

SPIRITUAL ELDERS – PART 1

1 Timothy 5:17 ... “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine.”

When we speak of elders in this devotional, we are not referring to old people or the “elderly,” although it is often the case that elders of the church are advanced in years. Filipino culture is very respectful of older people, and even considers older brothers and sisters as worthy of honor. However, in the context of our verses and most text in the New Testament, an elder is a person – regardless of age – who is spiritually mature; a devoted follower of Christ who lives, as much as possible, a pious and holy life.

Depending upon your church’s doctrine and practices, a church elder may be elected, appointed or simply recognized as a person in the church that acts as a spiritual guide and mentor, both to the pastor and the congregation. In this context, church elders can have great impact on the lives of the people he or she walks beside. Church elders can help a young pastor develop his ministry and learn to manage the complexities of running a church, shepherding the members, counseling, teaching and managing finances. They might also be the ones to whom God speaks when the pastor is distracted or not mature enough in his own faith to hear God speaking. Church elders are often the glue that holds a church together through disagreements. They give strength and encouragement to burned-out pastors. They might also be tasked by God to impart wisdom or even correction to a pastor who has made a mistake.

However, all of these great attributes about spiritual elders only apply to those who are genuine and obedient followers of Christ; men and women who hold themselves accountable to God. Unfortunately, some churches elect elders because they give more money than others or because they are a local business person. They might appoint elders solely because they helped build the church, donated the land, or invited the pastor out for dinner. These are like political appointments that may not fulfil the Biblical authority illustrated in the Bible. It is important for a church to understand the authentic, Biblical role in which a church elder is supposed to serve. Elders who are not spiritually mature or who live lifestyles contrary to the holiness God requires of an elder, can contribute to a church splitting over disagreements, to people leaving in frustration, or the pastor becoming discouraged.

It is also wise for individual believers to have one or more spiritually mature elders in their own lives. Remember, in this context, a spiritually mature elder can even be younger than yourself. If you are a young person who has only recently submitted to the Lordship of Christ, you should look for a trusted mature Christian to help guide you in your new faith. If you are an older person who has just accepted Christ as your Savior, do not be afraid to look for a mature Christian who might be younger than yourself to act as your mentor. Remember maturity, not age, is the most critical aspect of being a Godly elder.

In our next devotional, we will illustrate some of the duties of an elder.

Copyright © 2019 Datu Wali Mission Foundation