationships and open communication in a church.

Third, ‘one-woman man’ describes this person as a LOVER. He knows how to love his wife, how to make her feel securely cherished and valued. Why would we expect a man to love God’s church when he has not done a good job of loving his own wife? A man who brings a glow to the face of his wife will brighten the lives of his flock as well.

Fourth, a one-woman man demonstrates by the stability of his marriage that he can keep covenants. He will keep his marriage covenant - no matter what. Covenant-keeping in marriage assures the flock that this shepherd will also keep covenant with the flock of God, that he is going to be there, consistently, with the best interest of the church at heart - no matter what it costs him.

The solidarity of an elder’s marriage is a crucial leadership criterion because he and his wife will be mentoring marriage for countless others.

An elder’s wife is his ministry partner. This is at least, in part, the reason Paul elaborated the qualities of wives in his character sketch of elders:

‘Their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything’(I Tim. 3:11).”

Peter’s address to wives is noteworthy: “Whose adorning let it not be that of outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a MEEK AND QUIET SPIRIT, which is in the sight of God of great price” (I Peter 3:3-4).

Adam Clarke aptly comments:

- An “ornament” is that which “adorns.” The proper ornament of a woman is that which becomes her best. This is neither gold, nor pearls, nor fancy clothes; but those things which are an evident proof of gravity, consistency, and modesty.
- Wives are to be adorned with “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” that is, a mind that will not give provocation to others, nor receive irritation by the provocation of others. Meekness will prevent the first; quietness will guard against the last.

B. Children

Let us review the scriptures concerning children again:

“He must manage his own family well”

“See that his children obey him with proper respect”

“A man whose children believe”

“Children...are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient”

“For if a man does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of the church of God?”

- 1) To manage one’s family well means that the father must assume his proper place of authority and responsibility in the home as the SPIRITUAL LEADER. His good family management results in:
 - a) OBEDIENT CONTROLLED CHILDREN - He lovingly breaks their will for obedience rather than their spirit for hurt and rebellion. A lack of breaking a child’s will results in wildness and insecurity.
 - b) Secure, disciplined, believing children.
 - c) WINNING his wife’s and children’s proper RESPECT.
- 2) He has trained up his children as believers in the Christian faith. Note, when a child’s faith endures to adulthood it is evidence of the authenticity of the parent’s faith. Read II Timothy 1:5 and Proverbs 22:6

- 3) Paul saw a correlation between a man’s ability to build and maintain healthy relationships in the home and his ability to do so in the church.
- 4) Some ending notes: Paul is not saying your marriage and family must be perfect. Every marriage has its “moments” and anyone, no matter how consistent they are, may have a child act out in disrespect as an adolescent or become renegade in adulthood. This does not disqualify the parent from being an elder. Paul is saying that we should look for OVERALL CONSISTENCY and those who STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCY.

C. Family - Wife and Children (and the dog)

Building and maintaining healthy relationships within the family takes TIME (FAMILY TIME) and EFFORT . The elder’s family time models to all other families the need and importance of family time. He also should model an annual family vacation or periodic family outings. - Conferences, meetings and camps do not qualify, as they are not vacations for the pastor and his family! He must keep his family a higher priority than the church. If in “keeping” the church he loses his own family, he has lost everything, including the church he so closely kept! Priority must be:

GOD
FAMILY
CHURCH
OCCUPATION
RECREATION

IV. Man of Character

Below is a list of character qualities found in our previous Scripture readings. I have categorized them according to relationships - Jesus, Others, and You (JOY).

Jesus - Our relationship with Him:

- **Holy:** right by Divine character.
- **Loves what is good:** abhors evil.
- **Upright:** equitable in character, **just**.
- **Of a ready mind:** Spiritually alert or sensitive, - as God would wish, eager to serve out of devotion.
- **Not self-willed,** self-pleasing nor self-led; God-led.

Others - Our relationship with others:

- **Blameless:** irreproachable character, unimpeachable, unaccused.
- **Above reproach:** above dispute or speaking against; not to be laid hold of.
- **Example of Christian living:** a model for imitation.
- **A good reputation with outsiders:** respected, spoken well of, consistently displays values and convictions, courteous; good testimony with those outside.
- **Hospitable:** “loving strangers,” fond of guests.
- **Not quarrelsome:** not a controversialist nor argumentative, peaceful.
- **Not lording:** not a tyrant or a dictator, not domineering nor controlling.

You - Our relationship with ourselves:

- **Self-controlled:** literal - “of sound mind” - moderate controlled pattern of behavior in opinions and passions or appetites; DISCIPLINED, a proactive self-management; TEMPERATE, managing temper.
- **Gentle:** forbearing disposition, mild, appropriate, not harsh, NOT VIOLENT.
- **Respectable:** character worthy of respect (must have self-respect before you can obtain other’s respect), has values and convictions, of good behavior
- **Not overbearing:** aggressive, arrogant, self-pleasing
- **Not quick tempered:** not hot-headed, short-tempered, nor soon angry
- **Not greedy for money:** not after the pay nor personal gain, not a professional
- **Not given to wine:** “must be no drinker” (NEB)

I remind you, Godly virtues must first be exemplified in the home/family. Go through the list above and note how each can be applied in the home. Pick out four character traits that you display positively in the home:

Pick out three character traits that you could improve your display of in the home:

Pick out four character traits that you display positively in the church/leadership:

Pick out three character traits that you could improve your display of in the church/leadership:

Are you displaying the same character traits in the home as in the church? Why or why not? _____

_____ Should they not be the same?!

Lest by now you are overcome with feelings of inadequacy, insufficiency, imperfection and hopelessness, please don't throw in the towel. Understand that the Scripture is neither asking for PERFECTION, nor is it issuing a list of QUALIFICATIONS for an "elder." Rather, it is stating that in search for elders the candidates need to display certain QUALITIES with CONSISTENCY; look for one who is STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE. Note, the Scriptures list qualities not qualification. God seeks **CONSISTENCY** not **PERFECTION**.

Character is not necessarily as much moral right and wrong or "commanded" issues as it is the willful actions and behaviors we do because of the servant-life we live. See them as "character privileges" of the territory.

V. Visionary

"Overseer" - Look diligently after, on the behalf of , with wide-open eyes, taking the oversight, watch over; "over-watch".

Leading out of conviction with an eye to the future. Proactive verses reactive.

Ground-sight vs. Oversight

-Elders Summarized-

An Elder, Bishop, or Pastor is one who is called and appointed through the Holy Ghost by Church leadership, upon the acknowledgment that shepherding qualities have already been evident, to a position of spiritual oversight and pastoral care of a local flock. The elders, appointed by founding evangelists, were men of exemplary character and leadership within that assembly.

A final note: The word “ ELDER ” is always plural when in reference to leadership within the Church. Preaching and teaching to any group takes diversity necessary to meet the diversity of the group. Multiple learning styles takes multiple teaching styles. A multiple leadership team should not be a threat, but a compliment to the primary leader! No one man can meet all the needs of his assembly!

Deacons then served these elders.

- Defining Deacons -

Deacon comes from the Greek word *diakonos*: A SERVANT, TO BE AN ATTENDANT, A “WAITING MAN”. Matthew 20:26 renders it, “minister”. “But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your [diakonos] minister.” As a servant or a slave is the lowest secular office, so a deacon is the lowest ecclesiastical office - an attitude for becoming “ GREAT ” in God’s Kingdom!

This brings us to Acts 6 where the apostles as overseers of the church in Jerusalem did not have time to take care of the material needs of the widows, who “were neglected in the daily ministrations” [diakonia] (v. 1). The apostles said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait [diakoneo] (serve, KJV) on tables” (v. 2 NIV). The Church then chose seven men to assume this responsibility (business) while the apostles gave their attention to “prayer and the ministry of the Word” (v.4). Although the word deacon is not used here, it appears these men became the first chosen to fulfill the duty of *diakonos* - deacons.

Note the qualities the Apostles sought for when selecting these seven deacons:

- 1) “ OF HONEST REPORT ” - having obtained a good witness, those whose life bears or gives good testimony; “men of good reputation” (NEB, RSV, PME, JB); proven. A reputation takes time to build!
- 2) “Full of the Holy Ghost” (KJV); “men..... WHO ARE KNOWN to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (NIV, TEV).
- 3) “Wisdom”: ACCUMULATED knowledge, insight, judgment, and sense; teaching of the ANCIENTS.

Paul addresses the Epistle of the Philippians to “all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons” (1:1) - those entrusted with the SPIRITUAL affairs of the Church and those entrusted with the MATERIAL affairs of the Church.

Adam Clarke comments: “The office of a deacon, in the primitive Church, was to *serve* in love feasts; to proclaim different parts and times of worship in the churches; and to take

care of the widows, orphans, prisoners, and sick, who were provided for out of the revenues of the Church” (Vol. 5, p. 199).

Though a trustee of material affairs versus spiritual affairs, these men were no less spiritual. Those first forerunners were of “honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). “Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people,” spoke publicly for Christ and became the Church’s first martyr. Philip went on to labor as an evangelist.

- Characteristics/Qualities of a Deacon -

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a 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 houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 3:8-13).

“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” (Acts 6:3 KJV).

I. The Deacon

- Grave: Of SERIOUS outlook and SINCERE conviction (PME), men WORTHY OF RESPECT (NIV), men of HIGH PRINCIPLE (NEB).
- Not double-tongued: men whose word can be trusted (JB).
- Not given to much wine: TEMPERATE.
- Not greedy for filthy lucre: not after the pay nor personal gain; not a PROFESSIONAL.
- Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience: keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience (NIV). No compromise. Psalm 25:14, Heb. 6:1-6.
- First be proved: tested, examined, let them serve a period of probation first, and only serve as deacons if they prove satisfactory (PME).
- Blameless: irreproachable character, unaccused.
- Husbands of one wife: must not have been married more than once (JB).
- Ruling children and houses well: able to control their children and manage their own household’s properly (PME).

“For those who SERVE well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (I Tim. 3:15 RSV).

I Kings 19:19-21: The call of Elisha starts out with intense passion. Elisha slew his oxen. Using the instruments of his oxen for kindling wood, he boiled them “and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and MINISTERED unto him.” After this event there are seven years of silence concerning Elisha. The only report we have of his “MINISTERING, SERVING, or ATTENDING years is, “Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah” (II Kings 3:11). He was a minister. Though he was initially anointed to be a prophet, he learned servant hood before fulfilling the roll of prophet (I Kings 19:16). It is no wonder that Elijah’s deacon took over his “room” with GREAT CONFIDENCE and FAITH for a double portion!!!

II. The Deacon’s Wife

- Grave: worthy of respect, OF HIGH PRINCIPLE (NEB), sharing their husband’s serious outlook.
- Not slanderers: GOSSIPERS, malicious talkers (NIV). O.T. providential punishment for slander: leprosy - Miriam (Nu. 12:1-6). The camp did not move or progress until cleansed.
- Sober: temperate, women of discretion and self-control (PME).
- Faithful in all things: honest, reliable, and trustworthy.

Deacon Summarized

A deacon is one who is called and appointed through the Holy Ghost by the Church leadership, upon the acknowledgement that they are full of the Spirit and wisdom and that their life has borne testimony to godly character and leadership qualities. The deacons cooperated with the elders in serving the natural needs of the assembly. It was common for a deacon to rise to a “ministry gift” (i.e., Evangelist, Pastor/Teacher - Eph. 4:11) or elder.

God’s multi-person and multi-leveled leadership of the New Testament Apostolic Church provided the leadership necessary for a church of exponential growth and diverse needs. We must replicate Christ’s leadership strategy in order to effectively reach our world with apostolic results.