

AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH ELDERS

Volume 4

Section B



General Conference
Ministerial Association

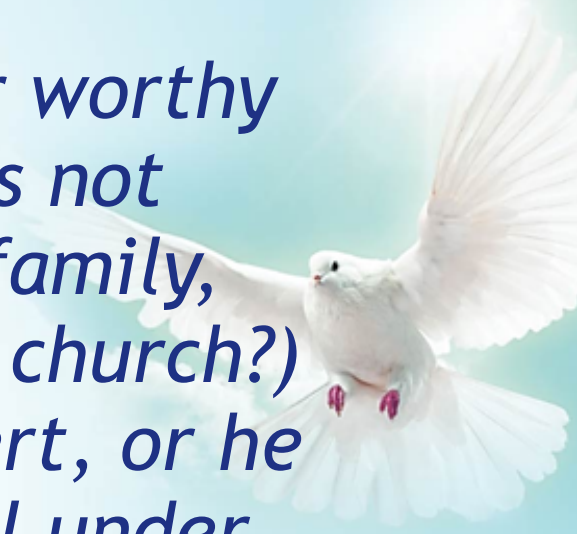


*“Here is a trustworthy saying:
Whoever aspires to be an overseer
desires a noble task. Now the overseer
is to be above reproach, faithful to
his wife, temperate, self-controlled,
respectable, hospitable, able to
teach, not given to drunkenness, not
violent but gentle, not quarrelsome,
not a lover of money. He must manage
his own family well and see that his
children obey him,*



and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."

1 Timothy 3:1-7



The elders are religious leaders of the church

“In the absence of a pastor, elders are the spiritual leaders of the church and by precept and example must seek to lead the church into a deeper and fuller Christian experience.”

Church Manual (2010), p. 71



I. Some functions of the elders in Biblical times



- 1- Govern the people.
Deuteronomy 27:1
- 2- Represent the nation.
Exodus 3:18
- 3- Honor a guest.
Exodus 18:12
- 4- Observe a covenant.
2 Samuel 5:3
- 5- Perform religious activities.
Joshua 7:6



II. Characteristics of the church elders



Church elders should:

- Be recognized by the church as consecrated *spiritual leaders*.
- Have a *good reputation* inside and outside of the church.
- Lead the church to Jesus *by precept and by example*.
- Always be prepared to *minister the Word*.



- Be completely *assured of and committed to the doctrine* that they live and teach.
- Daily be concerned about being *better prepared* in all areas.
- Be willing to foster all aspects of *missionary work*.



- Take great care of *the flock* God has given to them.
- Work in full harmony with the *pastor of the church*.
- Be *ready to lead* all church services.
- Learn to deal kindly with people, especially when they are *overwhelmed with problems*.



- Have *devotional lives that are increasing in virtue and grace.*
- Be concerned about improving their *intellectual training.*
- Be *peacemakers* and not sowers of discord.
- Be *impartial* and cordial with everyone.
- Be 100% *denominational.*



- Promote the *giving of tithes and offerings*.
- Be fully convinced of the value of *the Spirit of Prophecy in Ellen G. White*.
- Be vigilant to ensure the doctrinal purity of the church: “*To the law and to the testimony!*”

Isaiah 8:20, NKJV



- Be originators of *ideas and share them* with the other leaders.
- Know how to distribute *responsibilities*.
- Stay humble and *recognize their own mistakes*.
- Be willing to *apologize as well as forgive* whenever necessary.



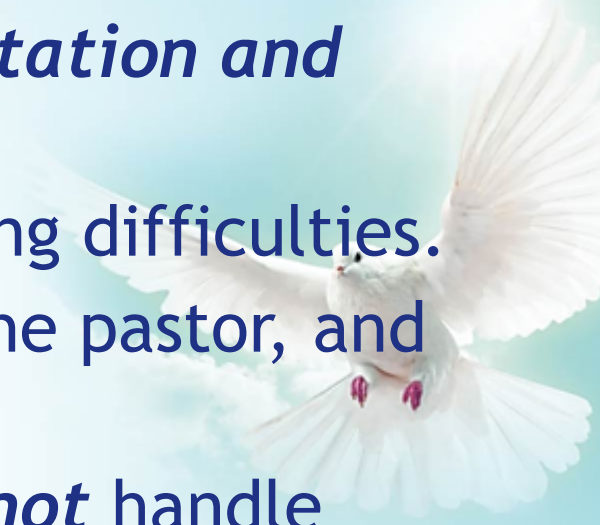
- Remain *free of resentment*.
- Avoid *making decisions that are vengeful* or for self-interest.
- Uphold their families and the church as *first in everything*.
- Dress *becomingly*, but with modesty and humility.
- Strive to daily improve their *manner of speech, vocabulary and choice of words*.



- Keep a spirit of *self-improvement*.
- Be *visionaries* without leaning on perfectionism and idealism.
- Not hesitate to be *innovative* while still keeping the principles and unity of the church intact.
- Understand *the fallen and help them* get back on track.



- Be willing to take time for *visitation and personal instruction*.
- Be *positive leaders* when facing difficulties.
- Be *loyal* to God, the church, the pastor, and the other leaders.
- Excel in *communicating*. Will *not* handle problems on their own, unless the problem itself warrants it.
- Avoid giving rise to gossip and criticism because they *will destroy the harmony of the church*.



- Constantly assess *their work*, both personal and on behalf of the church.
- Be prepared to *help* in whatever is needed.
- Daily place *their lives in the Hands of Jesus*.
- Daily pray for the *church*.
- Excel in *promoting* the activities of the church.



III. General information about the position of elders



- Elders are elected for a ***one-year period***, unless otherwise determined by the church.
- Anointed elders can be active as such ***only when the church appoints them for that period.***



- When elders are anointed, it is ***not necessary to anoint them again*** the next time they are appointed as elders.
- During the interim time between ***the appointment and the anointing***, elders can act as leaders, but cannot officiate in the ceremonies of the church.



- Only an *ordained pastor can anoint the elders.*
- Those who are anointed as elders, do not need to be anointed to serve as *deacons.*
- Those who are anointed as deacons and then are chosen as elders, *do need* to be anointed as elders.



- Those who have been anointed as elders in the past, but for the period at hand are ***not*** appointed to serve as elders, ***cannot*** officiate in any duties reserved for elders, ***no matter what the circumstances.***



- If elders are not appointed as such for the standing time period, they shall remain ***discharged*** from fulfilling the duties reserved for appointed and anointed elders.



- No circumstances which emerge shall justify that church leaders, who have not been appointed as elders, should carry out the duties reserved solely for elders who have been appointed during a given time period.



IV. Authority of church elders



- The authority of elders is *local and does not cover other churches unless, by means of a special request* and as indicated in the Church Manual, the Conference recommends it otherwise.



- Church elders can officiate in *funeral* services.
- Are authorized to *anoint the sick*.
- Must perform the duties at the *Communion Service ceremony*.



- In the absence of the pastor or in agreement with him, elders can lead the ***local church board meeting***.
- If it is so authorized by the ***president of the local Conference, elders may baptize*** during the baptismal ceremony.



- They may *preach at a wedding ceremony.*
- Are authorized to conduct the *child dedication ceremony.*
- In agreement with the district pastor, they may lead the *administrative church board.*



- Should serve as consultants to the various *church departments*.
- Can direct all of the *ceremonies that are permitted*, in the groups that depend on the church.



V. Limits to the authority of elders



Church elders *should not*:

- Perform the baptismal ceremony without the prior authorization of the Conference president.
- Provide their services as *elders in another church* without previously making special arrangements with their church and the Conference, as specified in the Church Manual.



- Perform marriage ceremonies, nor administer marital commitment, nor declare the couple, “man and wife:”
- On their own initiative remove a name from the church records.
- On their own initiative add a name to the church records.
- On their own initiative make administrative decisions.



- Impose their ideas just on the premise that they are elders.
- Be ex-officio delegates to represent their church at congresses of the Conference.
- Withdraw money from the church treasury without prior authorization by the church board.



**Recapitulating
what we studied**



1. What were some of the functions of the elders in Biblical times?
2. Cite five characteristics of a church elder.
3. Cite five aspects relating to the authority of a church elder.



- Church elders are chosen by God and elected by the church to perform functions that have to do with caring for the flock, preserving the same, and spreading the Gospel.



- Elders should not only look after the church in its present state, but should envision it expanding to new frontiers. The Church Manual, when addressing the responsibilities of the elders, instructs as follows:



“Elders must be recognized by the church as strong spiritual leaders and must have good reputations both in the church and community. In the absence of a pastor,



elders are the spiritual leaders of the church and by precept and example must seek to lead the church into a deeper and fuller Christian experience.”

Church Manual (2010), p. 71

