

Church of Christ

...Heart to Heart...

Last week we began our study of elders and their work. Elders are not selected to be a board of directors, men of business savvy or good money managers. They are *spiritual* men, with hearts for the Lord and His word, loving God's people, selected from among the congregation, to guide, direct and oversee the spiritual welfare of the saints. The Greek word "*presbuteros*" is where our English word for *elder* comes from. It means "one who is older." We saw several examples of this used in Old Testament last week. The term can be used in a generic sense, just referring to older men, and also as a specific role in the Lord's church. Context always determines the usage.

After the church of our Lord was established (Acts 2), spiritual insight and teaching came from the apostles. They (apostles) dealt with disciplinary problems that arose in the church (Acts 5). They handled the delegation of what was to be done for serving tables in the church (Acts 6). The first time we see the term *elders* used after the death of Jesus is in Acts 11:27-30. This is some ten years plus after Jesus' death. It isn't referred to as a role in the church, but simply "older men." At the end of Paul's first missionary journey, 47-49 AD, Barnabas and Paul appointed *elders* in every church (Acts. 14:21-23), the first usage of the word in relation to Christ and His church. Paul charged Titus, leaving him on the island of Crete to "...*appoint elders in every city as I directed you.*" (Tit. 1:5) The *elders* were given charge over the Lord's church to keep them on the path of truth and righteousness. The term was always used in plurality, meaning there was never one man over the church but in each congregation, there were always two or more. Since the term *elder* refers to an older man, the question arises, how old should one be to serve in the eldership in the Lord's church? God's word doesn't give us an age, but points to a man's spiritual life and those spiritual life experiences. We find he must be old enough to have children who believe (Titus 1:6). He must not be a new convert due to the temptation of become conceited (I Tim. 3:6). He must be old enough to have proven himself as a good manager of his family (I Tim. 3:4). These are good indicators of the men that are selected to serve in God's household, the church.

Next week we will look at another aspect of the *elders* and their work, expanding on the Lord's intention for leadership in the body. Spend time studying God's word. Renew your minds each and every day. Think about it!!!

Brent