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# Should A Man Desire To Be An Elder?

Dick Blackford

When I turned 35 years old, I reached that magic age whereby I was old enough to run for the office of president of the United States of America. However, I let the opportunity pass — for a reason. I did not desire the office. There were many ways in which I was not qualified. And I didn't even want to qualify.

However, the eldership is not an "office" like the presidency. Our problem today is, most male Christians feel no compulsion toward becoming an elder. It is treated as optional or for "somebody else besides me." To be honest, with most it is a thing to be avoided. Why else would some congregations have gone for 30+ years from their beginnings and never had an eldership? I have no answer for that.

Someone may respond, "We seem to be getting along pretty well without an eldership, so why should we change that?" That's not the question. The question is, "What does the Lord say he wants?"

In the Scriptures we are told that as Paul and Barnabas were returning from their first journey "they appointed elders in every church" (Acts 14:23). Appointing elders was a part of "continuing in the faith" (v. 22). Later, Paul told Titus, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city, as I commanded you" (Tit. 1:5). From these verses we see both a command to appoint elders and an apostolic example of it being done. We also learn that a church without elders has not been "set in order" and that it is "lacking." God wants everything to be done "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). We should never be content with anything else.

Let us raise some questions that should be helpful:

1. Should a male Christian desire to see the church scripturally organized as God planned it? You had to answer "Yes," unless there is something wrong with your Christianity.

2. Since the eldership is called "a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1), should a male Christian desire to do a good work? You had to answer "Yes" (Jas. 4:17).

3. Since God wants the church "set in order," should a male Christian desire what God wants? You had to answer "Yes."

4. Since God does not want the church "lacking," shouldn't a male Christian desire the same thing? If you have the mind of Christ, I know you answered "Yes."

5. Since God commanded that elders be appointed, shouldn't a male Christian do all he can to see that this command is obeyed? You surely answered "Yes."

6. Since the purpose of elders is to watch for souls (Heb. 13:17), should a male Christian desire to watch for souls? If you care about the souls of others, you answered "Yes."

7. Should a male Christian want to be an example to the flock (1 Pet. 5:3)? Since, according to Matthew 5:13-16 all disciples are to be examples, you had to answer "Yes."

8. Should a male Christian desire to be without reproach, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach, gentle, in control of his house, of good report, as it says in 1 Timothy 3:1f? If you take your Christianity seriously, you had to answer "Yes."

9. Should a male Christian desire to see the congregation led and guided in the right way so as to spend eternity in heaven? Without question, you answered "Yes."

10. Should a male Christian desire to see the congregation "continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22, 23)? Obviously, "Yes."

11. Wouldn't "seeking the kingdom first" involve doing all we can to see that each congregation is scripturally organized? Again, "Yes."

These are questions every Christian would have to answer "Yes." Otherwise, there is something seriously wrong with his Christianity. Not all male Christians will attain the qualifications for the eldership. Sometimes it is for reasons beyond their control. *But*, most of the time, it is because they do not desire to be elders. With them, the eldership is merely an optional expediency.

Since all of these questions must be answered with a "Yes," shouldn't every male Christian desire to be an elder? Are you working on it? There are some things we need to consider. I hope we will be totally honest with ourselves in answering some more questions.

1. If the reason you do not desire to be an elder is because you don't have time, when will you? If not now, when? Do you make time for things that you feel are important — whether on your job or with family and friends? Isn't the Lord's work important enough to you? Are you putting him first in your life? (Eph. 5:16: "Redeeming the time" — buying up the opportunity.)

2. If the reason you do not desire to be an elder is because of your joy of worldly pursuits, is it because you are a workaholic? Are you giving so much effort to your job that it is crowding out everything else? Why are you putting all this effort into your job? Is it so you can have a bigger house in a better location, a nicer car, the best clothes, or leave your children a bigger inheritance? Is it that you feel a bigger responsibility to your company, corporation, and your boss, than you do to the Lord?

3. If the reason you do not desire to be an elder is because you are fearful of the responsibility, does that same fear keep you from being a good employee? Do you turn down promotions that will involve more responsibility or do you accept the challenge and give it your best?

4. Is the reason you do not desire to be an elder because you are fearful of criticism? Here is where the congregation and/or fellow Christians can shoulder some of the blame. The fact is, sometimes members can be cruel, gossipy, backbiting, and discouraging (this is a "worse case scenario." I haven't known many cases like that). No one wants his family scrutinized. However, if you are serving the Lord as an elder there are some unnecessary pressures that come on a family, occasionally, that other members don't experience. This should not be. We should all hold up the elders' hands and be a help, not a hindrance. You should never allow others to hinder you in the Lord's work. Elders, like preachers, have to develop the hide of a rhinoceros!

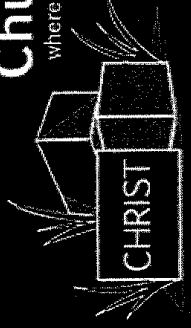
5. Is the reason you do not desire to be an elder because you are not spiritually minded enough? Could this be the real reason? If we were spiritually minded, would we let anything stand in our way of doing what we know is best for the people of God and the cause of Christ in the congregations where we worship?

A proper spiritual attitude will compel us to make the time, put the Lord's work on the front burner in our pursuits while in this world. It will compel us to take the responsibility and take the challenge and run with it.

Having the proper spiritual attitude will help us find the strength to endure harsh criticism, should it come our way, depending on the Lord (2 Tim. 4:16, 17). Also, if the people have a proper spiritual attitude, they will be an encouragement to an elder, understanding of his trials, hours of concern, the difficulties to his family, and will work to make his job as easy as possible.

Brethren, are any of these things hindering you? Will you do some soul searching? Living up to our potential should be our goal. If the congregation where you worship has gone for years without elders don't you think it's time?

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**StoneRidge  
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where CHRIST is the chief cornerstone  
1 Peter 2:7

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### Differences Between Jesus and Muhammed

1. The whole testimony of the prophetic word and the testimony of eyewitnesses is that Jesus was crucified and was raised from the dead the third day, confirming that Jesus was in fact the Son of God as He claimed. Muhammed was just a man, and when he died, he remained dead. Who is greater? The one that can overcome death or the one who can't?
2. Jesus claimed to be the "I AM" (deity) (John 8:58), the Son of God who can give forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Muhammed claimed only to be a messenger of God. Which is greater?
3. Jesus is known to have performed many miracles, but Muhammed is not known to have performed any. Jesus backed up His claim with miracles (John 20:30,31), while Muhammed could not provide divine verification of his claim to be God's messenger. Which is greater?
4. Jesus did not engage in carnal warfare (John 18:36) to advance His kingdom. Muhammed grew his following by use of force and intimidation, carnal warfare. In Jesus' kingdom, people obey out of love, desire, admiration by hearing the evidence of the good news. In Muhammed's domain, people submit out of fear, intimidation, and political pressure. Which is more peaceful?
5. In following Jesus you have freedom from guilt and condemnation through mercy, grace, forgiveness of sins. In following Muhammed there is no freedom from guilt, and one must work to earn your right standing before God. By grace

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through faith is the Way of Christ (Eph.2:1-8), while works of merit is the way of Islam. Which way is better?

The choice should be simple. Jesus is the only legitimate way (John 14:6). Be wise and take the way to God, forgiveness, and eternal joy! -*Terry W. Benton*

### More On The Birth of Christ

Kernuel gave that article a "plug" last week. They say that's like saying "sic'em" to a dog. Anyway, here's a little more on the subject.

God didn't tell us when Jesus was born. If He intended the church to have a special celebration of that, He surely would have told us **when** and **how** to do it. He did not, so it took "borrowing" December 25 from the pagan worship of the sun, which suggests a nonchalant willingness on the part of the "church" to appropriate a pagan festival when the early church was so intent on distinguishing itself categorically from pagan beliefs and practices. This happened in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, long after the birth of Christ.

It became known as "Christmas" because a "mass" was performed in which Christ was literally offered again. The people are taught that in eating the "eucharist" that the substance of the bread is actually eating the body and blood of Jesus, known as the doctrine of transubstantiation. This misses the whole point of Hebrews that Jesus was offered "**once and for all**", not in need of repetition (Heb 7:26,27) This is a major difference in the offering of animals which had to be repeated, and Christ being offered **once** for all time.

Many religious songs sung around this time of year would be fitting throughout the year, not just in observance of a manmade holiday. "*Joy To The World*" is nothing short of a masterpiece. Of course there are some songs sung there are not in harmony with

## *c*News/Notes/Quotes

**THE SICK.** .... **Debbie Spencer** will see her surgeon on Dec 12 to determine when she will have back surgery.... **Gracelyn Lands** had surgery last Wednesday and was to remain in the hospital a few days for observation and treatment. .... **Debbie Spencer** will see her surgeon on Dec 12 to determine when she will have back surgery **Virginia Bishop's** knee surgery is scheduled for 12/14.... **Ruby Vanhooser** (Virginia's mom) is now under hospice care.... **Sherry Horton** is recovering from another back injection and is to have an MRI...**Holly Kortan's** surgery is scheduled for 12/15... **Chloe Humblet** is away for some extended treatment .... **Shut-ins: Rhea Vines** (at Roger's house)... **Gail Brooks** room 423 Lawrence Hall, Walnut Ridge... **Rita Kieffer**, St. Bernard Village ... **Shirley Coots**, Lawrence County Nursing (hospice care)... **Joyce Riley** at St. Elizabeth's Place... **Bob** and **Jean Evans** at home... **Betty Shrable** at home. Pray for these!

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the scriptures and teach error, like "God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing ye dismay, remember Christ our savior was born on Christmas Day." No he wasn't. That day wasn't decided on until the 4<sup>th</sup> century and there was never a "mass" in the Bible. Then there's "*We three kings of Orient are.*" The Bible doesn't say the wise men were kings nor that there were three. There are also secular songs around the holidays which many enjoy in social settings. The festivities of the holidays can be heartwarming. There's something beautiful in seeing a family all "wrapped up" in each other.

Christians should be able to distinguish the sacred from the secular and manmade religious observances from what the Lord has authorized. We wish all of our readers joyous times with their loved one at this time of year. -*db*

**True prayer is a way of life. It is not just a case of emergency.**

**Do not ever finish something you should never have started.**