

## *Cutting Straight the Word of the Truth on Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24*

### **Remember, Obey, and Greet the Ones Leading You**

Recently a sister wrote and posted an article which openly criticized a number of elders on the Internet. She nitpicked and listed a litany of complaints to discredit some elders (she used the terms “leading ones”, “responsible brothers” and “elder” interchangeably), quoting Hebrews 13:7, 17, and 24, and insinuating that their “manner of life” does not befit one who is worthy of emulation or obedience from the saints.

In her article, the writer listed a number of situations where she considered an elder is unworthy of emulation or obedience:

1. One who still celebrates his or his children’s birthday and even invite saints to go to his house to celebrate with them;
2. One who resides in one locality but has his church life in another locality;
3. One who already resides in another locality but still holds on to his service in the locality where he formerly resided in;
4. One who is a mere sign board telling the saints what to do but does not move out of its place to do what it says;
5. One whose wife and children does not love or live the church life;
6. One who would not preach the gospel to his mother because she would reprimand him for it;
7. One who would not voluntarily pray to end a very grave meeting.

In this article, we shall delve into the Scriptures and the ministry of brothers Nee and Lee, and also check what other notable Bible expositors have to say to address the various issues related to what she cited.

First, was the sister correct in her interpretation and faithful in her application of the verses in Hebrews chapter 13? What does the apostle Paul really mean in his threefold mentioning of “the ones leading you”: remember the ones leading you (v. 7), obey the ones leading you (v. 17), and greet all the ones leading you (v. 24)? Are these verses meant to exhort the believers to respect, obey, and submit to the ones leading the churches or to be critical of, criticize, and disobey them?

Second, is the sister right about her complaints and accusations against the elders? Do the issues raised by the sister against the elders have biblical basis to discredit or disqualify them? Based on the issues she cited, does she have scriptural ground to encourage believers to disobey and dishonor the elders she censured in her article? What are the qualifications and requirements of an elder set forth by the Word in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9?

Third, is the sister biblical and proper in criticizing the elders openly through the Internet? In the event that believers have any complaint against an elder, who should be the proper recipient of such a complaint? What is the biblical way to express one’s concern regarding an elder according to 1 Timothy 5:19-21?

May the Lord grant us a sober mind, a humble spirit, and a submissive will as we look into the healthy teachings of His word through the help of the ministry.

## Concerning “The Ones Leading You” in Hebrews 13: 7, 17, and 24

Let us look at the Bible to see what these verses in Hebrews 13 say: “Remember the ones leading you, who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith” (v. 7). “Obey the ones leading you and submit to *them*, for they watch over your souls as those who will render an account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning; for this would be unprofitable to you” (v. 17). “Greet all the ones leading you and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you” (v. 24).

First, with regard to “remembering the ones leading us” (v. 7), in the footnote of the Holy Bible Recovery Version, Brother Lee indicates that this is “*essential in the church life.*” The elders as leading ones and ministers of the word of God should have a manner of life that issues in an example of faith for the church members, the receivers of the word of God, to imitate. Then the church members not only will *receive* the word that the ministers minister but will also *imitate* the ministers' faith, which is expressed in their manner of life. As it is important that the elders take heed to their manner of life, it is *essential* that the believers remember them so as to *receive* the word of God and *imitate* their faith. In the same footnote, Brother Lee said:

“Verse 7 is a continuation of vv. 5-6. Manner of life must refer to the living and behavior pursued by those ministers of the word of God, in which they had no love of money and were satisfied with what they had (v. 5a). Their faith must refer to the fact that they trusted in the Lord, their Helper, for their living (vv. 5b-6). The word that they ministered and the life that they lived must have been entirely Christ, and their faith must have been the faith in Christ, of which Christ is both the Author and the Perfecter (12:2). Such a manner of life and such a faith were surely worthy to be imitated by the believers, who received the word of God that the ministers ministered and who considered the issue of their manner of life.”<sup>1</sup>

From this footnote we see that the “manner of life” in this verse refers specifically and explicitly to the living and behavior directly related to how the elders treat money and other earthly possessions; it is *not* the issues raised by the sister in her accusatory article.

Second, with regard to “obeying the ones leading you and submitting to them” (v.17), in the footnote of the Holy Bible Recovery Version, Brother Lee says that this is “*vitally necessary in the church life.*” In the context of this verse, the elders are the shepherds who watch over the flock's needs not only of their spirits but also their souls. As sheep to the shepherd, it is *vitally necessary* that the believers “obey and submit” to the ones leading them.

It is noteworthy that the apostle Paul did not stipulate the *conditions* under which the believers should obey the elders and submit to them. It is because his emphasis is on the *necessity* of the believers' proper attitude toward the ones leading them, that is, to obey and submit to them. Surely Paul was not demanding blind and obsequious obedience from the believers or condoning possible misconduct of the elders. According to the apostle Paul's burden in this Epistle, whether or not the leading ones measure up to the requirement and expectation is not the point in question the believers need to be concerned about, for he assured them in the same verse that the elders will render account to their Lord. The elders as commissioned by the Lord to shepherd the flock (Acts

20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2) have the Lord as their Chief Shepherd to render account to (1 Pet. 5:4). As regards any possible concern, complaint or even accusation that the believers may have toward an elder, the apostle Paul took up this recourse separately in chapter 5 of his first Epistle to Timothy, which we shall take up in a later section.

In line with this, none of the renowned Bible expositors throughout the centuries considered the obedience and submission required of the believers to the ones leading the church as *conditional* or *situation-specific* like the sister did. John Nelson Darby points out that such obedience is “a *proof* of that humble spirit of grace which seeks only to please the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry states that to obey the leading ones is the “duty” of the believers, and that “Christians must not think themselves too wise, too good, or too great, to learn.”<sup>3</sup> R. Jamieson, A. R. Faussett and D. Brown stress that the believers should “not only obey in cases where no sacrifice of self is required, and when you are persuaded they are right, but also ‘submit yourselves’ as a dutiful yielding when your judgment and natural will incline you in an opposite direction.”<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly in verse 17, after enjoining the saints to simply obey and submit themselves to the leading ones rather than condemning them based on their condition, the apostle Paul immediately entreats the believers to *pray* for him and for other leading ones (v. 18). In a practical church life, just as there is no perfect church, there are no perfect leading ones. In 2 Corinthians 11:29 Paul says, “Who is weak, and I am not weak?” If even the apostle Paul himself claimed that he can be weak and less than perfect (Phil. 3:12), how much more for the elders he appointed and exhorted the believers to obey and submit to? Noticeably, after mentioning his imperfection and his need to further pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called him upward in Philippians 3:12-14, in verse 17 Paul still called on the saints to be *imitators* of him. He did not disqualify himself from being one who deserves imitating in spite of his professed “imperfection”.

In like manner, while the leading ones in a certain locality may not necessarily measure up to the standard of God’s requirements or our expectations at all times, yet they are still our elders appointed by the apostles according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is a necessity predicated upon the believers to fulfill their “duty” to obey and submit to them, and pray for them that they may be perfected in every way so that they in turn may fulfill their obligation to watch over the flock.

Third, with regard to “greeting all the ones leading you” (v. 24), in the footnote of the Holy Bible Recovery Version, Brother Lee says that the greetings in this verse are a form of fellowship in the church and among the churches. In concluding his Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul exhorts the river-crossers to *greet*, not criticize or condemn, the ones leading them. And in greeting, he specifically said “greet *all* the ones leading you”. This means that in the way the believers remember, obey, and greet (or fellowship with) the ones whom they considered qualified and deserving, the same should also be rendered to *all* the leading ones, including those whom they considered to be less qualified.

### **Concerning the Qualifications and Requirements of an Elder in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9**

From the writings of brothers Nee and Lee we find at least fifty qualifications, requirements, responsibilities, and pursuit of an elder: (1) Unreprovable or without reproach, (2) Husband of one wife, (3) Temperate or self-controlled, (4) Of a sober mind, (5) Orderly, (6) Not self-willed, (7) Not quick tempered, (8) Hospitable, (9) Apt to teach, (10) Not an excessive drinker, (11) Not a striker, (12) Forbearing, (13) Not contentious, (14) Not fond of money, (15) Not greedy for base gain, (16) Managing well his own household, (17) Not a new convert, (18) Having a good testimony from those outside, (19) A lover of good, (20) Righteous, (21) Holy, (22) Merciful, (23) Holding to the faithful word, (24) Submitting to the authority of the Holy Spirit, (25) Experienced in life, (26) Pursuing life and growing in life, (27) Spending much time in prayer, (28) Knowing God's will, (29) Caring for the inward need of the saints, (30) Having functions, (31) Growing up into Christ the Head in all things, (32) Knowing God and living Him, (33) Not an arrogant person, (34) Able to take the lead, (35) Able to render care, (36) Able to take heed, (37) Able to shepherd, (38) Overseeing willingly and according to God, (39) Becoming a pattern of the flock, (40) Constituted with the truth, (41) Able to minister to others, (42) Desiring to prophesy, (43) Functioning in every meeting, (44) Directing the meeting, (45) Studying the meeting, (46) Building up the church with gold, silver, and precious stones, (47) Making proper management for practical affairs, (48) Being thorough in the management of affairs, (49) Enjoying Christ as the budding rod, and (50) Contacting people.

All these points represent the prerequisites as well as the lifelong lessons and experiences an elder should undergo while exercising his function in overseeing the church which the Lord entrusted to him through the apostle's appointment. From this long list it shows how difficult it is to be an elder, how he cannot live up to such requirements by himself, and how he needs the continual intercession of the saints.

In her critique, the sister listed requirements other than the ones we learned from the Scriptures or the ministry. One of the requirements she added and cited not just in her article but also in other writings pertain to an elder's residency in the locality where he is serving. From the Word, we see that residency is not a qualification for a brother to be appointed as an elder, and it does not disqualify him to function as an elder. This was never an issue in the Bible or in the ministry, yet the sister categorically listed whimsical criteria like "*one who resides in one locality but have their church life in another locality*" [sic] and "*leading ones who already reside in another locality but still hold on to their service of the locality where they formerly resided*" [sic] as responsible brothers or elders who are not worthy of emulation and obedience.

Moreover, the qualifications of an elder are determined by the apostles who appointed him under the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as Brother Lee said:

“In [Acts] 20:28 Paul tells the elders of the church in Ephesus that the Holy Spirit had placed them among the flock as overseers. It was the apostles who appointed the elders in every church (14:23). But here Paul, the leading one, who did the appointing, says that the Holy Spirit did it. This indicates that the Holy Spirit was one with the apostles in their appointing the elders and that the apostles had done it according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>5</sup>

As we shall present in the next section, any concern from the saints questioning the qualification of an elder should be brought up before the apostle who appointed him or

the ones leading in the Work. In the case of the elders whom the sister criticized in her article, they were mostly appointed by Brother Witness Lee or Brother Liu Chi-cheng. Neither brothers Lee nor Liu, while aware of the situation that some elders may not reside in the locality where they are serving, ever made an issue out of an elder's residency as a qualification for the eldership. On numerous occasions several brothers separately requested to be discharged of their function as elder in the locality where they moved out from, but Brother Liu asked them to stay on as an elder in the locality even though they no longer resided there. Having worked under him for many years, why did the sister not seek clarification with Brother Liu on these matters so that he could personally explain these things to her?

If the sister does not respect the selection and decision of the apostles, at least she should respect the leading of the Holy Spirit in the fear of God, and not openly criticize the elders especially on issues based on her own set of requirements and not those set by the Word and the Holy Spirit through the apostles who were the appointing authority. It is inexpedient and unnecessary for one to measure the standard of an elder in a legalistic way to criticize him, as Brother Lee said:

“Although no one will be fully mature, some will be comparatively mature. Not even in Philippians 3 did Paul regard himself as matured in full. Because maturity is relative, the qualifications of an elder are not absolute. In other words, an elder's qualifications are comparative.”<sup>6</sup>

What is expedient and necessary is that we *pray* for the elders, knowing that their responsibilities are huge, and the requirements and expectations, plenteous. We must *pray* in order that the Lord may give them more grace to be constituted with Himself in their living and in their service, for He alone is the One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8):

“I am so happy for the last verse at the end of these two books: ‘The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you’ (2 Tim. 4:22). If there were not such a verse, we would only have some good teachings; we could never fulfill them. Who can be such an elder? There is not one among us. Only the Lord Jesus Christ has such a humanity, and praise the Lord, He is in our spirit! We must learn to turn to our spirit to take the very humanity of Jesus. He is in our spirit, and where the Lord Jesus is, there is grace. Even He Himself is the grace. All we need for the building up of the church is the humanity of Jesus. We need all the virtues of His humanity. I cannot be such a person, but by enjoying His humanity in my spirit I can. It is not my duty; it is an enjoyment!”<sup>7</sup>

### **Concerning Accusations Against an Elder in 1 Timothy 5:19-21**

Is it biblical or proper for the sister to publish her discontent toward the elders in the open on the Internet? What is the proper way to handle one's concern toward an elder? Who should be the proper person to receive any such complaint? The answers can be found in 1 Timothy 5:19-21: “Against an elder do not receive an accusation, except based upon two or three witnesses. The ones who sin reprove before all that the rest also may have fear. I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels that you keep these things without prejudice, doing nothing by way of partiality.”

In the *Life-Study of Timothy*, Brother Lee has this to say regarding accusation against an elder:

“To make an accusation against an elder is a very serious matter. For the sake of accuracy, it should be put in writing and not merely be spoken. Furthermore, it should not be received except on the word of two or three witnesses. Verse 19 is simple, but it implies something very important. The fact that Timothy was charged by Paul to receive an accusation against an elder indicates that the apostles have authority to deal with the elders after they have been appointed by the apostles to be elders. There is no doubt that the written accusation against an elder was to be presented to Timothy.... We know from 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2:6 that Timothy was an apostle. Furthermore, in the book of 1 Timothy we see that Timothy was the representative of the Apostle Paul. Therefore, for an accusation to come to Timothy was for it to come to an apostle. We would expect such an accusation to come to the apostles because they were the ones who had appointed the elders.... If the elders lead others astray or if they are wrong in some way, accusation against them can be made by the saints to the apostles.

“In verse 20 Paul continues, ‘Those who sin reprove before all that the rest also may be in fear.’ The fact that apostles can rebuke elders who sin indicates that the apostles have authority over the elders. The expression ‘before all’ refers to the whole church. A sinning elder should receive public reproof because of his public position. If an elder is reproved publicly, the rest of the elders will be ‘in fear.’”<sup>8</sup>

Based on this clear word, there are four vital matters that we need to pay attention to regarding accusations against an elder:

First, it is clear that any accusation against an elder must be in writing and attested to by two or three witnesses. To bring an accusation against an elder touches God’s authority, so it is a serious matter, more so for a sister whose head needs to be covered. The sister’s intemperate accusations against the elders did not come in the form of a letter to the apostle but a public critique posted in her website with no witnesses whatsoever to attest to her allegations. Her practice certainly diverges from the apostles’ instruction regarding the matter.

Second, it is clear that any accusation against an elder must be sent to the apostle and *not* to the saints in general. For one to dredge up alleged shortcomings of the elders and recklessly publish them as a public spectacle for their reproach, like what the sister did, is not only unscriptural but also ethically and morally deficient according to both the divine and human standards.

Third, it is clear that the only one who is qualified to make public reproof of the elder is the apostle. The sister is *not* the apostle who appointed these elders and her hands are *not* the ones that feed them. As a sister who in God’s ordination is supposed to be under the head covering, she does not have the position or the authority to deal with the elders, more so, publicly.

Fourth, it is clear that the issue involving an elder the believers may bring before the apostle for a harsh public reprimand must be one that is related to *sin*, as indicated by the words “the ones who sin”. However, none of the many issues raised by the sister against the elders in her scathing article has any sinful element to be dealt with.

## Conclusion

From the sister’s impertinent writing it is sufficiently clear that her article, like many others she had posted, is not in line with the fourfold goal that she had professed her website is for, namely: (1) to bring the unbelievers to salvation by gospel preaching through the articles written in it, (2) to lead these newly saved ones to the local churches, (3) to produce these saints as overcomers, and (4) to hasten the Lord’s return. Ironically, while the title of her article was “*Obey the Ones Leading You*,” the overtones and undertones of her writing are full of injudicious remarks, negative commentaries, criticisms of elders, surreptitious encouragement for readers to be critical of their elders, and specious justification of disobedience and rebellion against authority in the church such as what she has been doing. What she did was to sow seeds of suspicion and dissent among the saints and churches in general towards their elders and leading ones, to tear down instead of build up. It is absolutely unscriptural and unconscionable for one to wash “dirty laundry” in public in the guise of teaching the truth.

Furthermore, despite Brother Liu’s demand for her website to be closed down on account of its being a “work within the Work”, she refuses with impunity and insists on her right to publish her “personal” website to promote her dissonant views, different teachings, and divergent practices that are not answerable to the Body. In claiming all contents therein (all of which pertain to the ministry, the church and work) as her “personal copyright”, she has misappropriated unto herself the common heritage that we enjoy and hold so precious in the Lord’s recovery. Her deviations in teaching and in practice are too conspicuous to go unnoticed.

Both brothers Nee and Lee taught widely about the organization of the churches and the eldership, yet neither of the two ever made any of the seven items she cited as a condition for an elder to be disqualified from the eldership or a ground for the saints not to submit to the responsible brother. Even if some of the items she cited were true, it only manifests an elder who is weak, but not one who is necessarily sinful to warrant a public censure. Even if her concerns are well-founded, the way she handled her concerns in public instead of bringing it to the proper authority in the position to help the situation belies the concern. The air of imposed superiority in her writing also shows that the sister, who neither appointed nor fed these elders, either believes herself to be an apostle who can reprove them, or that she is above the elders of the churches to lecture them. The sister’s writing, together with her intransigence and insubordination in her own locality and in the Work – refusing to submit to the elders of the church where she serves and to the leadership in the Work – is very telling.

Blatant arrogance is seen when she asked rhetorically: “*How could one really and practically take care of the new ones if one does not live in the area of his service?*” By this question she makes a sweeping generalization in presupposing that an elder serving in a locality where he does not live necessarily lives far from that locality and that it is unlikely for him to travel there regularly, or that in the absence of a convenient condition for easy transport such an elder is unwilling to travel to really and practically take care of

the sheep. The fact is: modern means of transportation and communication affords us all the way to serve practically even in nearby locales, while the all-fitting life of Christ energizes us to bear the cross to travel and overcome whatever difficulties there may be in the environment so that we can shepherd His sheep.

Recurrent arrogance is seen again when she asked, *“How can an elder still stand before God and man if his own wife and children do not love/live the church life?”* She narrowly constricted the apostle Paul’s word that an elder “must be able to manage his own household well” and misapplied this by adding her own requirement that elders’ wife and children must necessarily *“love/live the church life”*, *“otherwise he does not have the standing to be an elder of the church.”*

The glaring arrogance is seen yet again in her words, *“Who would rather see his mother go unsaved than be reprimanded by the mother for preaching the gospel to her. As if the lake of fire nor the kingdom discipline is not real.”* [sic] These words of grumbling, overstepping the divine authority, perhaps grew out of her predisposition and being accustomed to mistranslating the words of Brother Liu to others by mixing in her own views and feelings, and misrepresenting these as Brother Liu’s. It is plain that her overstepping has reached an unparalleled plane where she passes judgment on the responsible brother she is taking to task “for not preaching the gospel to his mother,” prematurely disqualifying him from the kingdom reward and sentencing him to the kingdom punishment when the Lord, the righteous Judge, has not yet returned to determine the brother’s fate. In so saying, she also misrepresented the truth about the millennial reward and punishment by restricting its application to the responsible brother’s perceived inability to preach the gospel to his mother. One cannot presume to know for sure, based on one incident of alleged failure, the mind of God towards the brother as he stands before the judgment seat of Christ when He returns. This is arrogance dissembled under a cloak of concern.

We need to point out also that Hebrews 13: 7, 17 and 24 do not refer to elders exclusively, but generally to those who lead us as well. This may refer to elders, serving ones, and those who minister the Word. In applying these verses to the elders among the churches, the sister introduced her own set of criteria by which an elder is to be emulated and obeyed, totally twisting the intent and deforming the context of the Word. Here, as in her other writings, the sister exhibits a pattern of propounding her personal feeling and opinion which she passes off as divine utterance. She places legalistic yokes foreign to the Word and the ministry of brothers Nee and Lee and lays these squarely upon the elders, saints, and churches.

Moreover, in studying and expounding the Scriptures, we realize that no passage stands by itself, because there is harmony in the Word of God. Other passages like 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9 deal with the criteria or requirements for eldership and elders’ living and work. These should be taken into careful consideration, like what we have done here when studying this matter; yet the critically discordant sister neatly sidesteps these Scriptures that speak directly to the point being taken up, presenting an article that on the surface speaks of “obeying the ones who lead” while actually undermining the leading ones in general and the elders in particular who do not agree with her views, teachings and practices as ones who do not meet certain standards of being proper elders by using criteria she herself had imposed.

Finally, 1 Timothy 5:17 says, “Let the elders who take the lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and teaching.” The Word here implies that *all* the elders are to be counted worthy of honor, whether they take the lead well or not, since those who lead well are to be counted worthy of *double* honor. Therefore, imperfect as the elders may be, they need to oversee, to shepherd, and to lead the saints in the church with ardent love and diligent care, and the saints need to obey and honor the elders and even intercede for them continually. However, this does not mean that the saints should follow the elders blindly, and by no means should the elders exercise authority to lord it over the saints.

In the *Life-Study of Hebrews*, Brother Lee spoke about obeying the ones leading us, where he identifies “obeying the leading ones and submitting to them” as the ninth virtue necessary for the church life that should be practiced among us. His words make a fitting and balanced conclusion:

“Verse 17 says, ‘Obey the ones leading you and submit to them, for they watch over your souls as those who will give account, that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable to you.’ We must be balanced in this matter. We thank the Lord that in His recovery during the past fifty years there have always been the proper leading ones among the churches for the keeping of the order in God’s house.

In every household there are, in addition to the parents, the older brothers and sisters. Suppose there are six children in a family. Spontaneously, each one of them knows his order. When the oldest brother speaks, all the others listen to him. But if the third brother would presume to be the oldest brother, all the others would refuse to listen to him. If we would maintain a good order in the house of God, we must have the leading ones, and all the saints must obey them and submit to them. This is necessary for the building up of the church.

If a brother is truly an elder, everyone will realize it, and he will have no need to assume any authority. If you are the oldest child in a family, all the other children realize this. There is no need to exercise yourself to assume authority. Rather, you should take loving care of your younger brothers and sisters. Likewise, the elders in the churches should not assume authority but take loving care of the saints. Elders, forget your authority. On their side, the saints must obey you and submit themselves to you. On your side, however, you should not assume authority. Nothing is uglier than assuming authority. We should simply be what we are without assuming anything. Nevertheless, in the house of God and for the building up of the Body of Christ, we must have a beautiful order among us.”<sup>9</sup>

## **Excerpts from the Ministry**

### **Qualifications, Requirements, Responsibilities, and Pursuit of an Elder**

#### **1. *Unreprovable or Without Reproach* – 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6**

“In verse 2 Paul says, ‘The overseer then must be without reproach, husband of one wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach.’ Paul first mentions the qualification of being without reproach. This does not denote perfection in the eyes of God, but an irreproachable condition in the eyes of man. An overseer must be one with a good reputation. There should be no ground for others to speak evil of him.”<sup>10</sup>

## **2. Husband of One Wife – 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6**

“An overseer should be the husband of one wife. This implies the restraint of the flesh, which is necessary for an elder. It keeps an elder in a simple and pure married life, free from the tangle of a complicated and confused marriage.”<sup>11</sup>

“The book of 1 Timothy speaks of the qualifications of an elder, one of which is to be the husband of one woman (3:2a). This means not marrying more than one woman, which implies temperance and self-control.”<sup>12</sup>

“In addition, an elder must be the husband of one woman. All those who have had concubines cannot be an elder because this means that such a person cannot control himself.”<sup>13</sup>

## **3. Temperate or Self-Controlled – 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8**

“An overseer should be temperate. Temperate here means self-controlled, moderate.”<sup>14</sup>

“Why does a person have to rule himself? When a person cannot rule his own temper, he cannot manage the church of God. Subduing one’s own heart and spirit is the most difficult thing to do. If a man cannot submit to the authority of Christ, he cannot make others submit to Christ’s authority. In 1 Timothy and Titus, the words concerning an elder not being one who drinks excessively, or who strikes others, etc., refer to the aspect of the self-control of an elder. In short, an elder must be one who can rule himself.”<sup>15</sup>

“The elders are the authorities in the local church. All the brothers have to submit to the elders. Titus 1 speaks of basic qualifications of an elder—self-control and submission. A lawless person can never execute the law, and a rebellious person can never make others submissive. An elder must exercise strict self-control. A common trait among many people is the lack of discipline. Hence, in appointing elders, we have to select those who are particularly exercised in self-control. God appoints the elders to manage the church. As such, they must be submissive and must exercise self-control. They must set their hearts to be a pattern to all in everything. God never appoints a person who loves to be the first among others (like Diotrephes) to be an elder. The elders are the highest deputy authority in a local church. For this reason they must be men with self-control.”<sup>16</sup>

## **4. Of a Sober Mind – 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8**

“To be of a sober mind is not only to be sensible, but also to be discreet in understanding. In 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus Paul uses the words sober and sobriety a number of times. All the saints in the church life need to be sober in their understanding.

All must have the virtue of sobriety. If we have the Christian virtue of sobriety, we shall be very discerning and full of insight. However, we shall be quiet, not talkative. A talkative person is not a sober person. One who is sober is keen in his understanding, but slow to speak. The elders should take the lead in all positive aspects of the church life. They should take the lead in prayer and in exhibiting the virtue of sobriety. If a brother is able to be silent for fifteen minutes while someone is having fellowship with him, he is able to meet this qualification to be an elder. When anyone is speaking to him, the elder should be a calm, tranquil lake, clear and transparent. This is one of the qualifications of an overseer. Talkativeness disqualifies a brother from being an elder. A proper elder is one who is quiet, calm, keen in understanding, and very discerning.”<sup>17</sup>

### **5. Orderly – 1 Tim. 3:2**

“The Greek word rendered orderly in 3:2 also means decorous. To be orderly, decorous, is to have behavior that always fits the situation. It is to be neither too fast nor too slow, neither too bold nor too timid. A decorous person is one who always does what is fitting. One who is decorous talks when talk is necessary and is silent when silence is required. He can also laugh when laughter is appropriate.... Elders should also be orderly in the way they speak to others. Sometimes they need to speak loudly; at other times, they should speak softly. Furthermore, they should be orderly in the way they have their hair cut. To have hair that is either too long or too short is not orderly.”<sup>18</sup>

### **6. Not Self-Willed – Titus 1:7**

“The presumptuous and self-willed heart must be completely broken, allowing the word of God to be the guide in all things.”<sup>19</sup>

### **7. Not Quick tempered – Titus 1:7**

“Not quick tempered means not easily provoked.”<sup>20</sup>

### **8. Hospitable – 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8**

“Another qualification of an overseer is that he must be hospitable. Hospitality requires love, care for people, and endurance. All these virtues are required if one is to qualify to be an elder. Nothing is more bothersome than giving hospitality. Hospitality tests the qualifications of elders. The principle of hospitality is giving without receiving; it is suffering without requiring anything in return. Hospitality means sacrifice with joy, but without recompense. An elder must have a heart and a spirit for such hospitality.”<sup>21</sup>

“Another qualification of an elder is to be hospitable (v. 2b). Being single in marriage is being restricted in oneself, and being hospitable is being happy to take up others' troubles. On the one hand, the elders have to restrict themselves. On the other hand, they have to love to take up others' troubles. Receiving guests is a test from God. It shows whether or not we are afraid of troubles.”<sup>22</sup>

“One of the qualifications of an elder is hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2). If you are not hospitable, meaning that you are unwilling to take care of others but only care to be individually holy, you are not qualified to be an elder. If we are going to be hospitable, our name must be changed from the father of exaltation to the father of multiplication. Only a

multiplied father is hospitable. The more we take care of others, the better it is for the church life. This is the real changing of names and the real changing of our person.”<sup>23</sup>

### **9. Apt to Teach – 1 Tim. 3:2**

“In verse 2 Paul says that an elder should be apt to teach. To teach here is similar to parents teaching their children. An elder must be apt to render this kind of home teaching to the members of the local church.... [I]f the elders would be apt to teach, they need to be knowledgeable.... If a brother is not knowledgeable concerning the truth, he is disqualified from the eldership. An elder should be able to teach the saints like a parent helps a child with his homework. However, this does not mean that every elder should be a teacher. It is not necessary for parents to be teachers in order to help their children with homework. Similarly, not all elders are teachers, but they all should be apt to teach.”<sup>24</sup>

“First Timothy 3:2 says that one of the qualifications of an elder is to be apt to teach.... The elders should not excuse themselves from this responsibility simply because others can teach better than they can. They must be teachers. First Peter 5:3 indicates that the elders must take the lead in everything, becoming patterns of the flock.... By doing this, the elders will be forced to learn the truth and speak the truth. In principle, the elders should know more of the truth than the other saints.... No elder in the Lord's recovery should be an ‘honorary’ elder. Every elder should be a practical and useful elder. The first responsibility of an elder is to teach.”<sup>25</sup>

“In the church life today, the main responsibility of the elders is to teach the saints with the truths. The Bible says that one of the qualifications of an elder is being apt to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Paul tells us that certain elders may not have a job but may ‘labor in word and teaching’ and therefore should be supported by the church (5:17-18). However, I have observed that some elders are deficient in the knowledge of the truth and may not even be clear whether a particular matter is an item of the truth.... All the elders need to spend much time to learn the truths. This is the duty, the responsibility, of an elder. Anyone who accepts an appointment to the eldership must fulfill this responsibility. Like Ezra, all the elders and co-workers must be skilled in the Word of God.”<sup>26</sup>

“Since the work of an elder is related to the church and not to a worldly organization, he needs to have much assurance in God's truth. To do other things, it is not absolutely necessary to have a good reputation or to have much assurance in the truth; one does not need to be apt at teaching the Bible to do other things. Yet an elder must be apt to teach the brothers and sisters.... At the same time, an elder must be one who can differentiate and judge. He should be able to judge the kind of teachings that should be introduced to the church and the kind of teachings that should be rejected. If the elders do this, the brothers will not become confused in the messages they hear....”<sup>27</sup>

“The second requirement for elders is to be apt to teach. Teaching is not easy; it requires labor in word and teaching (v. 17). The teaching required of the elders is not general but specialized; otherwise, there would not be the need for labor. For example, a person can easily speak a message for an hour without much need to labor; however, if he truly wants to release a burden and speak the truth into the saints, helping them to enter into the truth, there is the need for much labor.”<sup>28</sup>

**10. Not an Excessive Drinker** – 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7

“In verse 3 Paul lists other qualifications: ‘Not an excessive drinker, not a striker, but forbearing, not contentious, not fond of money.’ When Paul says that an elder should not be an excessive drinker, he, of course, has in mind not an excessive drinker of wine. However, the principle here is that an elder should not be excessive in anything. This requires strong self-control. In the matters of food and clothing, for example, an elder should not be excessive. This tests his ability to exercise self-control.”<sup>29</sup>

**11. Not a Striker** – 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7

“The next requirement, ‘not a striker,’ is related to the control of one’s temper. This implies a strong restraint of the temper. An elder should be one who does not lose his temper.”<sup>30</sup>

**12. Forbearing** – 1 Tim. 3:3

“To be forbearing is to be yielding, gentle, mild, reasonable, and considerate in dealing with others. It is to deal with people without strictness.”<sup>31</sup>

**13. Not Contentious** – 1 Tim. 3:3

“An elder should not be contentious. He should not be quarrelsome; rather, he should be peaceable and not debate with others or contend with them. Even if someone comes to fight with him, he should not fight back, but should learn not to be contentious.”<sup>32</sup>

**14. Not Fond of Money** – 1 Tim. 3:3; Heb. 13:5

“An elder should not be fond of money. Money is a test to all men. An elder must be pure in money matters, especially since the church fund is under the elders’ management (Acts 11:30). An elder must realize that the money which passes through his hands is not for his personal gain. He should not have even the thought of monetary gain.”<sup>33</sup>

**15. Not Greedy for Base Gain** – Titus 1:7

“A deacon should not seek gain from his service to the saints. To seek such gain is to be greedy for base gain.”<sup>34</sup>

**16. Managing Well His Own Household** – 1 Tim. 3:4

“In verses 4 and 5 Paul goes on to say, ‘One who manages well his own household, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (but if anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)’ Managing well his own household is a proof that one is qualified to take the oversight of a local church. An elder should exercise to manage his household well and maintain it in good order. It is clear that anyone who does not know how to manage his own household cannot take care of the church of God.”<sup>35</sup>

“First Timothy 3:4-5 speaks of another basic qualification of an elder—he must be able to manage his own house. Managing one's house does not refer to managing one's parents or wife, but it refers mainly to managing one's children. An elder has to teach his children to walk soberly and to be obedient in all things. A man must first be a good father before he can be an elder. He must first be an authority at home before he can be an elder in the church.”<sup>36</sup>

“If a man cannot manage his own house, he cannot manage the church. If he cannot manage his own children, how can he manage the brothers? The eldership is a position; it is not a gift. Teachers, shepherds, and evangelists are gifts. But eldership refers to a person's position in the church. Therefore, such a person must be experienced and capable. His house is his testing ground. If he cannot make his wife and children submit to him at home, and if he cannot be a good husband or a good father, he cannot be a good elder in the church. In dealing with his own wife and children, God puts him to the test to see if he can deal with the brothers and sisters.”<sup>37</sup>

### ***17. Not a New Convert – 1 Tim. 3:6***

“Verse 6 says, ‘Not a new convert, lest being blinded with pride he fall into the judgment of the Devil.’ The Greek word rendered blinded literally means beclouded with smoke. Pride here is likened to smoke that beclouds the mind, making it blind, besotted with the self-conceit of pride. One who is blinded with pride may fall into the judgment of the Devil. This judgment refers to that to which Satan was sentenced due to his pride in his high position (Ezek. 28:13-17). The Devil was judged because of his rebellion which came from pride. The Devil was proud, blind, and rebellious. For this, he received God’s judgment.”<sup>38</sup>

### ***18. Having a Good Testimony from Those Outside – 1 Tim. 3:7***

“In verse 7 Paul concludes, ‘And he also must have a good testimony from those outside, that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the Devil.’ An elder must be right with himself, with his family, with the church, and with those outside—the society. And, according to the context, an elder must be right in intention, in motive, in character, in attitude, in words, and in deeds. To fall into the judgment of the Devil is due to the pride of the elder himself; to fall into the snare of the Devil is occasioned by the reproach of outsiders. An elder should be alert not to be proud on the one hand, and not to be reproachable on the other, that he may avoid the Devil’s entanglement.”<sup>39</sup>

“An elder is a person who represents the church. Sometimes an elder has to represent the assembly to deal with outsiders. If he does not have a good testimony, the whole church will be slandered.... Few people say good things about others. Most people tend to destroy the reputations of others. If men can find something good to say about a person and give good marks to him, then he surely must be somewhat good. If a greedy, self-centered, and defiled son of Adam can call a Christian a good man, then the Christian surely must be good.”<sup>40</sup>

### ***19. A Lover of Good – Titus 1:8***

“The fourteenth is nonlovers of good. In today’s world situation, evil and devilish people are teaching others to hate all good things. Instead of lovers of good, they are nonlovers of good.”<sup>41</sup>

### **20. Righteous – Titus 1:8**

“In Daniel 12:3 they that turn many to righteousness will shine as stars. In Matthew 13:43 the Lord says the righteous will shine forth in the coming kingdom as the sun. But the church messengers do not need to wait until the coming age to shine. They are shining right now. I hope that all the elders in the churches are shining stars. When people go to them, they should come into light. A star shines, enlightens, in a time of darkness. By looking at the stars we can learn what kind of persons should be the leaders in the church.”<sup>42</sup>

### **21. Holy – Titus 1:8**

“To be holy is to be separated, set apart (to God)”<sup>43</sup>.... “Through the sanctification of the Spirit (v. 2), based on regeneration (v. 3), which brings us the holy nature of God and issues in a holy life.”<sup>44</sup>

### **22. Merciful – Heb. 2:17**

“It is easy for us to be either strict or sloppy. But we must learn to be strict on the one hand and merciful on the other. If we give others a strict dealing, we must immediately be merciful toward them. This is an important lesson for elders to learn. The kingdom people are both righteous and merciful. When you are righteous, you must be absolutely righteous; and when you are merciful, you must be very merciful. Although righteousness and mercy are two opposite poles, they must meet in your experience. Your righteousness must come together with your mercy.”<sup>45</sup>

### **23. Holding to the Faithful Word – Titus 1:9**

“In verse 9 Paul says, ‘Holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who contradict.’ The elders are appointed to administrate God’s government in a local church that good order may be maintained in the church. To accomplish this, the elders need to hold to the faithful word, which is according to the apostles’ teaching, that they may be able to stop troublesome talkers and calm a tumultuous situation (vv. 9-14).... The elders in a local church should hold to this kind of healthy word that they may fulfill their duty in teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17).”<sup>46</sup>

### **24. Submitting to the Authority of the Holy Spirit – Acts 20:28**

“There are several high spiritual requirements related to the offices in the church. The first requirement is that the appointing one must be in the Holy Spirit.... As for the appointed ones, that is, the elders and deacons, there are also spiritual requirements. In making an appointment, an apostle should not consider a person's position, reputation, ability, or wealth; instead, he should consider whether or not this person submits to the authority of the Head, that is, the authority of the Holy Spirit.... In order for one to be an overseer or an elder, the prerequisite is that he submit to the authority of the Head.”<sup>47</sup>

## **25. Experienced in Life**

“Another basic requirement for elders is related to the matter of life. The designation elder implies life. One who is not sufficiently mature in life cannot be an elder, because to be an elder is a matter of life. One who is older surely has a considerable measure of life. When the apostles appoint an elder, they should first consider his condition before God with regard to authority; second, they should consider his condition in life. Strictly speaking, an elder is not the result of an appointment but is produced by growth in life.... Our eyes must be opened to see that education, ability, reputation, position, and wealth are not qualifications to be considered in the appointment of elders.... In appointing elders, an apostle should consider only two principal matters: authority and life. However, the degree to which an elder should be experienced in life is not absolute but relative. A person may be qualified to be an elder in a small local church, one that is newly raised up, but he may not be qualified to be an elder in a larger church, one that has more experience in life.”<sup>48</sup>

“The first thing the elders need to pursue is that they may advance and abound in the knowledge of the truth. The second thing they need to pursue is the growth in life unto maturity; they must first have the experiences of life themselves.”<sup>49</sup>

## **26. Pursuing Life and Growing in Life – 2 Pet. 3:18**

“Before the change of system, we were lacking in matters such as gospel activities, shepherding people, and group meetings. This does not mean that since we currently have many activities, we can neglect the emphasis on life. The whole church still needs to pay attention to the matter of life; the elders and co-workers especially need to take the lead to pursue life and grow in life.”<sup>50</sup>

## **27. Spending Much Time in Prayer – Acts 6:4**

“The elders and co-workers should spend much time in prayer. No matter how busy we are and how little time we have, we need to endeavor to tell the Lord all the burdens within us and pray before Him.... [W]e need to cooperate with God’s work through our prayer.”<sup>51</sup>

## **28. Knowing God’s Will**

“The elders should go to God on behalf of the church and inquire of His will. By definition, a business is an endeavor that is busy with ideas. In order for a business to prosper, a manager has to be very busy in his thoughts; he has to know the market and the needs of his customers clearly. The elders have to be rich enough in their mind to receive guidance from God. If they cannot receive guidance from God, how can the many brothers and sisters under them prosper in the work? The elders have to find a way before God when no way seems to be in sight. In order for the elders to know God’s will and receive leadings, they have to bring the affairs of the church to the Lord all the time. They have to bear the brothers and sisters before the Lord and look to Him for light. This is not a matter of man waiting for God, but of God waiting for man. As long as a man’s heart is open, God will show him ‘the pattern on the mountain.’”<sup>52</sup>

### **29. Caring for the Inward Need of the Saints**

“The elders must not neglect the inward need of any brother or sister in the church. The saints have inward needs, and the church cannot ignore these needs. It has to take care of these needs immediately. In addition to the light which God has shown us through His servants, we have to pay attention to the spiritual needs within the brothers and sisters, because all these needs speak of God's work within them. If the elders ignore these needs, they are ignoring the heavenly vision and will receive severe chastisement (cf. Amos 2:11-12).... The elders have to be more sensitive and perceptive to the feelings of the brothers and sisters. God often grants us stronger lights through the brothers and sisters. For this reason, the elders have to care for the needs of the saints as much as they care for their own needs. If they do this, they will not offend the Holy Spirit.... The elders must open up their hearts all the time. They should bear the saints on their shoulders and upon their hearts, inquiring of God on their behalf.... I hope that the elders will take heed to all the flock (Acts 20:28).”<sup>53</sup>

### **30. Having Functions**

“In the appointing of elders, the two crucial matters to consider are the matters of authority and life. Once these two matters are clear, there can be an additional consideration, that is, how much function a brother has.... In the appointment of elders one should pay attention to function, but function is not a crucial matter.”<sup>54</sup>

### **31. Growing Up into Christ the Head in All Things – Eph. 4:15**

“[W]e need to exercise to grow up into Christ. In the administration of the church, the elders in particular must grow up into Christ; they should not rely on their natural being or depend on human wisdom, cleverness, or worldly methods. Elders who do not grow up into Christ in administrating the church are holding on to things other than Christ instead of holding to truth in love. Elders who touch God's fellowship in love will be able to forsake the things of the world, of their natural being, and of their human wisdom, cleverness, and effort. Thus, the Lord will cause them to live before the Lord and administrate the church by touching His feeling and being mingled with Him.”<sup>55</sup>

### **32. Knowing God and Living Him – Jer. 31:34**

“In verse 34 God says, ‘All of them will know Me, from the little one among them even to the great one among them.’ To know God does not simply mean that we know that God is triune and that He is holy and righteous. To know God is to live God, and to live God is to know God. For example, we may hate, but God loves. Thus, if we know God, we will live Him by loving others. Also, God is compassionate. To know Him is to live Him as the compassionate One. This is something that the elders in particular need to do. A compassionate elder is an elder who knows God. Furthermore, God is considerate. To know Him is to live Him as the One who is considerate.”<sup>56</sup>

### **33. Not an Arrogant Person – Matt. 5:5**

“An elder must not be an arrogant person. If a person becomes proud as soon as he assumes authority, he is not qualified to be an elder. An elder in a local church should feel as if he has no authority at all. If an elder is always conscious of his authority, he is not

qualified to be an elder or to handle the affairs of the church. Only the foolish and the narrow-minded are proud. Such ones cannot stand the temptation of God's glory, and they cannot bear God's commission and assignment. Once such ones are entrusted with something, they fall into a snare. This is why a new convert cannot be an overseer (1 Tim. 3:6—in Greek this word means a novice in a trade.)<sup>57</sup>

#### **34. Able to Take the Lead – 1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17**

“In the New Testament the first requirement for the elders is that they take the lead (1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17). Many people can preach the gospel, preach the word, and edify others, but in regard to taking the lead, they are helpless. Taking the lead is not an easy matter. Many people know how to get to their destination, but they may not be able to tell others how to get there. For example, we may ask someone for directions to a certain place, and he may know the way to get there himself; nevertheless, when he points out the way to us, it is quite possible that he will point in another direction and provide an indirect route. We might even get lost. Therefore, it is not a small matter for someone to take the lead in a locality where saints have been raised up to meet as the church.”<sup>58</sup>

#### **35. Able to Render Care – 1 Tim. 3:5**

“In addition to knowing how to take the lead and teach, the third requirement for the elders is that they need to know how to ‘care for the church’ (3:5). Care for is an excellent translation; the elders should not merely manage but care for the church. To manage is easy, but to care for a matter is not so easy.... This requires both time and energy. To care for someone is to look after him, to serve him, be concerned for him, teach him what to do, and give him what he does not have. This depicts how the elders should care for the church.”<sup>59</sup>

#### **36. Able to Take Heed – Acts 20:28**

“The fourth requirement for the elders is that they need to take heed. Acts 20:28 says, ‘Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.’ One is able to walk and move freely in an empty meeting hall; he can also jump, run, or even roll around. However, if the meeting hall is well furnished with tables, desks, and chairs, it is not that easy for people to walk around. If they are not careful, they will stumble, cause others to stumble, or even break the windows. Thus, Paul says that the elders need to take heed to themselves and to all the flock. This shows that the responsibility of the elders is not simple; it encompasses many aspects.”<sup>60</sup>

#### **37. Able to Shepherd – John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2**

“The New Testament reveals that an overseer is an elder and that an elder is an overseer. In 5:1-3 Peter gives a word to the elders concerning the shepherding of the flock of God. What is the function of an overseer? The Greek word for overseer means one who oversees a particular condition or situation. This word seems to indicate someone above us who takes oversight concerning us and watches what we are doing.”<sup>61</sup>

“The fifth requirement for an elder is to know how to shepherd (John 21:16; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Shepherding includes teaching (Eph. 4:11). Shepherding may seem to be relatively easy and involve merely feeding children milk; in reality, it is not easy

because shepherding is not merely to feed people. It also includes providing them with warmth. In other words, the shepherding one must provide tender care so that the one being cared for has a feeling of warmth. A brother may be discouraged to the uttermost, but when we talk to him and supply him with life, his heart is comforted and his inner being is warmed up. This is shepherding.”<sup>62</sup>

“In Acts 20:28 Paul speaks of the elders shepherding the flock. The main responsibility of the elders as overseers is not to rule over the flock but to shepherd the flock, to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock, the church of God. The elders are not placed in the church by the Holy Spirit as rulers but as shepherds. Shepherding the flock of God requires suffering for the Body of Christ as Christ did (Col. 1:24). This kind of shepherding with suffering will be rewarded with the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:4). According to 1 Peter 5:1-3, the elders are not to lord it over the flock; that is, they are not to exercise lordship over the ruled (Matt. 20:25). Among the believers, besides Christ there should be no other lord; all should be servants, even slaves (Matt. 20:26-27; 23:10-11). The elders in the church can take only the leadership (not the lordship), which all the believers should honor and follow (1 Thes. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17).”<sup>63</sup>

### **38. *Overseeing Willingly and According to God* – 1 Pet. 5:2**

“First Peter 5:2 says that the elders should oversee not by way of compulsion, but willingly, according to God. The elders should be willing to take care of others, to look after them, to protect them. They should not be compelled to do this.... By the context of 1 Peter 5 we can see that to oversee does not mean to rule; it does not mean to be a king. In the natural life everyone likes to rule over others. There is no need to compel someone, to force him, to be a ruler. The words ‘not by way of compulsion’ indicate that to oversee is to care for the church, not to rule over it.... As Peter says, the elders should oversee ‘willingly, according to God.’ To oversee according to God means according to God’s nature, desire, way, and glory, not according to man’s preference, interest, and purpose. The elders should not oversee according to their opinion, concept, or likes and dislikes. Instead, they should oversee according to God’s choice, desire, intention, and preference. The elders must oversee the church altogether according to God’s thought, feeling, will, and choice. They must oversee according to God’s likes and dislikes.”<sup>64</sup>

### **39. *Becoming Pattern of the Flock* – 1 Pet. 5:3**

“[The elders] must take the lead to serve and care for the church, that the believers may follow.”<sup>65</sup>

### **40. *Constituted with the Truth* – 1 Tim. 5:17**

“The elders need to advance and abound in the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 5:17b).”<sup>66</sup> “The truth is recorded in the Bible and upheld by the church. Even if a church is the weakest church, she is still a manifestation of God in the flesh. As such an entity, she upholds the truth in the universe, for the church is the pillar and base of the truth. Strictly speaking, elders must spend much time to study and know the Bible, thereby allowing the truth to enter into them. They must do so because they are elders in local churches, and every local church is a unit that upholds the truth of God. Thus, the elders must apprehend, understand, and know the truth. Only by all of us practicing this can we match God’s desire.”<sup>67</sup>

#### **41. Able to Minister to Others – 1 Cor. 16:15; Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7, 25; 4:7; 1 Tim. 4:6**

“The elders not only need to pursue the growth in life; they also need to be able to minister to others.”<sup>68</sup>

#### **42. Desiring to Prophecy – 1 Cor. 14:1**

“The elders should also earnestly desire and practice to prophecy (1 Cor. 14:1, 31, 39). If we desire earnestly to prophecy and speak for God, there will be an outward manifestation. Prophecy requires our continual practice.... We should not remain as elders and co-workers yet be unable to speak year after year. We must learn to speak in a way that is both appealing and weighty. This requires that we exercise to touch the Lord in spirit and continually enter into the Holy of Holies to touch God’s throne of grace. This should not be an empty saying; it should be our living.... Today whether we are elders or co-workers, we must realize that this is our common obligation.... The elders and co-workers must be on the alert, rise up, pursue the truth earnestly, and bear fruit so that their function can be manifested. Moreover, they need to desire earnestly that they may prophecy and exercise to practice prophesying.”<sup>69</sup>

#### **43. Functioning in Every Meeting**

“Elders and co-workers should be the head sheep who take the lead to function in the meetings of the whole church and in the district meetings. They need to function in every meeting.”<sup>70</sup>

#### **44. Directing the Meeting**

“The responsible brothers in a district should only bear responsibility for spiritual matters. They should step forward only when the other brothers and sisters cannot fulfill their functions. Even then they should not monopolize everything. The meetings should be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Whether they act or not, they have to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. For this reason the elders must have spiritual feelings and must be able to direct the meetings in the right direction.”<sup>71</sup>

#### **45. Studying the Meeting**

“We must learn to touch the Spirit ourselves first and learn to conduct the meeting according to the leading of the Spirit. The elders and district leaders must come together often to study together. They should make adjustments for the meetings and correct the meetings as needed.”<sup>72</sup>

#### **46. Building Up the Church with Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones**

“Our former condition was that not much gold, silver, and precious stones were produced. If all the churches in every locality want to produce gold, silver, and precious stones, the elders must be the first in whom gold, silver, and precious stones are produced. These materials will be produced from the knowledge of the truth and the growth in life; these are the basic factors. Only these two factors—the knowledge of the truth and the growth in life—are able to produce gold, silver, and precious stones (3:10,

12). Both are indispensable. In order to produce gold, silver, and precious stones, both truth and life are needed.”<sup>73</sup>

#### ***47. Making Proper Arrangements for Practical Affairs***

“The elders must not only bear the responsibility for the spiritual service of the entire church before God but must bear the responsibility for the practical affairs as well. For this reason, the elders must be able to make good and proper arrangements of all the three practical affairs.... Arrangements of practical affairs increase our capacity for God’s grace. The more arrangements the elders make with regards to practical affairs and personnel assignments, the more opportunity they will provide God to work among them.”<sup>74</sup>

#### ***48. Being Thorough in the Management of Affairs***

“The elders must not only make arrangements of practical affairs but must be thorough in managing these affairs. As a responsible brother, your mind and concepts have to be clear and quick. Some people are too spiritual in their thoughts. They think that as long as they pray for the saints, it matters little how they arrange the chairs. This is absolutely wrong. The elders must be quick to turn. We are not yet living in the New Jerusalem. There are still many things that need to be done in the church life. These things need to be done properly. The more thorough and complete the execution, the better off we are. Many times the elders come up with an idea; this idea calls things not being into being.”<sup>75</sup>

#### ***49. Enjoying Christ as the Budding Rod – Num. 17:3, 5, 8, 10***

“In the ark of testimony there is also the budding rod, signifying our experience of Christ as our acceptance by God in resurrection life for authority in the God-given ministry (Num. 17:3, 5, 8, 10). This is more inward than the experience of Christ as the incense for our acceptance by God. Aaron’s budding rod signifies resurrection life. Where there is resurrection life, there is authority. Hence, the budding rod means authority in the resurrection life for our God-given ministry. The Israelites were debating about who had authority to represent God. When God caused Aaron’s rod to bud, it signified that in resurrection he was authorized to represent God, to be God’s deputy authority. It is the same today. The elders and ministers of the divine Word must have the authority which comes from resurrection life.”<sup>76</sup>

#### ***50. Contacting People – Acts 20:20, 31***

“The elders must also learn to contact people. According to my observation and experience, an elder could contact about one hundred persons a month. This means he would contact about three or four persons daily.... Every day they should live according to a schedule. If one is a professor in a school, he does not need to resign. He can keep his job, but he must budget his time to contact people each day. An elder in a local church must budget his time to contact at least two people a day. The elders should contact all kinds of people, including unbelievers, new believers, and weak believers. The elders must pick up a burden to contact people in this way and to assign all the business affairs to the serving ones. This will save the elders from the business of the church so that they can care for people.”<sup>77</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> *Recovery Version Bible, fn 1, Heb. 13:7, LSM*  
<sup>2</sup> *J.N. Darby, Synopsis of the Bible*  
<sup>3</sup> *Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible*  
<sup>4</sup> *Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown Bible Commentary*  
<sup>5</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of Acts, Message 53, Section 2, LSM*  
<sup>6</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of Timothy, Message 10, LSM*  
<sup>7</sup> *W. Lee, Christ as the Reality, Chapter 14, LSM*  
<sup>8</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of Timothy, Message 10, LSM*  
<sup>9</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of Hebrews, message 55, LSM*  
<sup>10</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>11</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>12</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 3, Vol. 62, Chapter 23, LSM*  
<sup>13</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 2, Vol. 22, Chapter 1, LSM*  
<sup>14</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>15</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 2, Vol. 22, Chapter 1, LSM)*  
<sup>16</sup> *W. Nee, Authority and Submission, Chapter 20, LSM*  
<sup>17</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>18</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>19</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 1) Vol. 13, Chapter 11, Section 2*  
<sup>20</sup> *Recovery Version Bible, fn 2, Titus 1:7, LSM*  
<sup>21</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>22</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 3, Vol. 62, Chapter 23, LSM*  
<sup>23</sup> *W. Lee, Abraham—Called by God, Chapter 12, LSM*  
<sup>24</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>25</sup> *W. Lee, Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 1, Chapter 10, LSM*  
<sup>26</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of Ezra, Chapter 5, LSM*  
<sup>27</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 2, Vol. 22, Chapter 1, LSM*  
<sup>28</sup> *W. Lee, Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 1, LSM*  
<sup>29</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>30</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>31</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>32</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>33</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>34</sup> *Recovery Version Bible, Titus 3:8 fn 4, LSM*  
<sup>35</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>36</sup> *W. Nee, Authority and Submission, Chapter 20, LSM*  
<sup>37</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 2, Vol. 22, Chapter 1, LSM*  
<sup>38</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of 1 Timothy, Message 5, LSM*  
<sup>39</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>40</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 2, Vol. 22, Chapter 1, LSM*  
<sup>41</sup> *W. Lee, Christ as the Reality, Chapter 16, Section 2, LSM*  
<sup>42</sup> *W. Lee, The Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, Chapter 9, Section 2, LSM*  
<sup>43</sup> *Recovery Version Bible, Rom. 1:2 fn 3, LSM*  
<sup>44</sup> *Recovery Version Bible, 1 Peter 1:15 fn 2, LSM*  
<sup>45</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of Matthew, Chapter 15, Section 2, LSM*  
<sup>46</sup> *W. Lee, Life-Study of Titus, Message 1, LSM*  
<sup>47</sup> *W. Lee, Three Aspects of the Church: The Organization of the Church, Book 3, Chapter 9, LSM*  
<sup>48</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>49</sup> *W. Lee, Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 7, LSM*  
<sup>50</sup> *W. Lee, Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 2: Leading the Saints to Practice the New Way Ordained by the Lord, Chapter 18, Section 2, LSM*  
<sup>51</sup> *ibid*  
<sup>52</sup> *W. Nee, The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 3) Vol. 62, Chapter 2, Section 2, LSM*  
<sup>53</sup> *W. Lee, Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 7, LSM*  
<sup>54</sup> *W. Lee, Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 7, LSM*  
<sup>55</sup> *W. Lee, The Church as the Body of Christ, Chapter 15, Section 1, LSM*

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- <sup>56</sup> W. Lee, *Life-Study of Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Chapter 3, Section 4, LSM
- <sup>57</sup> W. Nee, *Authority and Submission*, Chapter 20, Section 2, LSM
- <sup>58</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 1, Chapter 10, Section 4, LSM
- <sup>59</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>60</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>61</sup> W. Lee, *Life-Study of Peter*, Chapter 21, Section 3, LSM
- <sup>62</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 1, Chapter 10, Section 4, LSM
- <sup>63</sup> W. Lee, *Life-Study of Acts*, Chapter 53, Section 2, LSM
- <sup>64</sup> W. Lee, *The Conclusion of the New Testament (Mgs. 189-204)*, Chapter 13, Section 2, LSM
- <sup>65</sup> *Recovery Version Bible*, I Peter 5:3 fn 3, LSM
- <sup>66</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 4, LSM
- <sup>67</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 2, Chapter 1, Section 6, LSM
- <sup>68</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 7, LSM
- <sup>69</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 6, LSM
- <sup>70</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 2, Chapter 6, Section 1, LSM
- <sup>71</sup> W. Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, (Set 3) Vol. 62*, Chapter 13, Section 4, LSM
- <sup>72</sup> W. Nee, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, The (Set 3) Vol. 62*, Chapter 10, Section 2, LSM
- <sup>73</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 7, LSM
- <sup>74</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 7, LSM
- <sup>75</sup> W. Lee, *Crucial Words of Leading in the Lord's Recovery*, Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 7, LSM
- <sup>76</sup> W. Lee, *Life-Study of Hebrews*, Chapter 40, Section 3, LSM
- <sup>77</sup> W. Lee, *Elders' Training*, Book 11, Chapter 2, LSM