

A CHURCH ELDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Titus 1:9 ... "holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict."

The New Testament prescribes a system of church government to help the church have integrity and to ensure that we are accountable to one another and to God. The book of Titus depicts some of the responsibilities of church elders, which in many early churches were also the teachers and pastors. Verse 7 of chapter one, reads: "...a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled." Do not get hung up on the word "bishop." That was just a title for local church elders during that period; the men who helped lead the local church, manage its finances, and share in the teaching duties.

Today, churches commonly use their elders only to decide the pastor's salary, or to attend to church repairs. But today's verse shows us that elders must be students of the Word of God so they can teach (exhort) and convict others of sin, which makes elders very important. It is no coincidence that church government as illustrated in the Bible, is similar to the way national governments of democratic countries are structured. In the Philippines, our three branches of government: Executive (President), Legislative (Congress), and Judicial (the Courts) provide a check-and-balance to hold one another accountable for following the constitution and the laws of the land. In a dictatorship, the king or premier is accountable only to himself; there is no check-and-balance to ensure that right decisions are made.

I urge church pastors to revisit the qualifications and responsibilities of the elders of your churches. Are your elders men of integrity? Are they moral? Are their tempers under control? Are they pursuing holiness? You must train and groom men in your church to serve as elders. And, they must be qualified and willing to teach people without hypocrisy. The leadership structure of your church should conform to that depicted in the New Testament, which means that pastors are also accountable to the elders to ensure the church operates under sound doctrine. Pastors, please study 1 Timothy chapter 3, which gives the qualifications for elders and deacons.

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