

StraitWay



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Overseeing The Flock Part Four (Developing Elders)

God has always sought for men to stand up and lead His people. We can read in Ezekiel 22:30, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.” Paul told those in Corinth to, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” (1st Cor. 16:13). Paul told Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” (Titus 1:5).

There is a shortage of qualified men desiring to serve as elders in the Lord’s church today. There are many congregations that do not have elders, and don’t see any hope of appointing any in the near future. It appears many don’t think much about elders or appointing them until the time is upon them to do so.

It is impossible to appoint qualified men into the eldership that have not qualified themselves years before. Qualified men don’t just appear overnight. It is a long process. It begins with the home. A man can be a Christian without being married and having a physical family, but he cannot be an elder without a wife and believing children (1st Tim. 3:1-7). It has been well said that a man’s wife can’t qualify him to be an elder, but she can sure disqualify him. The same can be said of his children. Developing elders begins in the home.

Spiritual teaching and righteous living must begin at home. God intended it to be so (Deut. 6:6-9; 1st Cor 2:5). Teaching our children the word of God takes time and example. Parents must set the proper priorities. Parents must stop “over-scheduling” themselves and their children. Many families spend very little time together at home. Many hardly, if ever, sit down at the table together for a meal. Many spend very little time talking about spiritual things.

We need more preaching and teaching about the home as God intended (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:22-28; Eph. 6:1,2). We need to hear teaching that Christians should marry Christians. We should hear lessons about the man leading the family in spiritual things, as did Abraham. We need more like Joshua that will stand up and say, “As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”

We as parents and grandparents must make a few big decisions up front and it will eliminate the necessity of making many smaller ones over and over again. For example, many Christians have to make a decision each Sunday whether to attend worship or not. The least excuse will cause them to forsake the assembly. This decision should already be made and not up for debate. Children should not have to wonder what a parent’s answer is going to be about a question of where they can and cannot go, or what they can and cannot wear.

It is no secret that marriage and the home have little value to many in the world, and this attitude has affected many in the church. Until we set out homes and families in order we cannot have the proper leadership in many congregations of the Lord’s church.

Many Christians have just gotten too busy for family. Thus, we have gotten too busy to develop elders.

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Preacher Training The Teaching

In this series we are breaking down the work of training preachers into segments for consideration and our hope is that some seed for thought might be encouraged in each area.

The Aspect of Teaching

In our last installment we looked at the work of preaching. Although preaching and teaching are sometimes synonymous, at other times they are very different works and require the use of a different set of abilities. The Holy Spirit separated them into two works in Ephesians 4:11 and for the purpose of training a man, so are we.

In Acts 20:20 Paul reminded the elders from Ephesus that he had not avoided proclaiming to them anything that was spiritually profitable both publicly and from house to house. This is the same distinction that we are making between public proclamation (preaching) and teaching. There is at least two reasons why this part of the preacher's work is vital. In spite of the modern-day distinction between "pulpit preachers" and other kinds of preachers; in spite of the feelings of some who could be summed up in the words of one gospel preacher who plainly said, "I don't do personal work!" This work is vital.

One who sincerely desires to be set for a defense of the gospel and glorify His Lord at every opportunity needs to be familiar with how to do so in private, as well as publicly. He needs to be able to look one in the eye and speak sincerely over a kitchen table and a cup of coffee, not just entertain a large crowd. He needs to be able to answer questions, and explain the scriptures further, and carry on a dialogue; not just present his side without any argument and sit down. This is teaching!

The second reason can be seen in the simple difference between the words 'proclaim' and 'teach'. There is certainly a place for proclaiming. There is a place for setting out the message without interruption for the benefit of those who are spiritually thirsty and need a deep drink right now. However, teaching, I believe, carries a different connotation. It is not just putting out the information, take it or leave it. Teaching is communication. It requires feedback from the student. It is the art of putting that information into palatable and interesting forms-not to make it acceptable-but to make it unforgettable. Word pictures like wolves, sheep, carpenters, vines, washed out houses, half finished battles, and eating body and blood stick in our minds! This is teaching!

Men in training programs ought to be teaching a class every quarter. Not a verse by verse, go as slow as you want, run every rabbit trail, talk about everything in the world, spend 5 years on the book of Exodus kind of class. I'm speaking of an organized, laid out, finished on time, homework preparing type of Bible study. Understand this... teachers ARE NOT discussion leaders. If one is going to teach, he should have something that he intends to present. He should get his point across (leaving time and room for question and discussion of course) and then there should be a conclusion. Everyone in the class doesn't have to buy into the conclusion, but at least there should be one. One Wednesday night Bible class in one not-to-be-named congregation spent the entire class "studying" what kind of oil the 10 virgins in the parable of the wedding feast might have used. Let me say about that type of class... WHO CARES?!? This is NOT teaching!

The intern preacher should be sitting in on home studies of every kind that are available. When the regular preacher or elder or some other "experienced" brother teaches, he out to be present. After observing, taking notes on methodology, etc. for a few months-He should teach some of these himself. If at all possible he should be speaking on the radio. Nothing builds quick thinking and confidence more (unless it is going door to door, which I'm not recommending at this time). Television also is good, but requires a different kind of preparation and only a few congregations are able to provide this medium for training. One option in many areas, however, might be the local free channel available in most areas via the local cable company. The viewing audience might be low, but it is not non-existent, and it is good training.

One on one, small home groups, classroom situations, fair booths whatever and wherever. Teach the young man to organize his class material (and save it), assign homework, and develop his skills with flip charts, flashcards, computer programs and anything else that can be used to communicate the message of Christ and explain it in depth.

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Passing The Sword

Introduction:

- A. In this publication, **StraitWay**, during 2002, emphasis was placed on the church, false doctrines, preparing sermons, etc. The 2003 issues will be dealing with elders, deacons, preacher, training, foreign evangelism, passing the sword, the home, etc.
- B. My responsibility is to encourage and enlighten young preachers, just starting out on the road of preaching, as to their responsibilities, required of God, to prepare themselves with the Word of God to carry on the work of spreading the gospel as it slowly slips from the hands of elderly men who are becoming less physically and mentally able to continue.
- C. The most important man and information that young men need, in their efforts to prepare themselves to effectively and Scripturally proclaim the Word of God, is Paul the great apostle of the Lord, and his writings to Timothy and Titus.
 - 1. There are a lot of helps along this line that have been prepared by men who have studied diligently the Word of God.
 - a. But, we need to be very careful concerning the writings and teachings of men and be sure that they are following the Word of God before we begin to put a lot of emphasis on their teachings.
 - b. Out of the many writings that you might obtain at this time to help with your studies, I want to just mention two that I think would be very helpful in your studies. These are: the whole set of Bible Study Books published by Bob and Sandra Waldron. Also, New Testament Books Outlined, by Derrel Shaw.
- D. Since the Books of First and Second Timothy and Titus are the major books that you should learn to use very efficiently in your preparations, I will spend some time dealing with the teaching of these books.

I. The Books of First Timothy and Titus are first chronologically.

- A. They were written by Paul after his release from his imprisonment in Rome about 62 or 63 AD.

II. The Book of Second Timothy was written by Paul during his second imprisonment about 67 AD.

III. First Timothy

- A. **Chapter One:** Paul begins this book with warnings about false teachers.
 - 1. He speaks of his own prior activities that were actually a detriment to the cause of Christ.
 - 2. But he tells of the grace of God that enabled him to make a complete change in his life.
 - 3. He tells Timothy to wage a good warfare having faith and a good conscience.
- B. **Chapter Two:** He exhorts that prayers, supplications, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men.
 - 1. He speaks of the One Mediator, Jesus Christ.
 - 2. He speaks of the conduct and activities of both men and women.
 - 3. He speaks of a woman being in subjection to man and how they should dress and why.

Conclusion:

When we get to Second Timothy where Timothy was told to "Study to show himself approved unto God, rightly dividing the work of truth" we will present some examples of how preachers in the past studied.

Studying is one of the major activities in preparing oneself to preach the gospel. One cannot preach what he does not know. Many false ideas and opinions have gone out into the world by the mouths of preachers who have not studied and do not reverence the Word of God. Young people, get you a very good, readable, dependable version of the Bible and a good concordance.

The Deacon's Work

Deacon's Qualifications 2

In First Timothy 3 verses 8 -10 and verse 12, we have the qualifications of a deacon. The apostle Paul gave this list of qualifications to the young evangelist Timothy so he would be able to show the early churches what kind of man is needed to fill this position. I believe it is no less important today for the church to measure men by this standard to appoint to this work. We have looked at the first three qualifications in our last article. I would like to continue to look at these qualities of a deacon so we might have a better understanding of them.

The fourth qualification the Spirit gives through the apostle Paul is a deacon must not be greedy for money. The Bible speaks in several places about the Christian's attitude about money. We are not to love money (1 Timothy 6:10). As Paul instructed the churches we should be willing to give of our money to help spread the word of God or relieve needy saints (1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8-9). We as Christians are to put God first before worldly possessions (Matthew 6:33).

In pointing out this qualification for a deacon, Paul is reminding us of the importance of this attitude in a man who wishes to serve in this area. There are a couple of reasons this would be especially important for a deacon. The first area is, if a deacon was greedy for money he would possibly spend all his time striving after that and neglect his work for the Lord. A deacon who works all the overtime he can get to accumulate worldly things is not going to have time to devote to completing his duties. It is not wrong for a deacon (or any other member) to work to provide a good living for his family, but we need to watch ourselves to see where our heart is and where we are laying up our treasure (Matthew 6:19-20). The other reason a greedy man would not make a good deacon is because deacons are sometimes responsible for handling the money that is collected by the church. This money is to be used in a manner that is consistent with the will of God. One who is greedy might use these funds where they shouldn't be used or use them in a way for his own personal gain. There is no place in the business of the church for kick backs or anything such as this. The money collected by the church should be spent in the way that gets the most work done for the Lord. A greedy deacon might be put in a position where he would be tempted to find the best deal for himself and not the Church. The Lord wisely helps us avoid that problem when He gave us this qualification.

The next qualification we are given is that a Deacon must hold the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. There are two aspects of this qualification that we want to look at. The first is that the deacon is to HOLD the mystery of faith. This word implies grabbing something tightly and hanging on with the tightest grip that one could achieve. This is the kind of dedication to the faith that is required of one who aspires to become a deacon. This does not mean that this man must be perfect in the faith, but he must be one who is dedicated to holding onto the faith. The other aspect of this is that he is to hold the mystery of the faith WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE. This would imply a mind that is free from guilt of wrong doing. In its simplest state that is what is implied by having a clear conscience. This leaves us open for all kinds of practices and beliefs for even when Paul was persecuting Christians his conscience was clear, (Acts 23:1). We have to tie this phrase in with the preceding statement where Paul says a deacon is to hold the mystery of faith. If one holds the mystery of faith, or clings to the word and does this with a clear conscience he is then qualified. This is more a self test for a man seeking to be a deacon than a judgment we can make about him. In saying this I don't mean to take away our responsibility in making sure our deacons are holding to the word of truth. We can not however know if he is doing so with a clear conscience. A deacon must be a man who is striving with his whole self to cling to the mystery of faith that was once for all delivered to us. If a man is working to accomplish this, then he will serve the congregation well as a deacon.

I hope that our study of the qualifications and responsibilities of deacons is profitable for us all. We will look at more of the standards God has set for these servants in our next writing.

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“Home” Of What Is It Composed?

In our present society, the home (family) is not thought of, by many, in the way God originally intended it to be. Today many people do not even consider the marriage relationship between a man and a woman to be necessary in the formation of a home or "family unit" as we are using the term in this series of articles. Today, women who are not even contemplating marriage decide they want to have a child, thereby forming what they call a “home” or “family”. Having a husband as God intended is the furthest thought from their mind. They simply go to a doctor who specializes in a procedure called artificial insemination. Male sperm is then selected from a sperm bank and the woman allows the doctor to perform a surgical procedure to impregnate her without the benefit of the union between male and female as God designed. Also, you may have some man who decides he wants a child, but doesn't want to be married, so he simply finds a woman who is willing to bear him a child. When the child is born, the woman then gives the child to the man and they may never even see one another again, much less think about becoming husband and wife. Or, in our "modern" society, you may have two males or two females (“gays” they call themselves, but let’s call them what they are, homosexuals) who "make a commitment" to each other, which in some countries and even in some states of the United States of America is recognized as a kind of marriage, then adopt children and call themselves a family. These simply illustrate the many efforts of mankind to deviate (this makes them “deviates”, doesn’t it?) from God's plan for the home.

Let me hasten to say, I do not believe it to be wrong for a husband and wife (as the Scriptures defines them) who are unable to conceive or have difficulty conceiving and bearing children to adopt children. You will find in Scripture where children were cared for by "parents" other than their natural parents. Such was the case with Lot who was cared for by Abraham, his uncle, after Lot's father died (Gen. 12:5). And, yes, I know that a single parent can raise their children. It may be that either husband or wife is taken through death or a spouse becomes unfaithful to the marriage bond and the innocent spouse Scripturally divorces the unfaithful mate and raises the children alone. However, for a man and woman who are Scripturally married to adopt a child or a single parent forced by death or any circumstances beyond their control, to rear their children is far different from the situations described above. In the above described situations, individuals are involved in ungodly relationships that are specifically condemned in Scripture (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-28) and therefore cannot be a home as God intended it to be.

You will remember in Gen. 1:27, 28 the Bible says: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." It is not difficult to understand from these verses that God intended that ONE man and ONE woman be joined together as one flesh, that is, married to each other and this for life. It is out of this union of husband and wife, as they are referred to in Gen. 3:16,17, that children are produced. So, it becomes abundantly clear that God intended that the home (family) be composed of ONE man (male) and ONE woman (female) and the children that result from this union. This is the basic components of the home as God designed it and when man deviates from this basic unit that God designed in the beginning, all kinds of problems arise. Yes, as noted above there are some exceptions that are sanctioned by Scripture. But, we must remember that these are exceptions rather than the rule. However, the ungodly and unscriptural relationships that modern man (actually they are not of modern invention at all) has devised is a corruption of the home (family) as God designed it and have resulted in an exceedingly corrupt society. In the above discussion, I used the term “Scriptural marriage” and in our next installment of this series I want to discuss with you what constitutes a “Scriptural marriage”.

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(Editor's note: This article should have been in the March issue and the March article in this issue. Please excuse the mixup and refer to last month's issue for a discussion of “Scriptural marriage.”)

False Evidences of Salvation

Matthew 7 contains the conclusion to Jesus' sermon on the mount. In 7:21 Jesus warns: *Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord; will enter the kingdom of heaven...* Some will live their life *feeling* secure and religious. They will *feel* close to God—but in all reality will be a stranger to Him! This “false peace” will lead us to think ourselves saved when we are not! Jesus' words here are among the scariest in God's word. They should serve as a wake up call to every Christian. Jesus describes those who felt assured of their salvation in 7:21b-22. What was the problem? Why were they rejected? What is the lesson for us?

Religious fervor and zeal is not always a sign of salvation! It is evident from 7:22 that those in the text had an emotional attachment to Jesus. They were “fired up.” There is little doubt they were excited about their work. There was little room for laziness in their work for God. This is also true with some in our time and unfortunately they base their religious life upon their *feelings*. *Some think they feel more than others—therefore, are more “spiritual” than others.* Our feelings and zeal must be based upon knowledge! (Rom. 10:2) If salvation were based solely upon zeal—Paul would have had no worries while a Jew. He writes: *as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.* But, of course, he said: *whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.* (Phil. 3:6-7) Our religious fervor and zeal must come from our relationship with Christ!

Religious works are not always a sign of salvation. “It is possible for one to preach—and to preach a correct message—and not be in the kingdom himself.” Balaam (Num. 22); Saul (1 Sam. 10:10-11; 18:10; 19:23-24); and others prove this point clearly. Paul guarded against this danger. He said: *I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.* (1 Cor. 9:27) Today, some are tremendous workers for the Lord—sacrificing great amounts of time; money; and effort. This is wonderful! We need more workers! But **one must not assume that just because he works hard that God is in him and he is in His kingdom!** Our great and wonderful works must result from our relationship with Christ!

Having a correct belief is not always a sign of salvation. Doctrine is important! It is essential! But, that is not all there is to it! There are many Christians who can spout off scripture after scripture on the necessity of baptism; the one true church; the error of premillennialism; how the impossibility of apostasy is wrong; why we should refrain from using instruments in worship; and why we partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. While we often do a great job in learning & teaching these important doctrinal precepts—it will mean nothing if we fail to be transformed into *God's kind of Christian*. For example, some have it right doctrinally, but exercise no control over their tongue. (Js. 1:22-26) There is great danger in one believing the right doctrine—but never putting God's word into practice where it counts—**in his life!**

We can avoid being one of the “surprised” ones on judgment if we will **change our heart** through the application of God's word. It will come through our seeking holiness! Paul writes of this in Eph. 4:24: *put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.* Jesus wants to *establish (our) hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.* (1 Thess. 3:13) Putting on holiness means that we must possess the inward righteousness that Jesus preached about during the first half of the sermon on the mount. We must ask: “Am I conforming to the kind of person described in the beatitudes?” “Do I have real holiness and righteousness within?” Jesus said, *“You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.* (Lk. 16:15) Beware of the danger of relying upon “false evidences” of salvation. Beware of the danger of self deception. Approach your spiritual life with a diligence resulting from your love for Christ!

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Preaching The Gospel In Foreign Fields

I have been asked to write a series of articles about preaching the gospel in foreign lands. My personal knowledge and experience limits me inasmuch as I have actually only preached in two other nations; the Philippines and Taiwan. Still, there are certain truths which are not only applicable to preaching the gospel in our own country, but to others lands as well. Allow me first to deal with the reasons why the gospel must be carried to lands other than our own.

The Lord's instructions to the apostles mandates preaching the gospel to ALL the lost. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek..." (Rom. 1:16). Since all have sinned, the wages of which is death and since God is no respect or persons; it is evident that all proclaimers of the word have a responsibility to preach the word to all with whom time and circumstances bring them into contact. (Rm. 3:23; 6:23; Acts 10:34). Faithful preachers have a compelling urge to preach. Full well do they understand Jeremiah's words: "And if I say I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain..." (Jer. 20:9)

Jesus said "and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all of Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8). Matthew's account is the great commission is "Go therefore and teach all nations..." (Mt. 28:18). Mark wrote: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature..." (16:16). Luke said: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preach in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem..." (24:47). In his parable of the tares, Jesus said "and the field is the world" (Mt. 13:38). Of the twelve apostles we have specific mention of two who went into other countries preaching the word: Peter who preached in Antioch of Syria and in Babylon; and John (if the writer of Revelation be John, the apostle) who likely preached in Ephesus and was banished to Patmos (Rev. 1:9). Of the remaining 10 (save James whose martyrdom is recorded in Acts 12:2), the sacred record is silent regarding their preaching either within Judaea or out of it. We know that on Pentecost they all spoke in other tongues to the nations gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost but such preaching was still in Judaea.

The greatest example of Apostolic preaching to foreign lands would be Paul,. He breathes the zeal with moved within him when he wrote to Roman Christians: "I am DEBTOR both to Jews and Greeks"; "So, as much as in me is, I am READY to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome" and "I am NOT ASHAMED of the gospel of Christ" (Rm. 1:14, 15, 16). While Paul's debtorship cannot be pressed to today's preachers to the same degree; his readiness to preach unashamedly the gospel certain can be.

Paul's charged Timothy "Preach the Word. Be Urgent in season, out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). To whom was Timothy to preach? To everyone he had opportunity to teach, home or abroad! Matthew records Jesus saying "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Mt. 28:20). Would not his command to "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" include that they also so "go and teach all nations"? Surely it would.

It is not likely that every preacher today will have opportunity to preach the gospel in another land. But when each preacher has the spirit of Isaiah who, having heard the Lord say: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" replied "Here am I; send me." then the gospel will spread through the world which is what the Lord intended it should do! (Isa. 6:8) May God help us all to love the word, love the lost and love to preach the word to the lost!

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It's All About The Lord!

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ."
Acts 5:42

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." **Acts 8:12**

"And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." **Acts 8:35**

"And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus." **Acts 11:20**

"Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection." **Acts 17:18**

"Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him." **Acts 28:31**

"For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea." **II Corinthians 1:19**

"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." **II Corinthians 4:5**

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:" **Colossians 1:27**

"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church." **I Corinthians 4:17**

Do you notice a theme in the verses above? I hope you recognize the emphasis on preaching Jesus the Christ. We could look at other passages but these should be sufficient to help us understand Christ should always be our focus as we discuss Scripture. Brethren, it is not about me, you or anyone else. **It is all about the Lord!** Be diligent in preparation and careful in study.

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