



# *The Messenger*

*Woodland Hills*  
**CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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## **OVERSEEING THE FLOCK OF GOD**

Serving as an elder of the church is a rather awesome responsibility if a man takes it seriously. If he doesn't take it seriously then he shouldn't be one in the first place. In admonishing Christians to obey the elders the Hebrew writer states, "for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." (Heb. 13:17) Watching for souls, and this generally includes quite a number who don't really want to be watched for in the first place, is no little task. The burden is lightened by remembering what an honor it is before God to serve in this capacity. To be a good elder there are several things which are necessary.

**HE MUST DESIRE THE WORK!** This is not an "office seeking" attitude, but a free and genuine desire and willingness to "use and be used" in God's work. "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." (1 Tim. 3:1) He is not to desire the office for prestige, power or prominence, but to serve the Lord in all humility. Elders who are offering a reluctant sacrifice need to change their attitude. There is no way to find happiness in half-hearted service. An elder's wife needs to understand the nature of the work and encourage her husband in every way possible. I have known of elders who not only carried the burden of the office, which is enough within itself, but carried an additional home burden because their wives resented their work for the Lord. What a shame!

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HE MUST DESIRE TO LEAD! Elders must lead God's people as shepherds. Lead them into the "riches of His grace." Lead them into "purity" and "unity." Lead them into "spiritual productivity." Therefore, elders ought to be thinking out ahead of the people. I have known many elders who only did what they were compelled to do by applied pressure from the members. This is not leading! I have known elders who were like a hound dog I once knew. He would run just in front of the horses who were pulling the wagon. It looked like he was leading, but when we came to a fork in the road he ran over to the side and waited to see which way the team was going, and then he took up his lead position again. That is not leading! True leadership demands thought, time, patience, prayer and courage. There is no way to truly lead without them.

HE MUST BE WILLING TO REBUKE THE WAYWARD! There is no easy way to do this. In the work of overseeing, this is the most difficult task I have faced. It is not all that difficult as an evangelist to stand behind the pulpit and rebuke the people for their sins, but "face to face" it is not so easy. Yet, it must be done! Elders must be sensitive enough to detect a straying sheep quickly, and loving enough to act without delay that a soul may not be lost. Elders often excuse themselves with a "wait and see" attitude. Of course, we must be patient, but most of the time "wait and see" is simply a "cop-out from duty." Overseers must be willing to take the lead in discipline, both instructive and corrective. This takes courage, and it can't be accomplished by the "faint-hearted."

HE MUST UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF TEAMWORK. God ordained "ELDERS" (plural). When you have a number of men who are leading "together," it demands teamwork. Those involved may not have exactly the same talents and temperaments, but they all can and must contribute their part. A failure to do this will result in one or more taking too much lead and that is not good. An elder should not be simply an "objector," but a "contributor." You cannot have good teamwork without good communication and that means elders need to keep their heads together. I don't believe there is anyway to do this without talking. They may not always agree one-hundred percent, but if they truly love the Lord and His church then something good will always come from their talking. Sometimes elders become too busy to communicate except briefly "on the run," and this doesn't give time for much thought. When elders become too busy to properly oversee they have become too busy!

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There isn't anything the church of the Lord needs more than godly elders. We badly need men who are willing to prepare for this great work. But, alas, there are many who are not willing to study, grow, work, and prepare for it. We will never just "accidentally" have good elders. Young men should start preparing and then be ready when the time comes. Instead of this, the time comes and then we scramble to get someone acceptable enough to get in. This is a poor way to run God's business. We also continue to have members in nearly every church who are so extra critical about the eldership that it makes it impossible even for the best of men to serve. These people may mean well, but they do harm to the progress of the kingdom. There is nothing that will stabilize and strengthen the Lord's church more than godly elders. May their tribe increase.

--W. R. Jones

#### OUR GOSPEL MEETING

Remember, our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for October 27th through November 1st. Sunday services: Bible Study 9:30 A.M. -- Morning Worship 10:30 -- Evening Worship 6:00. Monday through Friday services will be at 7:30 P.M. Jim Cope of Tampa, Florida will do the preaching. Brother Cope has been preaching over 45 years and for many years served as president of Florida College. He is a man of great knowledge and wisdom and it will profit you to hear him. Make your plans to be present for every service.

#### NEW LADIES CLASS

A new Ladies Class will start Sunday October 6th. The class will meet each Sunday afternoon at 5:00. Jan Sloan and Jean Jones will be responsible for the teaching. All women and young ladies from Junior High up are urged to attend the class. The first subject for study will be, "The Challenge Of Being A Wife." We urge all our ladies to attend, and bring a friend.

KATHY WELCH had surgery on Monday of last week. It is likely she will be home by the time you read this. We hope she will soon be much better.

If it were easy,  
anybody could do it.

BEING A CHRISTIAN IS A REAL CHALLENGE  
IT TAKES COURAGE

# The Messenger



## CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Liberty, Texas

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### "IF A MAN DESIRE THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP"

**DO YOU RULE YOUR FAMILY WELL?**

--W. R. Jones

In the qualifications for those who would serve as "elders" (bishops) in the church of Christ it says, "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Timothy 3:4-5) I believe this is talking about what a father does with what he has. That is, how he deals with his children and controls them while they are under his oversight. Of course, years after a child has left home he can engage in evil that reflects and hurts the family in which he was reared, but in all fairness I don't believe that is what is being set forth in these passages. It is a "ruling well" those he has to rule. Likewise, as an "elder", he is to "rule well" those he has authority to rule. The "flock of God among you" is where his oversight takes place. (1 Peter 5:2) He is not responsible for those who are no longer in the "flock." Again, let me say I believe it is speaking of what the head of the family does with what he has. This is something the members of the congregation may easily observe. Let us now consider what "ruling well" requires of a husband and father. --Continued on page two.



**ELDERS.....from front page.**

### **WHAT DOES "RULING WELL" REQUIRE?**

(1) It requires that a father teach his children the way of the Lord. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) Not a constant preachment, if you please, but a discussion of Truth and values. (2) It demands that a father exercise enough discipline that system and order prevail in the family. (3) It entails spending enough time with his children to make quality communication possible. (4) It mandates a demonstration of true love for the children's mother. This shows how ruling can be done in love.

### **HAVING HIS CHILDREN IN SUBJECTION**

"In subjection" requires that a man have his children under control. Not a "control" produced by threatening fear, but because respect has been earned. It is possible for a father to have all his children whipped into line, which looks impressive, but when they are out of parental sight they "sow to the wind." This father does not have his children in "subjection." He has failed to truly influence them.

### **WITH ALL GRAVITY**

Does this mean a father can't laugh with his children? Is it wrong for him to

have fun with his family? Absolutely not! The home needs to be a happy place, but ruling a family is not always "fun and games." This word "gravity" means: "seriousness, severity, solemnity and dignity." When a man oversees with "gravity" in all likelihood his word will carry a lot of weight and that is what counts in influencing children. There is a prevalent notion that what a young son needs is a father who is his "best pal." Not so! A young man can find pals at school and elsewhere. What the boy (or girl) needs is a true father who is not afraid to set boundaries and require duty. He also needs a father who can work with him and play with him. This will produce a lasting influence.

### **THE VALUE OF "RULING WELL"**

"Ruling well" in the family sharpens a man's ability to "oversee" the people of God in a local congregation. He will have experienced instructing in righteousness, commending the diligent, comforting the distressed and rebuking the wayward. All these things are very import when one serves as an elder in the church. Brethren, this is something that begins before you are asked to serve as an elder. Men who only become concerned about "family rule" when they suspect they might be asked to serve in the eldership have waited entirely to late. The truth is, men should rule their family well regardless of whether they are asked to serve in the eldership or not. Brothers in Christ, how are you ruling your family? I hope you are "ruling well."

# GUIDELINES FOR LEADERSHIP

-- W. R. Jones

Some months ago I wrote several short articles about what it takes to be an elder in the church of Christ. Early on I emphasized the need for "leadership," something often overlooked. What does it take to be a good leader? The following points come from an article, "Twenty Guidelines For Leadership" by Perry M. Smith, an international lecturer on effective leadership. As you might suspect he views it from the standpoint of business. Of course, the church is not a business, but I want you to observe how true his points are in regard to "leadership" in churches of Christ.

"Leaders count. People at the top can -- should -- make a difference. A leader can permanently affect an organization by establishing a strategic vision with specific long-term goals and implementation strategies. What will happen in the next 20 or 30 years will be, in large part, the consequences of decisions that influential leaders will make within their organizations." I have selected the following points from Mr. Perry's recommendations.

**TRUST IS VITAL.** "Without trust and mutual respect among leaders and subordinate leaders, a large organization will often suffer a combination of low performance and poor morale." This is likewise true concerning elders of the church. They must be men who can trust and be trusted. Their word must be reliable. Elders who rule with a political atmosphere or undercover maneuvering will not hold that trust and poor morale is likely to follow. An elder is to be; "Hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober minded, just, holy, self controlled," (Titus 1:8)

**A LEADER SHOULD BE A GOOD TEACHER AND COMMUNICATOR.** "Teachership and leadership go hand in glove." Regrettably, in the Lord's church this is often taken lightly. Other things often outrank this qualification in the eyes of the people. An elder must know God's Word, but that is not enough. He must be able to "teach" it. God's people are not led by arm-twisting, threats or pressure, but by teaching. No man can be an effective elder unless he can communicate the Word of God to the people in life and in words. The words; "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" were not written just to fill space. (Titus 1:9)

**A LEADER SHOULD RARELY BE A PROBLEM SOLVER.** "A leader should facilitate problem solving but should let subordinates solve most problems." I have seen elders in the church who spent much of their time trying to solve other peoples problems. Most of the time they didn't stay solved. An elder shouldn't spend his time trying to dictate the lives of the members nor solve all their problems for them, but teach them how to solve their problems with God's Word. If people listen, their problem will very likely stay solved. A bishop must not be a dictator to think for people, but "a steward of God" who will lead them in God's way. (Titus 1:7)

**LEADERS MUST NOT CONDONE INCOMPETENCE.** "Leaders must be willing to set standards, to abide by those standards unwaveringly, and to require their subordinates to live by those standards." Elders of the church need to demonstrate the pattern and challenge the flock to follow. It has been said; "most congregations never rise above its leadership." Show them the best and call on them for the best. Otherwise, why do you think Peter wrote; "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you?" (1 Peter 5:2) --Continued on page three.

**LEADERS...from page two.**

**LEADERS MUST TAKE CARE OF THEIR PEOPLE.** "They should recognize not just the top performers but also the many others who are doing their jobs well. Leaders should get up in the morning thanking people; at noontime they should thank more people; before going home at night, they should thank still more." Unfortunately, some elders never let the people know they are of any value in the church. When Christians feel they are wanted, needed and appreciated they will work much harder and sacrifice unselfishly. An elder is to rule his own house with love and he is to oversee God's flock with love and thankfulness. (1 Timothy 3:5)

**LEADERS SHOULD BE OPEN MINDED.** "The best leaders are the ones whose minds are never closed and who are eager to deal with new issues. Inflexibility can spell trouble for an organization. Leaders must be visible and approachable." Elders should never act as though they have the corner on all good judgment and wisdom. When they are open minded and easy to approach some of their most valuable suggestions may come from the members. "Self willed" elders not only violate God's qualification, but they stifle the growth of the church. (Titus 1:7)

Mr. Perry gave other worthwhile suggestions but these will suffice for the time. Because we are giving consideration to selecting elders, I urge the men of the congregation to give these thoughts careful consideration.

**NEW ADDRESS:**

John & Rhonda Pickard  
200 Cook Road #51  
Liberty, Texas 77575  
(Parkforest Section)

**NEWS & NOTES:** Sixty were in attendance Sunday the 16th with 16 absent because of sickness or visiting out of town. Our contribution has still not returned to where it should be. Our cause is an important one. Let's give generously. We continue to have good attendance on Sunday and Wednesday evenings. \*\* Dixie Cowart was ill Sunday the 16th and John Broomas was confined to the bed with a back problem. \*\* Thanks to Artie Williams for his work on the sign and the baptistry. \*\* It was good to have Mary Ann Pearson and Julie Williams Petry visiting with us Sunday. \*\*

Chasing after pleasure  
Is a true confession  
of an **UNSATISFIED** life.

**THE PSALMIST SAID: "In Thy presence is  
FULLNESS OF JOY; at Thy right hand are  
PLEASURES FOR EVERMORE." (Psalm 16:11)**