



KEAM ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

BULLETIN

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20 Keam Road, Baysville, East London • P.O. Box 958, East London, 5200
Tel: (043) 721 0398 • E-mail: cockel@telkomsa.net
Evangelist and Bible Teacher • Bill Elliott Cell : 084 727 8853

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Biblical Leadership The Lord's Way

The only plan revealed by God for leadership in the church is for spiritual men, most often referred to as Elders, to lead the church on the difficult and narrow way that leads to eternal life. It is evident that these special men were very important to the well being and function of the early church (Acts 11:30; 15:4; 20:17; 1Peter 5:1-4). In fact, the local church is not fully organized unless there are elders present (cp. Titus 1:5). "And when they had appointed elders for them in every church..." (Acts 14:23).

In Acts 6, before the church had matured to the point of recognizing elders, a problem arose in Jerusalem. The Apostles therefore instructed the church to "select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task" (Acts 6:3). In Acts 7, we see one of the seven, Steven, being stoned to death for preaching essentially the same sermon Peter preached in Acts 2 that ended up in the conversion of 3000. Then, in Acts 8, we see Philip, another of the seven, successfully teaching the gospel to the hated Samaritans.

Acts 6 is probably the clearest and most complete example of a process for selecting servants in the church, and Elders are servants (Matthew 20:25-28) and examples (1Peter 5:3), not "Lords", as clearly stated in both passages. It is also abundantly clear that Steven and Philip did not just distribute food to the widows, but that they were gifted teachers and men of courage and integrity. While these seven men are often referred to as "the first Deacons", it is interesting that that word (Gr. diakonos) never appears in reference to them, though it does appear in reference to Jesus and others many times. It could be reasonably argued that these men were actually the forerunners of Elders instead. While we know nothing of Steven's family, we do know that Philip the Evangelist "had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses (Acts 21:9). Food for thought?

Last Sunday, all the Keam Road members present were encouraged to provide the names of men whom they saw as spiritual leaders. There were two categories of nominations – Elders & Leadership Committee. It was hoped that there would be a consistent and decisive list of names for Elders, and that those men would be qualified and accept the designation and responsibility for that work. Unfortunately, this will not immediately be the case.

In the "Elders" category, six men appeared on at least 20% of the forms, though none reached 60%. Nine men (including the six from the Elder category) appeared on over 50% up to 90% for a Leadership Committee. Following that input, the men met together and spoke openly, honestly, and with self-control and dignity about the subjects of leadership and decision making here at Keam Road. Each elder candidate carefully considered the awesome responsibility of the work, acknowledged the honor associated with having his name set forward for consideration, and several seemed resolved to work toward that end in the near future.

Similar to the way in which the infant church in Jerusalem selected seven men to serve the church in her time of need, nine spiritual men have been identified to serve as a Leadership Committee. They will meet on Monday evening to discuss how either they or a subset of them can lead this church forward until Elders can be installed. It is difficult to meet all the Lord's expectations for being an Elder. Overseers must meet about 24 specific qualifications (16 positive and 8 negative). These requirements are listed in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. To my understanding, all of these qualifications are necessary. The Greek word dei, "must" means "it is necessary", and I think it applies to the whole list of attributes (1Timothy 3:2,7; Titus 1:7). We may neither add to nor take away from the conditions God has set forth in His word.

We MUST recognize that God desires, yes, even expects elders in every church. Except for their qualifications concerning biological age, spiritual age, marriage, and children, there is nothing expected of them that is not expected of every mature Christian. Let us be careful not to be overly critical of those who are willing to bear the scrutiny that accompanies such an awesome, honorable, and responsible task of service. Let us not criticize and then turn right around and shirk our own responsibilities to "grow in the grace (favor) and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18). Moreover, let us not be so harsh and unrealistic as to expect these men to be as perfect as Jesus himself. If one could do that, then Jesus would have suffered and died in vain.

In Christian Love

Bill Elliott