

God's expectations of the Elders **and the Church**

Acts 20:28

Thesis: To discuss the expectations and responsibilities of Elder's and of the church they serve.

1. The time has come for new elders to serve the needs of the church here. A new chapter in our Congregation's history is about to begin. As it does this morning I want us to think about what God expects from us.
2. We often think about God's expectations of the elders. After all He has spoken specifically about their qualifications and work. But, how often do we think about God's expectations of us, the church?
3. Not only does God have expectations for elders, but He also has several for the church toward the elders. With this sermon, let's look at God expectations of the elders and the church, by answering four questions.
 - A. What does God expect from the elder's?
 - B. How are the elders to meet these expectations?
 - C. What does God expect from the church toward the elders?
 - D. How is the church to meet these expectations?

I. What does God expect from Elders?

- A. God expects elders to be qualified.
 1. God has spoken concerning who He says can and cannot be an elder.
 2. The qualifications deal largely with personal character of the men involved.
 - a. It has nothing to do with money or social standing.
 - b. It has nothing to do with a popularity contest or voting.
 3. An elder must be. . . . (1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9).
 - a. A man with a good reputation and character (1 Tim 3:2-3,7; Tit 1:6-7).
 - b. A married man with faithful children (1 Tim 3:2,4-5; Tit 1:6).
 - c. A man with experience (1 Tim 3:6).
 - d. A man with teaching ability (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9).
- B. God expects elders to shepherd the flock.
 1. This is one of the primary duties of an elder/s (Acts 20:28; 1 Pt 5:2).
 2. Shepherd: To lead with the implication of providing for. Aka: Pastor.
 - a. Shepherd's have the best interest of the flock at hand at all times.
 - b. Shepherd's feed, protect and lead the sheep (Psalm 23:1-2).

3. They are to shepherd the flock of God among them (1Pt 5:2).
 - a. Their authority does not go beyond this congregation (Acts 14:23).
 - b. The flock/ church belongs to God not the elder's (Acts 20:28).
 - c. Elder's are simply stewards of God's flock (Tit 1:7).

C. God expects elders to oversee the church.

1. This is the other primary duty of an elder/s (1 Pt 5:2).
2. Oversee: a superintendent or guardian. One who has the responsibility of caring for spiritual concerns (Acts 20:28; 1 Pt 2:25). Aka: Bishop.
3. To properly oversee anything, one has to know what is going on and what is needed.
 - a. The elders are to know the congregation by being involved with people in and out of the building (Jn 10:14).
 - b. Then the needs of the church can best be met and the congregation can properly be overseen by the elders.

II. How are the Elders to meet these expectations?

A. Elders are to serve willingly.

1. Peter describes how these expectations are to be met (1 Pt 5:1-3).
2. Elder's are to serve willingly/ voluntarily and not by compulsion. This shows the proper spirit (vs.2).
 - a. No man should ever feel or be forced to be an elder (1 Tim 3:1).
 - b. God only desires sincere willing service to Him (Ex 35:5; 1 Chr 29:5; 2 Cor. 9:7).

B. Elders are to serve eagerly.

1. Elder's are to serve eagerly and not for personal gain. This shows the proper motivation (1 Pt 5:2).
 - a. Some elders were supported financially in New Testament times (1 Tim. 5:17). This office became a full time work.
2. An elder must not use the office in any improper way (1 Tim. 3:3).
 - a. It must not be used as a way to get ahead financially, politically, socially, etc. . .
 - b. They must be motivated by a sincere desire to serve the Lord as an Elder.

C. Elders are to serve as examples.

1. Elder's are to lead by example. This shows the proper manner (1 Pt 5:3).
2. They are not to lord it over the church.
 - a. Elder's are not to have the attitude of I am an elder and what I say goes.
 - b. An elder is not a dictator. Nor is there to be a head elder. This attitude comes off as being unconcerned about the church.
3. Leading by example is the best way to lead (John 13:14-15)

- a. When one leads by example, it shows they are willing to do themselves what they ask of others.

III. What does God expect from the church toward the Elders?

- A. God expects the church to know her elders (1 Thess 5:12).
 - 1. Know: Gk to have a general knowledge of. Used in reference to having a general respect or regard for another.
 - a. We are to be aware of the elders in such a way that we have respect/ appreciation for them.
 - 2. To know the elders/ appreciate them, two things must take place.
 - a. You must have a general knowledge of these men. Who they are. A relationship with them (Jn 10:14).
 - b. You must know the great work they have been given to do (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17).

- B. God expects the church to esteem/ respect her elders (1 Thess 5:13).
 - 1. Elders are to be respected because of their work.
 - a. These are heavy responsibilities with eternal consequences (Act 20:28).
 - b. These men take this position voluntarily (1 Pt 5:2).
 - 2. As a leader in a congregation, elders often have to make decisions no one else wants to and bear the brunt of undue criticism.
 - a. Often elders do not receive the credit or acknowledgement they deserve. No thank you at the end of the day.

- C. God expects the church to submit/ obey the elders (Heb 13:17).
 - 1. Obeying the elders may not always be what we want to do.
 - a. God has commanded it.
 - b. The spirit of unity demands it (Eph 4:1-3).
 - 2. God gives two reasons why we are to submit.
 - a. Because they watch for your souls. Even when you may not be watching your own. This is a serious matter.
 - b. Because they will give an account. God will and does hold them responsible for their work as an elder.

IV. How is the church to meet these expectations?

- A. How the church respects her elders.
 - 1. Our respect for our elders will largely come from knowing them.
 - 2. Our respect comes from. . .
 - a. A heart of love and thankfulness (1 Thess 5:13).
 - b. An understanding of the great work they do. The next time you complain or criticize, put yourself in their shoes?

3. We can show our respect by. . .
 - a. Thanking them for the work they do (Col 3:15).
 - b. Cooperate with them in this work by bringing up new ideas or suggestions and asking “what can I do?”
 - c. Increase our communication with them concerning the work of the church. Approach them personally. They cannot read your mind.
 - d. Pray for them (1 Tim. 2:1-2).
 - e. Do not speak or gripe against them without cause (1 Tim 5:19).

B. How the church submits/obeys her elders.

1. We submit, when we cooperate in such a way it makes an elder’s responsibility a joy (Heb 13:17). This can only happen when the congregation makes it so!
2. We are to submit with the right attitude. The attitude of love and respect.
3. The church can only submit to those in whom we have full confidence in.
4. Submitting does not mean we will never disagree with an elder. But in such cases, we are not to be angry with one another.

Conclusion:

1. God has high expectations for elders. This is the reason for the qualifications and why these men will give an account (Heb 13:17).
2. How wonderful it is when elders carry out their duties faithfully and how wonderful it is when the church faithfully follows their leadership and guidance.
3. When we each meet God’s expectations as the elders and the church, God is pleased and we are one step closer to being what God wants us to be.